

Boards, Commissions, and Committees (BCC) Questionnaire

1. Briefly describe your board, committee, or commission (BCC) purpose and explain why it is valuable to the County. Based on conversations with members of the BCC,
 - Share reasons for why your BCC should or should not continue to serve, or be combined with another BCC.
 - Explain how your BCC collaborates with government services to meet the needs of the community.
 - Highlight specific expertise and lived experiences of your members have related to the advisory subject.

The Animal Services Advisory Committee (ASAC) was created through Bill 37-21. The law clearly states the purposes of the ASAC which are broad and as follows:

(e) *Duties.* The Committee must work with the Office to advise the Executive and the Council on issues and recommendations for:

- (1) animal care and welfare;**
- (2) animal rescue;**
- (3) animal fostering and adoption;**
- (4) control of the animal population;**
- (5) animal bite prevention;**
- (6) zoonotic disease transmission;**
- (7) educating the public on safely coexisting with wildlife;**
- (8) best practices for animal shelters;**
- (9) recruiting volunteers for the County animal shelter; and**
- (10) the operation of the Office.**

Given that the creation of the ASAC is set in law and its membership is outlined in law, it would require a legislative change to restructure the ASAC or combine it with other BCC's. There is however clearly value to the ASAC working with other Committees to further the goals of the Committee and OAS. The two main objectives of the Maddie's Million Pet Challenge Operational Consult include:

- **Identify proactive pathways such as Safety Net and targeted spay/neuter that will keep pets and people together and therefore reduce shelter intake.**
- **Address barriers to live outcome in a timely manner that include improving program efficiencies, updating job duties and population management that will reduce the length of stay for shelter pets.**

These goals can only be achieved by working across County Government.

The ASAC works closely with OAS to ensure that our goals and efforts are closely aligned and coordinated.

The law outlines specific types and some specific organizations that have designated representatives on the ASAC. These organizations include fostering, community cat, animal rescue, wildlife rescue and behaviorists – all of whom lend important expertise and perspective to the work of the Committee.

2. **How many times has your BCC met in the past two years? In your answer, please detail the following,**
 - **How many of these meetings have been in-person, remote, or hybrid?**

The Committee has met 19 times since November 2022 (2 times in 2022, 9 times in 2023, and 8 times in 2024 to date) – nearly once every month. The vast majority have been in person, though members and the public have the option to join the meeting via Teams to ensure maximum participation on the important topics we cover.

- **Do you ever hold "field" meetings in communities (ie. At Community Centers, Libraries, etc.)**

We have not had any “field” meetings. All the meetings have been held at MCASAC which is a public building, and members of the community are welcome to attend.

3. **Describe your relationship with department(s) or agency(ies) that you work with. Is this relationship beneficial? If so, why? If not, why? How does that department utilize the work of the BCC?**

Members of the ASAC believe that there is a positive working relationship with the OAS. There have been differences of opinion at times, both within the ASAC and between members of the ASAC and OAS. However, we have worked to ensure that the relationship remains mutually supportive, and we have worked through any differences to reach a consensus. The Committee is also in the process of developing and approving a Code of Conduct which will serve to guide our internal interactions as well as those with OAS.

4. Share your BCC's top 2-3 impactful accomplishments within the past two years.

The ASAC was instrumental in bringing the organization that pro bono consulted on OAS operations and provided an intensive analysis with recommended next steps – Maddie's Fund. OAS staff have worked hard to implement many of these recommendations which are based on industry best practices and the ASAC frequently refers to the recommendations to track progress.

The Committee has also provided important support to OAS by advocating with both the Executive and the County Council for its priority resource needs through written and live testimony.

5. How does your BCC define success? Has this definition been effectively communicated with your members?

The ASAC is working to develop its goals and objectives. In the last year, there has been significant turnover within the Committee, as well as the appointment of a new Executive Director for OAS. These changes provide us with an opportunity to establish goals and objectives that align with those of the new Executive Director as she establishes her priorities and goals.

6. What do you believe are the greatest barriers, roadblocks, or challenges that may hinder success of your BCC over the last two years? What areas could you improve on?

There is a lack of shared understanding of the purpose of the group. Up until this point, we have had individuals with expertise in different areas, each with elevated priorities that do not always align. A plan to move forward with a shared vision and working norms will ensure a productive future.

The resources provided to OAS for the support of the Committee are minimal. OAS staff works very hard to be fully responsive to the Committee (and they are), but their primary role and responsibilities are to the animals and the public. The group would benefit from some professional facilitation to reconcile some of the varying perspectives among Committee members related to the goals and priorities. That expense is simply not something that OAS can afford, and the Committee would not expect them to provide that resource at the expense of the animals or staff.

7. Briefly summarize the Group's current priorities and anticipated workload for the next two years.

As noted in question #5 above, the Committee is now able to focus on identifying its key priorities for both the short term and the long term. That is our next task at hand.

We are a relatively a new group (only 2.5 years old) and with the turnover at both the Committee level and in OAS, plus delays in the posting of vacant ASAC positions by the County, we have not been able to hone in on our goals and objectives in coordination with OAS. We will be developing those goals and priorities in the next couple of months.

8. Name the specific communities that you serve (i.e. zip codes, cities, etc.). In your answer, please:
 - Detail how your BCC communicates/engages with, community leaders, groups and individuals.
 - Describe the methods your BCC implements for community involvement (e.g., surveys, forums, outreach programs).

ASAC serves all of Montgomery County, unlike regional BCC's for example, which serve only certain parts of the county. As a new Committee, we have focused more internally, but believe that as we become more established, we should be doing more outreach and community engagement, and we recognize the County's focus on underserved communities. We will use these questions as points of consideration as we develop our goals and objectives.

9. List your key partner organizations, community groups, and other BCCs your BCC has worked with. How valuable are these partnerships to your mission?

There are several key county animal welfare groups represented by law on the Committee: Friend of Montgomery County Animals, Montgomery County Community Cat Coalition, Montgomery County Partner for Animal Well-being, and Second Chance Wildlife Center, so by definition they are partners in the committee. In addition, members of the committee are also involved with other animal welfare organizations such as Animal Welfare League of Montgomery County and bring a wealth of experience. This experience has been invaluable in guiding our mission and we will reach out to additional organizations as we focus on identifying our goals and objectives.

10. How does your BCC include non-members in future planning and visioning activities.

As noted, we are a relatively new committee and with the turnover at both the Committee level and in OAS, as well as delays in filling vacant ASAC positions. We have not been able to hone in on our goals and objectives in coordination with OAS. As we develop our goals and priorities in the next couple of months, we will also look at how to include non-members in these activities. We should note that we already have several members of the public who regularly attend the ASAC meetings, which are all open to the public, and provide valuable input. Members of the public also regularly provide verbal and written comments.

11. List any communities that you have not yet engaged with your BCC and outline plans to include them in the next two years. In your reply,
- Please describe any challenges that have prevented your BCC from engaging with some communities.

See above.

12. What types of incentives could your BCC utilize to improve recruitment strategies and community participation?

People in the animal community are very passionate and willing to volunteer and help. We have had applicants to the Committee, yet it has taken an extremely long time for the applicants to go through the selection process. A number have been discouraged by the extensive lag between their expression of interest and the selection process conclusion. Additionally, once we have filled key vacancies, we can focus on issues including community initiatives involving these passionate people and others.

13. Has the BCC used services to ensure inclusivity, such as sign language interpreters and translation services?

No. Perhaps as our outreach progresses, those services may be necessary.

14. Has your BCC used data to measure engagement success; ensure equitable participation; and determine which activities to champion/support? What data have you used, and how that data is used.

No, but the Maddie's Million Pet Challenge Operational Consult we brought to OAS serves as a road map (checklist) for making and measuring positive changes at MCASAC.

15. Does your BCC have access to County government resources such as staff time allocation? If so, please:
- Detail the specific tasks performed by staff to support the activities of your BCC.
 - Describe how your BCC maximizes the efficiency of available resources and the effectiveness of the staff.
 - What resources does your committee need to become more effective/impactful?

OAS staff provide the Committee with a great deal of support. They schedule meetings, arrange for the Teams link, advertise the meetings, distribute materials, and provide other administrative support. In addition, since we are a new committee, all the members have had to climb a steep learning curve. OAS has patiently provided us with information, tours, and responded to our many questions.

