

San Francisco Commission of Animal Control & Welfare Meeting Minutes - March 10, 2022

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Present: Jane Tobin, Michael Angelo Torres, Annemarie Fortier, Irina Ozernoy, Brian Van Horn, DVM, Iris Chan, Shari O'Neill, DVM/ACC

Absent: Commissioner Nina Irani (excused absence), Christopher Campbell, SF RPD, Officer Joe Majeski SFPD

2. General Public Comment - No public comment

3. Approval of Draft Minutes from the February 10 Meeting - Approved

4. Chairperson's and Commissioners' Reports

Commissioner Fortier has copies of the Animal Commission Annual 2021 Annual Report and will distribute them to the Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner Fortier also suggested supporting animal advocacy groups helping to remove barriers for refugees with pets fleeing Ukraine.

Commissioner Van Horn updated on progress regarding dog thefts (information consolidated under "Old Business/B").

5. New Business

A. Glenn Phillips, Executive Director of the Golden Gate Audobon Society (GGAS).

- Great Backyard Bird Count data is still being tabulated but spoke generally what backyard birds mean in SF. GGAS was founded in 1917 and includes SF, Oakland, Berkeley, and the surrounding community. The focus of his presentation was on "urban birds" of which there are 496 species in the SF Bay Area. This is an extraordinary number and also includes the Farallon Islands. SF Christmas Bird Count recorded 187 species.
- Director Phillips shared some favorite birds found only in California and recorded in San Francisco throughout various seasons. This area is rich in bird populations because so many birds migrate from south to north and birds from the north fly south during winter months.
- California Quail was named the official bird of San Francisco. The Annas Hummingbird is prolific in San Francisco and Director Phillips shared recordings of their song so we can identify them. The males make a high-pitched pop with their tail feathers when diving.
- Tools for tracking birds - 1) Christmas Bird Count - last Tuesday of December 2) Great Backyard Bird Count in February - trying to identify them when they are in the area they are migrating to and how counts are tabulated. 3) Breeding Bird Atlas - once a decade.
- Director Phillips recommends installing e-Bird app from Cornell as well as merlinallaboutbirds.org. A great way for any bird enthusiast to track birds and contribute to scientific research.

Risk to bird populations

- Bird populations have declined by one-third. Climate change is a contributor to the long-term impact on bird populations. There are also direct human threats. 1) cats (not just feral) kill 4Billion annually. 2) windows (reflections) - kill 1billion a year 3) rodenticides and pesticides. Raptors are particularly vulnerable. They feed on rodents

and the rodents are poisoned and the poison kills the raptor. Although rodenticides are illegal in the State of CA but still widely used. Pesticides impact the insects and the pesticides bio-accumulate so baby birds are consuming toxic insects.

How we can help

1. Don't use pesticides encourage others not to as well.
2. Catos - to allow cats to be in an enclosed space that is located outdoor (catiospaces.com)
3. Window visibility - SF has a policy in place to ensure windows are "bird-friendly" (birdsmartglass.org)
4. Plant native plants that encourage caterpillars which are essentially food for birds. Plants for Birds - 1. Coffee Berry 2. Flowering Currant 3. Coast Buckwheat 4. Bush Lupine

Commissioner Comments/Questions

- Commissioner Fortier asked for waterbird recommendations.
- Commissioner Van Horn asked for feedback on the following issues:
- Q: How might the Commission help with vulnerable bird populations in San Francisco's Community cat areas? Also responsible dog guardians?
- A: Suggested working with multiple stakeholders including advocacy groups promoting responsible dog ownership. Create common ground.
- Q: How to have common ground working with other orgs on making sure rodenticides aren't used.
- A: Recommend reducing food sources for rats.
- Q: What is his position on pigeon bird birth control
- A: Impacts non-target species. Birds that prey on them may be susceptible to some damage too and contribute to declining bird populations. The better solution is to control access to feeding pigeons which contribute to their overpopulation.
- Commissioner Ozernoy asked about ACC's free-roaming cat policy. Dr. O'Neill noted that cats free-roaming (and healthy) are more likely to find their way if left alone.
- Commissioner Van Horn on ACC's recommendation of putting bells on cats.

No public comment however public comment missed the previous callers who were in the queue.

- Caller #1 commented on ACC's feral cat policy which is inhumane and unhealthy. Asked for change in policy.
- Caller #2 commented on a cat she found in a dangerous intersection. She called ACC and the recommendation was to return the cat to the place where it was found. ACC doesn't take free-roaming cats. Caller requested clarification on this policy.

6. Old Business

A. **Reporting from Animal Care & Control** [Commissioner Torres and Dr. Shari O'Neill]
Distemper numbers for wildlife are up especially skunks. Working with Fish and Wildlife to understand the uptick. Dogs and cats should be vaccinated. Have not seen coyotes with distemper yet. Parvo is still present and preventable with vaccines. Don't touch wildlife. Don't have domestic animals interacting with wildlife.

Dr. O'Neill presented the numbers of animals at ACC. Queens and kittens coming in. Kittens are in foster. Young puppies in foster. Guinea Pigs still coming in. The Dog population at ACC is high because of investigations.

Dr. O'Neill could not comment on the caller's question about the cat other than reiterate ACC policy to not pick up free-roaming cats.

Questions and Comments from Commissioners

Commissioner Van Horn asked about Community Cats in collaboration. Dr. O'Neill referred the question to SF/SPCA for more information

Commissioner Ozernoy asked about ACC's free-roaming cat policy. Dr. O'Neill noted that cats free-roaming (and healthy) are more likely to find their way if left alone.

Commissioner Van Horn on ACC's recommendation of putting bells on cats

A. **Companion Animal Abductions** [Commissioner Van Horn]

The Commission discussed the series of companion animal abductions occurring in the Bay Area. Increasing violent events involving animal abductions. No legislation in CA vs. serious consequences - 10 years in prison in VA. In CA must prove your animal is worth more than \$950 for the crime to be prosecuted as grand theft which is a felony. There are minor charges for threatening, strong-arm, or break-ins. Reporting on animal abductions is not readily available.

Commissioner VanHorn provided follow-up information. It continues to be an under-reported problem. The District Attorney and SFPD are overwhelmed and this is not a priority. It's not a felony.

Commission will continue to follow up.

7. Commission Governance

[Discussion/Action Item] [Commissioner Torres] The Commission discussed the status of in-person meetings. Meetings continue to meet remotely. Boards that are advisory meet remotely. We will be given 2 months' notice about resuming in-person.

Commission voted on a resolution to continue to meet remotely as required.

8. Items to be put on the Agenda for Future Commission Meetings

Follow-ups on items presented at this meeting, Thursday, April 14.

Mothers Building/Earth Day presentation

Regular reporting from ACC.

9. Adjournment - approximately 7 p.m.