

Change Our Shelter initial gathering-minutes

October 28, 2007 3 p.m.

45 individuals were in attendance, representing citizens, Shelter employees, Memphis City Council, the Animal Protection Association, Memphis Charter Commission, various animal rescue volunteers, area breeders, Memphis Humane Society, and the media.

Guests signed in on registration sheets provided to obtain contact information for those interested in working toward changing the practices at MAS.

Michelle Buckalew welcomed everyone and introduced Beverly King, long-term Memphis Animal Welfare advocate.

Ms. King presented the chronological development of issues related to Memphis Animal Services specifically related to euthanasia methods and legislation advancements achieved through her work with the City leaders.

Ms. King introduced Sylvia Cox, Charter Commission member, who provided the group with information about what the Charter Commission is, its function and some printed information on the Shelter's Citizen's Advisory Board. Myron Lowery, City Council Member and Charter Commission member, advised and reassured the group that the Citizen's Advisory Board would be REINSTATED. Legislation regarding vicious dogs was recently passed in the Council that contained a codicil that eliminated the Shelter Advisory Board. Per information provided by Ms. Cox, no council members were aware of the 'fine print' in the vicious dog legislation regarding the Citizen's Advisory Board and steps would be taken to rectify this oversight.

Ms. Cox requested all attendees to send comments requesting reinstatement of the CAB to the following URL:

To provide input / feedback to the Memphis City Charter Commission, their website is:
www.memphischartercommission.org

- 1 The individual e-mail addresses for all 7 members.
- 2 See the sample e-mail below for a list of those members e-mail addresses.

SAMPLE EMAIL:

TO: willie.brooks@memphistn.gov, sylvia.cox@memphistn.gov, marsha.campbell@memphistn.gov,
janis.fullilove@memphistn.gov, george.brown@memphistn.gov, sharon.webb@memphistn.gov,
myron.lowery@memphistn.gov

Subject: Establishment of an Animal Shelter Advisory Board

Dear Memphis City Charter Commission Members:

In reviewing the Memphis municipal codes, I find that Article 1, Section 8-12-5 provides for the establishment of a citizens' Animal Shelter Advisory Board.

I am writing to go on record that I hereby support the formation of a citizens' advisory board for the Animal Shelter.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR STREET ADDRESS
CITY/ST/ZIP

The Memphis city codes are found at:

<http://municipalcodes.lexisnexis.com/codes/memphis/>

- 1 Section 8 is regarding Animals.
- 2 Article 1, Section 8-12-5 is the provision for the establishment of a citizens' advisory board for the animal shelter.

Ms. Cox introduced Lisa Trenthem, founder/director of Good Dog rescue, who reiterated the story of the Border Collie who was killed as she stood outside the door of the Euthanasia Room at MAS on Tuesday, October 16, 2007.

Ms. Trenthem asked the audience to submit factual details relating to any issues experienced with the MAS to the email set up for Change Our Shelter: changeourshelter@gmail.com.

Ms. Trenthem opened the floor for discussion.

Shelter Supervisor, Ivan Russell, asked for four minutes to read a poem he composed related to the shelter issues. Mr. Russell presented his creation, but would not provide/share a copy of his writing. Mr. Russell provided the counter point to animal welfare issues by sharing the anger and frustration he apparently feels due to the recent media attention to heinous activities perpetuated by the Shelter Employees. While Mr. Russell's impassioned delivery was clearly heartfelt, he could not disguise his animosity toward the others gathered on behalf of animal welfare—the uppermost issue for the meeting.

Ms. Buckalew advised the coalition has access to pro bono legal services.

Susan Hutchinson took the microphone, relating her struggle to obtain a meeting with Public Services Director, Keenan McCloy. Ms. Hutchinson, also relayed the successful adoption event held by MAS at a volunteer's home. Her question was—based on the phenomenal success of the event (33 dogs adopted in 2 hours), why didn't MAS sustain the adoption efforts given this success?

Ms. King aptly noted for our efforts to focus on facts and financial benefit for the city. For every dog adopted, the city receives \$75. For every dog killed, it gets no revenue. She stated to sue the city; it will have to be done by an individual as it cannot be done by a group.

Donna Malone, of Responsible Animal Owners of Tennessee (RAOT) suggested a tactic of filing a Writ of Mandamus when officials are not performing the jobs they are hired to do. It is important to recall the proper chain of command/procedures should be followed before any legal action is taken.

See the following definition obtained from GOOGLE search engine:

“MANDAMUS - The name of a writ, the principal word of which when the proceedings were in Latin, was mandamus, we command.

It is a command issuing in the name of the sovereign authority from a superior court having jurisdiction, and is directed to some person, corporation, or, inferior court, within the jurisdiction of such superior court, requiring them to do some particular thing therein specified, which appertains to their office and duty, and which the superior court has previously determined, or at least supposes to be consonant to right and justice.

Mandamus is not a writ of right, it is not consequently granted of course, but only at the discretion of the court to whom the application for it is made; and this discretion is not exercised in favor of the applicant, unless some just and useful purpose may be answered by the writ.

This writ was introduced to prevent disorders from a failure of justice; therefore it ought to be used upon all occasions where the law has established no specific remedy, and where in justice and good government there ought to be one. Mandamus will not lie where the law has given another specific remedy.”

Several citizens questioned why the search for a successor director was taking so long? One person present had applied for the position only to be told it was filled. It is NOT filled. Another related Ms. McCloy has 12 resumes/applications on her desk for review at present. This fact is not verified.

Ms. Trenthem asked for a show of hands of those willing to go forward in the initiative to change our shelter. Most in the room were in favor.

It was proposed that 4th Sundays at 3 p.m. be the meeting time. Ms. Trenthem solicited suggestions/alternatives from those in the room for meeting places, as the Library will not have space going forward.

Addendum to the minutes:

The next meeting will be at the Central Library in the first floor meeting room at 3 p.m. on Sunday, November 18th.

Submitted respectfully by Julie M. Clark