

**San Francisco Animal Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2022**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

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

Absent: Christopher Campbell, SF RPD, Officer Joe Majeski SFPD

2. General Public Comment - No public comment

3. Approval of Draft Minutes from the August Meeting - Approved

4. Chairperson's and Commissioners' Reports - Commissioner Fortier commended SF Wildcare for their continued support of wildlife during the most recent heat wave. Commissioner Tobin reminded the Commission of the upcoming "Bark the Vote" event at Alamo Square on Saturday, October 22nd.

5. New Business - The Needs of San Francisco's Homeless Cats [Discussion Item]

[Commissioner Torres] Maria Conlon, from Give Me Shelter Cat Rescue, and Alena Ja, a volunteer with SF SPCA, presented their experiences rescuing and advocating for cats in San Francisco.

History

Presenters shared the history of TNR (Trap Neuter Return) and former policy. Began with volunteers and eventually in 1993 SF SPCA began Free Feral Fix program which is now Community Cats. Through volunteer efforts and programs like Community Cats, feral cat populations diminished in SF. 5 years ago rescuers reported Golden Gate Park feral cat community close to zero popular growth. .

2019 - SF ACC and SF SPCA's new cat policy- SF SPCA no longer intakes cats with few exceptions. SF ACC is no longer accepting healthy, stray, lost, and abandoned cats.

Presenters outlined the benefits of TNR:

Kitten socialization = increased adoption rates, reduction of the colony population, and reduction in shelter cat impoundment numbers as the colony decreases. Increase in kitten survivability. Presenters shared a number of supporting stories.

ACC's "Healthy Outdoor Cat Policy" - ACC does not intake healthy outdoor cats. The reasoning is that allowing cats to roam free is not illegal and most cats' free-roaming cats are close to home. If brought into the shelter, they are less likely to be reunited with their guardians.

Note - ACC does not encourage people to allow cats to roam free for the cats safety (coyotes, cars, disease, etc).

Presenters then shared ACC's policy on why ACC recommends the public leave the healthy cats outside. For kittens, the reasoning is that unless abandoned it is better to keep the kittens with the mom.

Presenters then shared a number of stories of cats/kittens left outside and the negative impact as well as conflicting policy statements on ACC's website. Presenters believe ACC's claim as an open-admission shelter is in conflict with its cat policy. As a tax-payer-funded shelter with a new building, the presenters shared ACC has the capacity to do better for the cats. Shared data on intake numbers as compared with other shelters with smaller operating budgets that have better results. Presenters believe ACC is not over-crowded, under-funded, or high-kill.

Presenters then shared successful programs to help with cat care that have been eliminated. Presenters believe ACC is shifting the responsibility and costs to cat rescue organizations and the public. Noted the problem cat rescues are experiencing is happening with dogs as well. [Please visit here for the presentation and video.](#)

Presenter recommendations:

- Form a closer working relationship between ACC, Rescues, and the public to educate. Better instructions.
- Better vetting of the situation by ACC customer service reps
- Expand foster program.
- Presenters shared Oakland Animal Services recommendations as a model for better service and care.

Questions/Comments from Commissioners and The Public Commissioners

Commissioners thanked the presenters for the meeting and hope to have the SF SPCA Community Cats also come to speak.

Q: Commissioner Fortier - Asked a question about an email that the policy was under review noted by Allen Lau of ACC.

A: He was an ACA (Animal Care Attendant). The email was from March 2019 at the start of the policy.

Q: Commissioner Irani - policies proposed are their other shelters doing that.

A: The presenter will follow up with Oakland Animal Services

Q: Commissioner Tobin - What is the communication between ACC and trappers?

A: Presenters noted no communication from ACC. and that SF SPCA Community Cats have not been called in. SF SPCA will call rescue groups about cats in distress. Most calls to rescues come from the public to rescues that they find on social media.

The public

13 callers all in support of ACC changing its cat policies.

6. Old Business

A. Reporting from Animal Care & Control [Discussion Item] [Commissioner Torres and Dr. Shari O'Neill] Animal Care & Control will report regarding outcomes for animals and ongoing operations.

- Tuesday hosting City Admin Head meeting - 80 guests, tours, meet and greet.
- Large intake - hoarding case of cats 20 cats and 20 rabbits
- Dog kennels are full
- 2 birds, 105 cats, 57 dogs, birds, 24 smalls, 4 reptiles, and wildlife birds
- In foster care 64 cats (mostly) kittens, some puppies and bunnies.

Commissioner Van Horn asked about vet care staff at the shelter. The new shelter is a lot better but its same number of staff. And no new staff is budgeted.

Q: Commissioner Tobin asked about contractors to help.

A: According to Dr. O'Neill, there is no additional contractor help. It must be done internally. SF SPCA is increasing spay/neuter which is helpful. Ramping up fosters is challenging.

Q: Peninsula Humane Society - Are they still coming?

A: Yes but had a pause and now gearing up to help but limited.

Q: 3 things to unclog the system

A:

1. Technical staff (Registered Veterinary Technicians)
2. Foster Coordinator
3. More front-end pathway planning including community outreach, and expanding the foster base to keep animals in a home for care and not in the shelter.

Q: Commissioner Fortier - asked about the capacity of the shelter. Walk us through resource constraints.

A. Dr. O'Neill explained about processing animals which includes (intake), physical space, wellness exams, and behavior evaluation. Spay/Neuter, chipped, then pathway out - (i.e. transfer v adoption floor). Fast-tracking v longer stay animals. Need to balance the fast-trackers and longer stay animals. Getting it wrong creates blocks in the system. ACC is always trying to make space for the next influx after they go through the processing system. The system has to accommodate the unpredictableness of the intake.

B. Commission Governance [Discussion/Action Item] [Commissioners Torres] The Commission voted on a resolution allowing us to continue to meet remotely at our October meeting. Commissioners approved unanimously.

7. Items to be put on the agenda for future Commission meetings (Discussion Item)

- The next meeting is Thur Oct 13
- Presentation on ACC Animal Admission policy
- Proposed Shock collar ban presentation by Ren Volpe
- An ongoing report by ACC
- Vote on meeting remotely

8. Adjournment - Approx. 7:45 p.m.