madacc

MILWAUKEE AREA DOMESTIC ANIMAL CONTROL COMMISSION

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LISTENING SESSION MINUTES

Meeting of March 24, 2014 – 6:00pm
Meeting held at:
West Milwaukee Community Center
1345 S 47th St.
West Milwaukee, WI 53215

Present:

Ms. Karen Sparapani, Executive Director (MADACC)
Ms. Laura Nigbur, Volunteer Coordinator/Community Outreach Director (MADACC)
Ronald Hayward, MADACC Board President, Operations Committee Member
Paul Ziehler, MADACC Board Treasurer, Operations Committee Member

1. Submitted Questions/Responses

Why are the listening sessions held on such short notice? If you want people to submit questions in advance and attend, they need some time. Why wasn't this listening session announced at the Ops Committee meeting on Tuesday, March 19th? Why wasn't this listening session announced on MADACC's Facebook page?

Actually, this meeting was booked three weeks out and was posted on our website accordingly. The space it was posted is the same exact space it has been on our website for some time, and has the same font as the other items on that part of the website. The Operations Committee decided because of the low attendance we have experienced since the initial listening session (there was one where only one person showed up – and that one, I might add, was posted on Facebook) that we would do these meetings quarterly, which was discussed at an Operations Committee meeting last year. That means that Listening Sessions for 2014 will be held in March, June, September and December. MADACC does not have a Facebook page. The page associated with MADACC is owned by Friends of MADACC, who does most of the postings. The Operations Committee Meetings are not public information sessions, and the board was already notified of when the next Listening Session would be so that they could put it on their calendars to attend if possible, so there was no need to re-discuss it at the meeting, which already had a pretty full agenda with the audit. Our website should always be consulted for news of this nature. Facebook is normally best used for promoting adoption events, feel good stories, and strays.

**The next Listening Session will be held Tuesday, June, 17th at 6pm at the Hales Corners Village Hall in the Meadows Room!

At the Operations Committee meeting on Tuesday, March 19th, Lorraine mentioned that the week of March 10 was a very busy one for dog intake. Yet, only 4 dogs were posted on the Stray Animals of Milwaukee County Facebook page during that week. Is the page going to be only used for dogs that the staff assumes that somebody is looking for? Or will all of the "stray" dogs have an opportunity to be seen and reclaimed by their owners?

The Stray Animals of Milwaukee County FaceBook page was inspired by the Wisconsin Humane Society's Stray Animals of Racine County page. MADACC currently does not have the staff to maintain the page in order to put every single animal on the page. Again, the public should go to our webpage to check the PetHarbor link which is on our page to see a listing of every stray in our custody. The site is maintained solely by the Executive Director and the animals chosen are the ones that happen to come in when she is in the building and can get a photo. This question has given us pause and will provide for some internal discussion about whether the page is actually helpful, or is preventing people from using our main page. As well, it was hoped that Chameleon, our internal animal management software was supposed to be developing a way to interface with either Facebook or Twitter or both. If that happens, we will certainly get every animal up as it will not take staff time to make it happen. Also, it should be noted that MADACC takes in many animals that are not strays every single day. They are what are called "Safe Keeps" – which are brought in for a variety of reasons, and not posted on our PetHarbor site either as we know who the owners are. In fact, on Friday, March 21, we took in 13 pit bulls from two separate residences that are not strays and will not be listed on our website. Just because we have high intake does not mean they are strays.

I am very pleased to see that the Friends of MADACC is hosting a screening of "Guilty till Proven Innocent" at the Oriental Theater in May. I was at the premiere of this movie in the fall and it has great potential to change the minds and hearts of people regarding discrimination against pit bull terriers. Since 4 Milwaukee Counties discriminate against pit bull terriers, and this affects the number of dogs that are able to be adopted out in the county; will the MADACC board and management support repealing the ordinances in those 4 municipalities?

I think the structure of MADACC continues to confound the public who feel that we should simply begin progressive reforms on a county-wide basis when we have no authority to do so. We are a quasi-governmental organization formed to provide holding services for each municipality. We do not have one set of rules. We have 19. MADACC, its management and its board have no ability to recommend, force changes on, or oppose ordinances in any of the municipalities. They are all individual entities which self rule and have every right to operate in the way their government and residents see fit. It is much like the 10th Amendment which guarantees State Sovereignty. If a municipality changes an animal ordinance, MADACC is bound to enforce it as we represent each municipality equally. Should MADACC be asked to give information on any proposed ordinances or the repeal of same, we are duty bound to provide the information asked for and will fully cooperate with any municipality who needs our assistance in developing ordinances and will adhere to those ordinances as that is what we were created to do. Those seeking to change ordinances should do so at the municipal level.

If an outside agency takes over the MADACC adoption program, will the details of the arrangement be made public?

This was an option explored by MADACC at one point, but we have decided that it is not a good fit for us right now. Should that ever become a reality, not only would we be advertising and promoting this new program to anyone who would listen.

What improvements have been made from the UC Davis report? MADACC said they would announce the changes to the public.

Many of the improvements had been made over the year following the receipt of the report. While it should be pointed out that the report contained recommendations, and not items that MADACC had any legal requirement to follow, MADACC as an organization felt that the report made many excellent recommendations and most of them have been implemented. Currently, we have a building improvement plan moving forward and if that building improvement plan is accepted and approved by the board, we will be able to share before the end of the year our updated responses to the report. If the board decides not to make those improvements at this time, the report will have to be adjusted before being made available to the public.

Last year Madacc said it planned to make adjustments to allow all stray hold dogs access to the outside kennels for a part of the day, has that happened? If not, why not?

MADACC did explore a project where new outdoor kennels could be added outside of the large dog kennels that would provide for each animal to be moved outside for cleaning – allowing them to stay away from aerosolized disease during the cleaning process and allowing them to be moved back into their original kennel once it was dry. Once we determined that the board would instead explore a feasibility study that would instead increase the kennel size for each animal and prevent them from having to be moved or exposed to disease in the ways they currently are, we abandoned that original plan and are moving forward with a new plan that will instead provide larger kennels for less stress, improved health, and the kennels will have skylights, fresh air, sound baffling to decrease noise. It seemed to be a far better option and will provide a better quality of life for ALL animals at MADACC including the cats. Moving animals on stray hold or taking them out provides for its own set of dangers. The current outdoor kennels were never considered for that purpose due to the fact that they would be unable to be utilized for the 100+ dogs we have in residence here. They are unable to be effectively cleaned between animals and dried, so they are only used for the dogs off of stray hold who are on the walk list and who are healthy.

Are the volunteers aware of and using the play yards daily for the dogs who can be walked?

All dog walkers are fully aware of the play yards, and some use them, some prefer to walk. This has been a terrible winter for the dogs, but we expect the play yards to be used much more frequently for the dogs this summer and have an SOP for the use of the yard.

First of all congratulations on a wonderful cat adoption event on Saturday 3/22. With Kitten and stray cat season upon us what are some of the options for this huge influx of felines? Going from intake of 250/month to 800/month puts a lot of stress on available resources to transfer and rehome. What can citizens do to help?

Obviously, the biggest thing any cat parent can do is to make sure that their cat is sterilized! Being pregnant is a big reason cats are turned in at MADACC, and the kittens and moms end up here separately or together as well. The cat population is very difficult to handle over the summer months

and it is because of the annual "kitten season" that the public is not aware of because they deal only with the cat in their life, while we get 30 – 50 cats and kittens a day in over the busy months – April – November.

As an organization, MADACC is trying to mobilize help with the influx. We are working with WHS to do some community education and get people to stop turning in their own cat or the kittens their cat had as strays so we can get them immediately into foster or an adoption program. We are increasing the frequency of our cat adoption events in the peak months to be weekly, and having volunteers available each evening to do cat adoptions. Cats are one population that we can improve the outcomes for by beefing up our in-house adoption program and offering kittens to rescues and shelters more quickly.

Additionally, here at MADACC we need more volunteer greeters and as we explore additional opportunities for our cats to meet the public. For instance, we are hoping to start bringing cats to PetSmart soon. We also need people to promote MADACC to friends and family as a place where they can adopt a cat or kitten.

How is the Free Ride Home program going?

The Free Ride Home program is something MADACC has done for years, but never thought to advertise. Now that it is a formal program, I think the staff in general has become far more enthusiastic and we are trying to come up with a way to keep statistics to show the public how it is going. Obviously, if we are bringing animals right home, we are not putting them into the computer, so we have been trying to do it on a manual basis – which is not super reliable.

How is the Home Stretch program going with WHS? Any new revisions or changes in store for 2014?

The HomeStretch program, in the end, proved itself to be unnecessary when it came to dogs, as WHS was able to find ways to take more dogs directly into their program. What we have decided to do is focus more on doing this with cats and kittens. Those populations are easier to foster and having the animals off-site provides us with more space for either incoming or adoptable animals. We are working on some changes right now that will be made soon to the program for when it re-starts as we have more cats in the building. Again, the purpose of this program is to move animals out of our building at the end of stray hold into foster care. We have been pretty good with cats with the UWM program ramping up and the kittens and queens with babies getting moved out quickly.

Do dogs get to burn off shelter stress outside before they are evaluated?

No, that is not part of any behavior assessment protocol that I am aware of, other than allowing a dog to go potty outside first. Many shelters do not even have an outdoor space for that to happen. I think letting them run around outside first would probably get them more worked up and unable to focus on our interactions with them.

Why are dogs being put down for leash reactiveness? When it's a fixable, or at the very least a manageable, behavior. There are tons of studies finding that it doesn't equate to dog/dog aggression.

First of all – NO DOGS ARE BEING EUTHANIZED FOR LEASH REACTIVENESS AT MADACC. That is completely not true, and I am sure that our volunteer dog walkers will vouch for us on that one. Leash reactiveness is very common at MADACC. We are very aware that being an unsocialized fool on a leash

does not mean you have dog aggression. Our behavior assessments are some of the most liberal around because of the fact that we know the dogs are likely showing their worst behavior because of fear and stress while at MADACC.

Are there plans for the front desk to go thru Customer Service orientations or training?

Part of our budget this year included an increase in staff training and ALL departments will be going through more training in an effort to improve our internal functions and our interactions with the public.

Are all the cats, not just the Condo ones, getting socialized daily? Played with, groomed, etc.

All cats are interacted with as much as possible during their stay here. We have the Kitty Concierge each morning who feed and water the cats, talk to them, check on them and let the staff know of any concerns. Of course, the condo cats get more attention, but as we reduce the length of stay here, we are hoping the cats move more quickly into traditional shelters where they will get the space for play and exercise and attention that they love. We can always use more "Kitty Concierge" volunteers to ensure consistent attention each day, especially with kitten season upon us.