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LISTENING SESSION MINUTES

Meeting of December 21, 2013 – 6:00pm

Meeting held at:

MADACC
3839 W. Burnham Street
West Milwaukee, WI 53215

Present:

Ms. Karen Sparapani, Executive Director (MADACC)
Ms. Lorraine Sweeney, Shelter Manager (MADACC)
Kathy Shillinglaw – Friends of MADACC, President

1. Submitted Questions/Responses

When is the next session? I am not happy about your adoption procedure. I lost out on getting a pet for our family because it went to an animal rescue, who did not even call me, even though I filled out an application for this dog. My name was in for the dog, and you just pulled it and sent it to the rescue. I adopted a dog last year from you with no issues (Nov 2012.) Charge more for them, if that is the problem. You said you were going to spend more time with getting the pit bulls ready and trained for adoption. This will not help MADACC. People do not want to adopt them due to their home insurance will not allow it. Madacc is known for Pit Bulls. Is that what you want?

I appreciate your feelings and opinions on the change in policy. I will say, however, that the decision was not taken lightly and it has been doing a lot of good here.

We changed the policy because of space and time. Things that, at MADACC, are the most precious things an animal has. I not only have pit bulls here, but I have old dogs, dogs with medical needs, and dogs that are not as desirable as a purebred. Those are the dogs that were being euthanized for time and space here. That is wrong.

When I started here, we immediately adopted a day 8 policy – where we wanted every animal out on day 8 (the day after the state-mandated stray hold). Usually, this meant for us to transfer to a shelter or rescue. MADACC was never supposed to have an adoption program, but because of the large number of

animals we take in here, and the low demand for them by shelters and rescues, we have taken on a limited one to save lives.

We work with our breed rescues and other rescues and shelters very closely. I have worked with the Boston rescue here for years. Many Bostons end up in shelters and have health problems like trachea issues, eye problems, skin problems, incontinence. We do not normally see them here, or in other shelters, but we know that because Bostons are awesome, they are highly desirable. I certainly understand that you do not want to pay the high fees associated with going through a rescue. But, some rescues, especially for small dogs, spend a lot of money on medical care. Italian Greyhound rescue spends thousands on broken legs. They also do not get the donations a shelter like Wisconsin Humane Society will get which is why the higher fees.

The biggest thing to me is that Boston Terrier Rescue (and all the breed rescues we work with) will take EVERY Boston (or their respective breed) out of here, the old, the sick, the injured. I cannot ask them to take only the ones that will eat up their finances without letting them have what one would call a few “easy” ones. Again, being at MADACC one minute longer than an animal has to be is not acceptable to me.

We have people all the time that see expensive and desirable purebred dogs that run down here wanting to adopt them. I do not make exceptions because I know there is no way that for the animal that it is better to stay here the extra time needed to complete an adoption than go to a foster home through a rescue. I am not judging the quality of any home that potential adopters could provide. My concern is for the animal. We work with approved rescues with good reputations, so I know that these dogs will likely end up in a great place and never end up here again.

I think we can help change the way people look at pit bulls and make more people want to adopt them by trying to adopt out the best ones we get in here. Animal welfare is for all animals, not just the ones that are desirable, young or purebred.

While I do sympathize with anyone who is upset or inconvenienced by this change, I am here for almost 13,000 animals a year, and almost a million people in Milwaukee County. I do know that I am doing my job by saving more lives at MADACC and saving the taxpayers who fund this organization money by getting animals out of here as quickly as possible.

Does MADACC actively discourage monetary contributions, and if so, why?

MADACC does not discourage donations of any kind – monetary or in-kind. If someone needs a receipt for taxes we would ask them to donate to the Friends of MADACC who is a not-for-profit group who helps the animals here.

What can we as a community do to help MADACC? So many want to help but don't know how and don't understand what the needs are. How can we assist in getting this message out to the public?

This is a hard question to answer because we are an animal control facility, not a traditional humane society, where we could say that we need donations. The problems we have are high intake numbers,

low reclaim numbers and having high populations of cats and pit bull terriers dogs. We need people to stop breeding pit bull terriers. We need people to start adopting the ones that are already here.

The same goes for cats. Cats seem to be the most disposable of animals and people get them and do not spay or neuter and then they bring in the whole family when the kittens are born.

We need to educate the public about responsible pet ownership and the resources available for free or low cost spay/neuter surgeries. We need to have more animals microchipped and wearing current ID tags. We need to increase the licensing in our community.

We need more shelters and rescues to pull the animals from MADACC after the stray hold is completed for their adoption programs. We get the small dogs out of here fairly easily, but dogs over 40 pounds and cats are always in abundance here. We do not have an adoption floor or the staffing and resources that we would need to operate a large scale adoption program so we really count on the local shelters and rescues to take the animals when they are available.

It would be great for there to be more education and awareness in the community about pit bull terriers. These dogs are wonderful companions and until the public becomes more accepting and knowledgeable about this breed or about pitties in general, they will continue to make up the largest population here at MADACC, and the most at risk. There are many wonderful advocacy programs out there like Animal Farm Foundation who work tirelessly to educate the public about pit bull terriers and have made great strides in other communities and

Lastly, we need to promote what this place is – animal control! If you lose your pet you should call us to tell us. You should come look for your pet here. You should even come in and get your animal back. So many people say that they never heard of us and that means we need to work very hard to reach out into the community to make sure that everyone in Milwaukee County knows that if they lose their best friend they know to come here.

What is the process for a dog getting put on the walk list? Also what is the process and reasons a dog could be removed from the walk list? Who has the authority to put a dog on or take a dog off the list?

Dogs are moved to the walk list based on energy level, health, behavior and the length of time they have been here. All the dogs must have boosted vaccines and a good behavior evaluation. Dogs are removed from the walk list for health and behavior reasons. As far as who has the authority to place animals on the list, our Shelter Manager puts the dogs on the list and keeps it current. However, staff members are required to report any changes in health or behavior to the manager on duty (could be the Veterinarian or another manager) for any animal, including walk list animals and any manager on duty can remove them. Animals who have bitten are automatically removed from the list. In cases where an animal might be very sick they are removed completely or put on a restricted “potty only” schedule where we just take them out to keep their housebreaking skills up.

The following questions were submitted regarding the “Court Case Dogs”:

Are there any policies or procedures in place to ensure these dogs are getting consistent enrichment?

The dogs are given enrichment activities every single day. Everyone agrees that the life they have right now is not what we would want for our own companions. But here they are safe and do not have to fight for their lives.

Is it the decision of the current ED (Karen) or the board, or both, that these dogs are not allowed visitors, enrichment, or alternative living environment?

Neither – this is regulated by state statute. These dogs are not our property and we cannot do anything with them until if and when they are signed over to us. Dogs in programs like the one for court case dogs in Chicago are all signed over by the owners or have been taken away by a judge. That has not happened in this case and until the circumstances warrant they are to be housed here and not permitted to be on the walk list or put into foster care.

What condition are these dogs in physically? What condition are these dogs in mentally? Besides the Wortham case, what are the names of the owners? This should be public information so you need to release this.

Because this case is still pending we are not permitted to give out this information to the public.