

# ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)

## MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Office of Animal Services

7315 Muncaster Mill Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room

Derwood, MD 20855

### I. Call to Order

6:36 p.m.

Meeting called to order by Vicki Thomas.

**Present In-Person:** Vicki Thomas, Vice Chair; Jan Armstrong; Georgia Dodson, Judith Vaughan-Prather; Caroline Hairfield, OAS Director; Dr. Gregory Lawrence, Chief Vet, and Bonnie White, Business Operations Manager.

**Present Virtually via Microsoft Teams:** Sandy Yuen

**Staff Present In-Person:** Trish Ranshaw

**Absent:** Jennifer Hughes, Interim Acting Chair; Elizabeth Mullen; Maureen Smith, and Katie Bante.

**Handouts:** 3/6/2025 Draft Meeting Minutes

### II. Review and Approve March 6, 2025, Meeting Minutes

6:37 p.m.

Motion by Jan Armstrong to approve minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Judith Vaughan-Prather. Vote – Approved by all.

### III. Budget Summary and Updates from Dir. Caroline Hairfield

6:37 p.m.

The CE wanted all departments to make a 5% reduction across the board; however, OAS' FY26 Budget was approved by the CE. Next, we will meet with the County Council. We are working to fund community facing programs. Connecting to the community and investing in the petfood pantry is essential to keeping pets and families together, especially during this time of turbulence. Now is the time to support OAS, to connect with the community, and to partner with others. OAS has also requested funding the basics to ensure animals are humanely treated in our care. Currently OAS has 15 Animal Care Attendants (ACA) to care for animals requiring the staff to function daily at over 25% above capacity. The national standard for staffing based on our current animal population is 24. So thankful for our volunteers! Planning on ramping up on training for our Animal Services Officers.

OAS received a sizable donation, and we are in the process of purchasing two stackable washer/dryer machines and one is in the process of being repaired.

The spay/neuter clinic has been going since March 1<sup>st</sup> and we're still working out final issues. It is not online yet; it has first come first serve and there's a small fee, approximately \$50 for dogs, and \$25 for cats. We will revisit fees and tweak as we go and will keep things simple to begin with and adjust as things progress. There is a simplified form for people attesting to their income. There is no plan to do free sterilization clinics yet. July we will begin offering routine vaccines at our Wednesday rabies clinics. Every animal is now examined by the vet team on intake in our triage area (intake) then moved to the appropriate housing area of the facility area.

We'd like to make changes to the cat room showcases and is working with Spencer on this. OAS is also trying to change the culture of how they see and do things. For example, the animal has been here for 5 days, what can we do for that animal? Follow the Five Domains Model of Sheltering, i.e., good nutrition, good physical environment, good health, and appropriate behavioral interactions.

A couple surrendered 70-40 cats to OAS, and 30 of them have found homes. The rest are not doing so well as they are not socialized and are feral.

We must recognize that mental health is just as important as food, water or veterinary care. Animals are deteriorating here, and there's a need to think of the mental health of the animals. Animals live in the moment – what's happening now. For some animals, being here is torture. Sometimes we have to make hard decisions. Addressing mental health and enrichment before the animal becomes a behavioral issue due to a decline in its mental health is important. The vet team is working on the use of psychotropic drugs to help us manage animals' anxiety and mental health. Doing so will treat mental health as a medical issue and allow behavior specialist better to manage the animals actual behavioral problems and in a safe and productive manner. Dr. Lawrence shared euthanasia rates. We speak for the animals, and we speak for the voiceless. Even if hard decisions need to be made, we always have to do the right thing for the animals.

Other updates include: OAS is working on a pamphlet of community facing programs for people. There's a need for dry dog food and dry or canned food for cats. Beth Mullin has been going in on the weekends and working with groups. The Play for Life program is being hosted on 4/19/2025, and all volunteers and shelter staff will have to go through the program. It is fine for ASAC to do a food drive. OAS feeds a prescription food diet, therefore the food from the food drive is not for shelter animals. OAS would like to stock up with bags of food. The storage building is never full and can hold donated items.

#### **IV. Review of Public Hearing Testimony**

**7:34 p.m.**

Per Vicki Thomas, Jennifer Hughes accepted her suggested edits to the draft public hearing testimony.

Motion by Vicki Thomas to accept Jennifer Hughes' testimony with Vicki Thomas' Changes which Jennifer has accepted. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jan Armstrong.

**7:34 p.m.**

Discussion continued regarding the draft public hearing testimony. Dir. Hairfield read what she wrote. Dir. Hairfield read the testimony and would like to stick to the point that OAS plays a vital role.

Friendly Amendment by Jan Armstrong:

**7:47 p.m.**

1. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, in the following sentence: "Despite these efforts, OAS is still on the brink of not being able to properly care for and feed the hundreds of animals that pass through *their* doors every year as well as animals throughout the county.", replace "their" with "its".
2. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, in the following sentence: "If you were to reduce OAS's resources just as *their* workload is likely to increase, the outcome for the animals is likely to be dire", replace "their" with "its".

Motion to accept the testimony unanimously accepted with amendments.

Trish Ranshaw will clean up the draft, fix it, and will email it out to ASAC members.

Vicki Thomas and Jennifer Hughes is encouraging everyone to attend ASAC's public hearing testimony to be spoken by her before the Montgomery County Council on Monday, April 7, 2025, at 1:30 pm. Location: Stella Werner Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850.

**V. Discussion of By-Laws** **7:50 p.m.**

Katie Bante did a great job with a draft of the by-laws. It is nice and simple. Katie Bante proposed 1-year terms for elected officers. Judith Vaughan-Prather proposed 2-year terms instead, and Katie Bante liked the idea.

It was noted that Ken Hartman-Espada, Director of Strategic Partnerships with the Office of the County Executive, said he does not want ASAC to encourage by-laws because the by-laws would need to go through the County Council and they would have to vet and approve them. Jan Armstrong noted that even if we submitted it, the Council may not even look at it for a year.

Judith Vaughan-Prather expressed that ASAC should have by-laws, as it guides how ASAC members conduct themselves. Dir. Hairfield also thought that by-laws are good for getting everyone on the same page.

Discussions and actions regarding by-laws tabled till the next meeting.

**VI. Public Comment – None.** **7:54 p.m.**

**VII. Additional Notes** **8:00 p.m.**

Having no public comments, ASAC then discussed the following:

- Vicki Thomas will chat with Spencer at some point.
- Judith Vaughan-Prather relayed a story about a bird issue at her home and speaking with someone competent and caring from Animal Control and Brian Jenson who went to her home to help. Both were very nice.

**VIII. Adjournment** **8:01 p.m.**

Motion by Jan Armstrong, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Judith Vaughan-Prather. Unanimous vote: All in favor. Approved.