

Animal Advisory Commission



City of Dallas

Drafted for Approval by the Animal Advisory Commission on January 26, 2023

Chair Shelby Bobosky's Memo

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE January 20, 2023

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **A Year in Review for FY22 from the Animal Advisory Commission Chair**

Despite the extraordinary challenges that Dallas Animal Services (DAS) faced in 2022, it faced them head on and continued to move the needle in professional animal sheltering.

Dallas was not alone in their animal sheltering challenges. In 2022, animal services and animal control organizations across the U.S. experienced: (1) short-staffing (in all positions, especially forward-facing staff, animal control officers, veterinarians, and customer service representatives due to comparably low salaries, difficulty, and stress of working conditions and environment, and slow hiring processes); (2) higher-than-usual animal inventories (due to pet adoptions and transports slowing dramatically, and both cats and dogs are spending up to twice the number of days); and (3) record-reported levels of stress/burnout among workers (stress of the pandemic has increased the number of emotionally charged instances and officers and shelter staff report a higher-than-usual number of negative interactions with the public, including people experiencing mental health crises and residents who are combative with shelter and animal control staff and volunteers).

DAS is the only shelter in Dallas that never turns away a pet in need and cares for tens of thousands of pets every year. Additionally, there has been an increase in euthanasia based on a distemper outbreak, canine influenza and space. Despite these issues, the DAS Team remained committed to its principles of public safety, compassion, and no shortcuts in the face of these new hurdles.

Here are some important highlights in 2022:

- DAS achieved a huge increase in dogs and cats being fostered. DAS met and surpassed its goals through their dogs and cats foster program as its goal was 5%, but DAS achieved 33% for FY22.
- DAS Director MeLissa Webber secured pay increases and bonuses for Animal Service Officers (ASOs). The more staff DAS has, the more engagement DAS can have.
- DAS received its audit on Dangerous and Aggressive Dogs and quickly planned through ordinance changes improvements based on the audit.
- While the total number of dogs brought into the shelter is up from last year, it is still lower than in 2020.
- DAS was instrumental in passing a Humane Pet Store Ordinance that stopped the puppy mill pipeline to Dallas and thwarted backyard breeders from continuing to add to the overpopulation crisis.

As Commissioners, we created two task forces: an Ordinance task force and a Support task force that we will grow and learn from in 2023. c

I cannot forget the support of the Friends of Dallas Animal Services (FODAS). FODAS is the official nonprofit partner of DAS and exists to directly benefit DAS and its innovative and lifesaving programs and services. As an independent non-profit, FODAS responds quickly to urgent shelter needs as they arise ensuring help is available when most needed. In 2022, FODAS raised \$347,897. Their philanthropic support allows DAS to serve the community and its animals daily.

Lastly, we must highlight our community and their role in all lifesaving efforts. Through partnerships, volunteers, and community outreach, DAS hits its stride. In December of 2022, Dallas citizens showed their kindness by removing 150 dogs from DAS and into homes when canine influenza struck. It is moments like this that make me proud to call Dallas home.

We are ready for 2023 as we plan to engage the community to come out and rescue, foster and adopt from DAS.

Shelby Bobosky, Chair

c: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Chris Caso, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Billieae Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, Deputy City Manager
Jon Fortune, Deputy City Manager

Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager
M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Assistant City Manager
Dr. Robert Perez, Assistant City Manager
Carl Simpson, Assistant City Manager
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer
Genesis D. Gavino, Chief of Staff to the City Manager
Directors and Assistant Directors

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Animal Advisory Commission Members as of 1/26/23

Commission Member	District
Jonathan Saxer	1
Rachel Gearing	2
Karen Kennedy	3
VACANT	4
Sandra Luhring	5
Greg Moakes	6
Cassandra Laster	7
Stephanie Hanson	8
Shelby Bobosky – CHAIR	9
VACANT	10
Elizabeth Schrupp	11
Lisa Faulkner-Dunne	12
Jay Gonzales	13
Karen Sanders	14
Sana Syed	15

Mission Statement

Mission

To assist the City of Dallas in ensuring that animal shelters operated by the City meet or exceed the standards required by Texas state law and to make recommendations to the City Council and City Manager regarding the City's Animal Services program.

Purpose

The City of Dallas Animal Advisory Commission's purpose is to act as an advisory body to the City Manager and the City Council to assist in complying with the requirements of state law and city ordinances pertaining to the operation of an animal shelter.

Duties

- The **Animal Advisory Commission (AAC)** is an advisory body of 15 members. Each city council member shall appoint one member to the commission. The mayor shall appoint the chair, and the full city council appoint the vice-chair. Each member shall be appointed for a two-year term beginning on October 1 of each odd-numbered year. All members shall serve until their successors are appointed and qualified.
- The commission shall act as an advisory body to the city manager and the city council to assist in complying with the requirements of state law and city ordinances pertaining to the operation of an animal shelter.
- Members of the commission must meet the following qualifications:
 - (1) one member must be a licensed veterinarian;
 - (2) one member must be a city or county official;
 - (3) one member must have duties including the daily operation of an animal shelter;
 - (4) one member must be a representative from an animal welfare organization; and
 - (5) eleven members must be chosen from the general public.
- The commission meets at least three times a year and may hold additional meetings on call of the chair (Ordinance 29403, 8/12/14).
- This is a volunteer position. The commission is only advisory in nature and is only able to provide recommendations to City Council.

Committees/Subcommittees/Task Forces

Ordinance Task Force

Purpose

A small Task Force devoted to reviewing Ch. 7 Animals City ordinances to ensure alignment with the Animal Advisory Mission and the guiding principles outlined and defined by the City of Dallas. Research and recommendations from sister cities are utilized in the shared goal of improving existing city code and defining areas of interest that might be strengthened or improved upon.

Members

Commission Member	District
Jonathan Saxer	1
Cassandra Laster	7
Stephanie Hanson	8
Shelby Bobosky – CHAIR	9

Support Task Force

Purpose

A small Task Force devoted to supporting and promoting Dallas Animal Services to all districts and communities within the City of Dallas. This task force's main focus is championing the animals and staff of DAS by aiding in events, activities, and marketing.

Members

Commission Member	District
Elizabeth Schrupp	11
Karen Sanders	14
Shelby Bobosky – CHAIR	9

FY 2022 Objectives and Accomplishments

Objectives

The Animal Advisory Commission acts as an advisory body to the City Council and City Manager by:

- Reviewing the operations of Dallas Animal Services and its programs and reporting the results to the City Council and City Manager;
- Recommending new and innovative programs to make all aspects of DAS more effective and efficient; and
- Providing guidance, as needed, to the city manager regarding compliance with Texas state laws and local ordinances governing animal services and animal shelters.

Vision

The Animal Advisory Commission's vision is for Dallas to be a premier city for companion animals and the people who care for them, so that all residents are free from the dangers and nuisances of irresponsible pet-ownership, and so that every pet born is assured of a good home and good care all its natural life and does not suffer due to abuse, neglect or ignorance.

To achieve this vision, the city must:

- Develop, implement and enforce the policies and programs that will support the Dallas90 initiative;
- Enhance the human-animal bond, promote responsible pet ownership and public safety provide struggling owners with access to pet care resources, and encourage pet adoption; and
- Maintain Dallas Animal Services' current place as a leader in the national animal welfare ecosystem.

Accomplishments

Overcoming Distemper

- On May 24, 2022 Dallas Animal Services (DAS) is launched the Three to Thrive program to send newly vaccinated dogs into foster homes for the three days necessary for their vaccinations to offer significant protection.
- DAS also temporarily restricted the intake of owner surrender dogs to avoid potential exposure to the disease.
- Since first detecting distemper cases in November 2021, DAS has worked with industry experts including Dr. Cynda Crawford, faculty with Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program within the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Florida, and Dr. Ellen Jefferson, President and CEO of American / Austin Pets Alive, to adjust disease control protocols.

- To stop the spread of distemper in the community, DAS partnered with Maddie's Fund, Friends of DAS, Spay Neuter Network, Operation Kindness, and Petco Love to offer free public vaccine clinics at the shelter weekly.
- DAS completed 1,586 PCR tests in 2022 to accurately track trends and monitor levels of distemper in the building. This data is being used by the City of Dallas' GIS Team to create an interactive dashboard that allows DAS to pinpoint the impact of specific operational changes during the FY22 response and in future disease mitigation efforts.
- Testing shows the internal spread stopped as of October 2022.

Increased Staffing Levels and Compensation Equity

- DAS prides itself on providing industry-leading care to the animals in its facility and first-class service to Dallas residents. As national labor challenges continue, the long-term staffing shortage at Dallas Animal Services (DAS) took a significant toll on operations in FY22.
- Though DAS has faced ongoing recruitment and retention challenges with the City of Dallas' day labor vendors, the situation in FY22 was unprecedented.
 - In the past, DAS operated with 36 Day Laborers working 1,270 hours a week; in FY22, we averaged 23 Day Laborers working 639 hours with the same workload.
 - DAS Day Labor roles, primarily animal care, handling and cleaning positions, are physically demanding and emotionally taxing and the previous FY22 pay rate of \$12.38/hour is not a livable wage in Dallas.
- DAS Field Operations general response ASO vacancy rate was previously reported in FY22 at 35% and is currently at 30% in January of FY23. Field operations currently has nine (9) vacancies and nine (9) new cadets in training, with an additional ASO currently onboarding.
- To address these challenges, DAS focused on:
 - Hiring, recruiting, and retention efforts
 - Working with other city departments to increase pay equity by working to:
 - Reallocate funds from day labor to create 12 FTE positions and promoting three longtime day labor staff into these roles.
 - Increasing the minimum pay rate for our day labor staff to meet the City of Dallas' minimum wage and provide an estimated living wage.
 - Re-implement a tiered career path for Animal Service Officers (ASO) that would result in automatic promotion and pay increase from an ASO I to an ASO II when their training requirements are completed.
 - Ensure that ASO tiers mirror the pay grade of Code Officers.
 - Implement an ASO Hiring Incentive and Return-to-Owner goal-based incentive.

Passing the Humane Pet Store Ordinance

- On Wednesday, May 11, 2022 the Dallas City Council passed the Dallas Humane Pet Store Ordinance, banning the sale of dogs and cats in retail pet stores.
- Dallas now joins Austin, College Station, El Paso, Euless, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, Sherman, and Waco in cities that have passed a similar ordinance.

Launching DAS Partner Coalition

- The Dallas Animal Services Partner Coalition was created in August 2022 to expand lifesaving through increased collaboration with partners that support the pets and people of Dallas.

Implementing Dangerous Dogs/Aggressive Dogs Audit

Recommendations

- The Office of the City Auditor released the Audit of Dangerous and Aggressive Dogs Investigation and Determination Process on August 29, 2022.
- The audit found that improvements to DAS' internal control environment, operations, and transparency have led to tangible and meaningful positive results, including:
 - A 20-30% increase in the live release rates for FY19 – FY21 compared to FY15's live release rate of 62.5%
 - Significant improvements in Field Operations
 - A request for an audit of processes to determine if additional opportunities exist to improve processes and address residents' concerns.
- DAS believes implementing these recommendations will provide the tools necessary to ensure owners of dangerous and aggressive dogs comply with City requirements.

FY 2023 Proposed Objectives and Accomplishments

Current proposed Objectives and Accomplishments for FY23 include:

- A continued focus on City of Dallas Service Values
- Employee Engagement in the service of Dallas Residents
 - Onboarding, Training, and Retention
 - Employee Resources and Appreciation
 - Implementing New Organizational Structure
- Implementing Dangerous Dogs/Aggressive Dogs Audit Recommendations
- A continued focus and expansion of the DAS Partnership Coalition

Recommendations of the Animal Advisory Commission

Strengthening Laws and Ordinances

- Areas of focus include:
 - Removing the 72-hour stray hold on cats
 - The stray hold for Community cats, kittens, and nursing moms are being covered under phase III of the DAS recommended ordinance updates.
 - Coyote Management Plan
 - Proposed addition to Chapter 7-3 to include provisions on prohibitions in the feeding of no owned animals (outside of allowances) and wildlife
 - Dangerous Dog Audit Recommendations
 - Changes to the ordinance to address findings during the recent audit, definition, and legislative updates
 - Ordinance Committee recommendations
 - DAS is working closely with the AAC ordinance committee to identify areas in which we can move certain ordinance recommendations through with support and education

Improving Quality of Life

- Areas of focus include:
 - Shelter capacity and needs
 - Providing continued spay/neuter resources

Focus on Task Forces

- Areas of focus for both the Support and Ordinance Task Forces include:
 - Community Engagement
 - Education
 - Adoption Promotion
 - Animal Cruelty Training

Highlights of the Animal Advisory Commission

Return of In-Person Commission Meetings and Shelter Tours

- This summer, the first in-person commission meetings took place since the start of the pandemic in 2020. While a virtual option remains for commissioners and residents, the ability to connect in person allows for a stronger familiarization with one another.
- This has also led to shelter tours of DAS, allowing commissioners to see the daily operations of shelter staff and discuss how they can best champion shelter needs to their districts and the Dallas community.

2022 Boards and Commissions Appreciation Luncheon

- The program incorporated words of appreciation from the Honorable Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Carolyn King Arnold, special acknowledgement to staff from Chief of Staff - Genesis Gavino, Cultural Arts Program performances, and special recognitions of appreciation from Honorable Deputy Mayor Pro Tem – Omar Narvaez and City Manager – T.C. Broadnax.
- Many City Councilmembers were in attendance and enjoying the delicious lunch with their appointees.
- During the event, City Manager T.C. Broadnax continued to stress and acknowledge the important role Commissions have and the dedicated service the members provide to the City, therefore making this event the inaugural Boards and Commissions appreciation event, with more to come annually.

APPENDIX

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