



Coachella Valley Animal Campus Commission Meeting (Minutes)

Thursday – August 01, 2024
9:30 a.m.
Commission Meeting
In-Person

Animal Campus Commission

Voting Members

Cathedral City

Nancy Ross
Ernesto Gutierrez (Alternate)

City of Coachella

Denise Delgado
Frank Figueroa (Alternate)

City of Desert Hot Springs

Gary Gardner

City of Indian Wells

Ty Peabody **Vice – Chair**
Dana Reed (Alternate)

City of Indio

Lupa Ramos Amith
Rob Rockwell (Alternate)

City of La Quinta

Steve Sanchez
Kathleen Fitzpatrick (Alternate)

City of Palm Desert

Karina Quintanilla **Chair**
Evan Trubee (Alternate)

City of Rancho Mirage

Michael O’Keefe
Lynn Mallotto (Alternate)

District 4

Supervisor V. Manuel Perez
Esmeralda Perez (Alternate)

Non-Voting Members

Animal Samaritans Ex-Officio

Tom Snyder

Loving All Animals Ex-Officio

Michael Phipps Russell
Shelley Daily (Alternate)

Palm Springs Animal Shelter

Ex- Officio

Dan Rossi
Tamara Hedges

RCDAS Staff

Erin Gettis
Dr. Kimberly Youngberg
Jaclyn Schart
Kasey Saldarelli

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Councilmember Nancy Ross, Cathedral City

2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Animal Campus Commission Meeting was called to order on Thursday, August 01, 2024, at 9:33 a.m. in person by Mayor Pro Tem; Karina Quintanilla (**Chair**), City of Palm Desert.

A roll call was conducted by the Mayor Pro Tem; Karina Quintanilla (**Chair**), City of Palm Desert., and it was determined that there was a quorum. The following were present:

Members in Attendance: Quorum Met

- Cathedral City, Mayor Pro Tem Nancy Ross
- City of Coachella, Councilmember Frank Figueroa
- City of Desert Hot Springs, Councilmember Gary Gardner
- City of Indian Wells, Councilmember Ty Peabody (**Vice Chair**)
- City of Indio, City Rep. Rob Rockwell
- City of La Quinta, Councilmember Steve Sanchez
- City of Palm Desert, Mayor Karina Quintanilla (**Chair**)
- City of Rancho Mirage, Councilmember Michael O’Keefe
- Ex. Officio Tom Snyder, CEO, Animal Samaritans
- Ex. Officio Shelley Daily, Loving All Animals
- Ex. Officio Tamara Hedges, President, Palm Springs Animal Shelter
- County of Riverside, Supervisor V. Manuel Perez, District 4

Staff in Attendance:

- Erin Gettis, Director, RCDAS
- Kim Youngberg, Assist Director of Operations, RCDAS
- Kasey Saldarelli, Executive Assistant, RCDAS
- John Welsh, Public Information Officer RCDAS
- County of Riverside, CEO Jeff Van Wagenen

3. **FINALIZATION OF AGENDA:**

- The agenda was approved to be altered. Unanimous vote by the Commission.
 - Item 1: Pledge of Allegiance
 - Item 2: Call to Order and Roll Call
 - Item 3: Updates to the Agenda
 - Item 4: Commission and Staff Comments
 - Item 5: Public Comments
 - Item 6: Staff Report and Action Items
 - Item 7: Approval of Minutes
 - Item 8: Announcements
- Break 11:54 am - 12:08pm

4. **ANIMAL CAMPUS COMMISSION MEMBERS AND DIRECTOR COMMENTS:**

- **Cathedral City – Mayor Pro Tem Nancy Ross** – Second time attending the Animal Commission, stated that there is so much to learn and that she has so much to give. Looking forward at taking several meetings that are planned, but also opportunities for grants. Would like to move forward elevating that the shelters are safe and that citizens have opportunities to adopt.
- **City of Coachella – Councilmember Frank Figueroa** – Looking forward to seeing the presentation from staff and to discuss city contracts.
- **City of Desert Hot Springs– Gary Gardner** – First meeting with the Commission. DHS does have its own animal control. We use the CVAC facility occasionally.
- **City of Indio – Alternate Rob Rockwell** – Third meeting with the Commission. Looks forward to learning and seeing what can be solved.
- **City of La Quinta – Councilmember Steve Sanchez** – Looks forward to seeing what staff presents. Community has questions about the statistics and what is posted online such as intake/outcomes and euthanasia. Lots of questions need answers.
- **City of Indian Wells – Councilmember Ty Peabody (Vice Chair)** – Has served for 9 yrs. with Indian Wells and 7 yrs. on this Commission. Cities that request services with Department of Animal Services have contracts but also have a choice to contract with Animal Services or not. We as a Commission can make suggestions/recommendations and as a city pay for more services. We have no right or authority on how the County's budget is spent. Suggested that Commissioners should refrain from getting involved with the press for interest of the department as false information can be given if not actively communicating with the Board. We can raise money, support putting associations together. The Thermal hoarding case brought sadness as well as Sky Valley. The County does not have unlimited funds, we can help! We can help educate the public, on proper treatment of animals, but also microchipping and expand spay and neuter services through separate funds. Animal abuse and the dumping of animals is terrible, how is this fair that the department is left with these problems. We need to support the department verses attack them. Solutions and money are needed for change to help the animals.

- **City of Rancho Mirage – Councilmember Michael O’Keefe** – First meeting with the Commission. Has already been given a tour of the facility prior to this meeting and discussed statistics. The pet population is extremely overwhelming. Rancho Mirage is a pet friendly city; we are coordinating an adoption event in October with Animal Services. Prefers that action items be tabled until the next meeting as he doesn’t feel qualified making any decisions on any action items at this time.
- **Ex. Officio Alternate Shelley Daily – Loving All Animals** – Representing Michael Phipps Russell. Mentioned having proposals (actions items) that will not cost a dime which will benefit the entire Coachella Valley but will also bring a bright star to this campus.
- **Ex. Officio Tamara Hedges – Palm Springs Animal Shelter President** – Been around a long time, it’s been a heavy haul. We are the odd duck around here. We have not contracted with the County, flying solo. Took over the contract for the City of Palm Springs in 2012. From day one we have been no kill. Many things go into being no kill, people, place, programs, and funding. Proud of our work and have served since 2008. Brought a fact sheet. Facts are important, we are extremely transparent about our budget and euthanasia.
- **Ex. Officio Tom Snyder – Animal Samaritans CEO** – Going to save some comments with good news in terms of actions and efforts made daily with Animal Samaritans.
- **Riverside County Supervisor V. Manuel Perez** – Excited to be at the Commission. We are seeing a combination of concerns and challenges. It’s time we deal with them but not just here in Coachella Valley but also throughout County of Riverside. Our hope with the ad hoc committee has been a result of conversation with folks to take a systematic approach to respond to the concerns that we are facing in Coachella Valley and the County of Riverside. This is the only way to identify the resources, the partnerships, the good work that has been done. Other efforts that need to be done for us to be in a better place is to become a county that is known as no kill which will require some work. Some of my colleagues have spoken and will have more ideas later in this meeting. Its ultimately going to require all of us, I’m asking that we all engage and potentially be a team. This is my first opportunity engaging at this degree on this specific issue, everyone cares. A list has been created from the ground up, it’s coming from discussions with individuals over the last couple of months. With strong ideas, we can work together, we can win. Work with me!
- **Riverside County CEO Jeff Van Wagenen** – Nothing to add to Supervisors comments.
- **City of Palm Desert Mayor Pro Tem Karina Quintanilla (Chair)** – Concerns about what we do and what we do not do. Discussed Bylaws; Article 9 Duties and Powers, section E & J. This community for a long time has been expressing some concerns. It is within our capacity and our duty to establish and escalate these concerns. When asked for a budget, it was not for a personal payment or of any personal gain, but to request video conferencing technology (Owl Method). It would provide the transparency that the community has been requesting. There has been a concern about the duration of meetings. When attendance is an issue, the Commission cannot conduct any business that requires a vote. Mrs. Saldarelli sends out reminder emails repeatedly. It is problematic when a commissioner cannot attend and doesn’t notify their alternate. With the new people that have joined, seeing a new energy. As chair, meetings give us the opportunities to discuss our challenges and achievements. Generated questions regarding data, people claim personal gain. Doing my job is my only agenda. This is about saving the lives of pets and ensuring state laws county mandates.

Public comment will be held at 3 minutes, as we want to serve and provide support. We need more transparency, to fulfill our mission.

- **RCDAS Director Erin Gettis** – In order to have our Commission meetings at a new location, we would need to request modification of the By-laws as it specifies the locations of where we are right now. PowerPoint Presentation Partially Presented:
 - 5 Year Plan – With Board support, we added to our vet services for our San Jacinto Shelter, Coachella Valley Campus, and our health equity bus. Today, we have a veterinarian on-site and have a contract service with Animal Samaritans. We have other contract veterinarians outside of operating hours if we have emergencies come up. There is always vet staff on site every day. In the future, we will be requesting support from the board to ask for additional vet surgeon teams to man our second bus. The first bus arrived late last year and is already in use.
 - Deputy Director of Shelter Operations Jaclyn Schart: Lead the team for our 60-dog transport flight. Started off with only 25 dogs, more partners and more community members reaching out to other receiving shelters in the pacific northwest. Several of those dogs were from the Sky Valley case. These were dogs that were being overlooked. Wings of Rescue was the transport service. We also have amazing champions in the valley and across Riverside County who have fundraised to help get these flights directly. We have another one scheduled for the end of August, about 25 dogs as of now. Volunteer, Lauren Mikinnis & family donated generously to allow the next flight to happen along with Jennifer Hamilton and others in the valley who have donated to Wings of Rescue to facilitate these lifesaving transports. Malinda Bustos with Canine Society of the Desert helped fund part of the first transport. We also had a group of local advocates able to help transport 8 large dogs to various rescues.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- Leni Jacobs – Concerns regarding Animal Services budget of 34 million and why is only 2 million of it being used to care for the animals.
- David Kirk – Commissioners should challenge RCDAS claim of 97% live release rate for cats at CVAC, and the manipulation of data. Submitted written comment.
- Halina Calimas – Why has this been going on for so long. How much does the rendering company get for each animal that is killed. Why have you not utilized the lot next store. Follow the money train. Staff training is needed. A single hand out was shared – What you can do to help!
- Anthony Desena – Supports No Kill, appreciates all efforts.
- Janet McAfee – Appreciates all fosters and everyone for helping. Thanked Ty Peabody for an off-site event and Steve Sanchez for sponsoring spay and neuter event.
- Laurie Deane – Concur with all that's been said. Supports no kill. Expand the space. It's time for change.
- Cheryl Mittry – Minutes given to Joyce Cain.
- Lisa Blodgett – Profound sadness and anger. Remove Erin Gettis, legal liability. Animals have been killed under her leadership. Follow the Hayden Act and transparency is needed. Community is skeptical. Follow Palm Springs as they have a track record of success.
- Joyce Cain – For the record, Larry Boima has given up public comment of 3 minutes to Joyce Cain. Animals have feelings. Best Friends tried working with Riverside to make change.

Called Erin Gettis for an appointment, it never happened. Hurricane Hillary – Made the connection with Big Dog Ranch Rescue Sanctuary (Laurie Simmons Owner) to take 150 large dogs. Animal Services declined the offer. Two handouts were passed around. Continued with extra time given by Lisa Jeffrey. Explains the euthanasia process. Passed around a map with pilots with planes. Meetings are meaning less if nothing is put forth.

- Linda Talley – Community can do better! We must pursue a no kill policy to protect the animals. We should follow Palm Springs Animal Shelter.
- Erin Hyland – Thanked staff for all their kindness. Staff will help you; I implore each and everyone of you to foster or adopt, it's easy and simple. We need more free clinics in our cities. Sponsor the clinic. It's not a shelter problem, it is a human behavior problem. Educate your people. Space is needed. One shelter is not enough. Cities should build their own shelters.
- Wendy Walker – Left Commission meeting.
- Susan Gugardo – Left Commission meeting.
- Maxine Silverstone – Shocked that the shelter was overcrowded. No one was available to assist when arriving at the shelter. Where is the money going. Do something for the animals.
- Stephen Nelson – Treatment of animals is not paramount. I will take measures with my HOA to help the animal shelter. Be leaders, get the job done, lets save the animals.
- Lisa Jeffrey – Director of Animal Services needs to be removed based on performance. Transparency is needed. Will yield the remaining time of 2 min. and 27 seconds to Joyce Cain.
- Mike Harrington – Most of the budget goes to salaries and medical. Concerned with euthanasia, rendering TLC contract. The shelter is profiting from animals.
- Amy Bianco – Adopted from CVAC and Animal Samaritans. We need to do more for the animals.
- Kim Hardee – Been teaching spay and neuter since 2013. Started spay and neuter clinics. Trying to help pets stay with their owners. We need to change policy and procedures.
- Jill Kroesen – Free adoption events should be a priority. Dogs are in a lot of discomfort from the noise.
- Wendy Henjer – Cats and Kittens need toys, please help donate supplies.
- Tiffany Lobue – Issues with breaking laws and Hayden Act. Where is city leadership?
- Ginny Foat – Promoting for a no kill shelter. Follow Palm Springs Animal Shelter.
- Brad Anderson – Submitted public comment for agenda Item 5 and 6. Board of Supervisors needs to address all concerns. Bring cost down. Supporting a no kill shelter.
- Christine Zeqler – Requesting microchips when pets are adopted. Yielding remaining time of 2min. and 27 sec.
- C.R. Craig – Urgent need for change regarding moral failure. It's a complex situation. It's not conducive for the public that commissioners do not post on their website. The press is not the enemy. Bring resources to bring the key issues to the light.
- Judy Garland – Future planes are needed. Questions on budget, Director of Animal Services, Transparency, and the press not being able to participate. Passion is needed. Appreciate the Mayor of Palm Desert.
- Renee Coffey – Yielding time of 3 minutes to Paulina Kallimanis.
- Paulina Kallimanis - 3 extra minutes were given by Renee Coffey. Passed out a petition for the removal of Director of Animal Services. All volunteers should be receiving credit. Erin Gettis has no qualifications. Recognized Lauren Mikinnis.

- Alan Woodruff – Ad Hoc Committee is redundant. Change is needed. Stop the killing. We are on the offense. The Hayden Law is being abused.

(*Written Comments)

- * Ty Peabody
- * Lisa Blodgett
- * R. McGrath
- * David Kirk
- * Tiffany Lobue
- * Joyce Cain
- * Mary Strong
- * Judy Garland
- * Michael Harrington
- * Sharon Mastropietro Malone
- * Mary Prevost
- * Brad Anderson
- * Lori Rich

6. STAFF REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS:

There was motion by Vice Chair Ty Peabody and seconded by Frank Figueroa to advance Items 1, 2 and 8.

Agenda Item 1: Consideration to change dates for the Coachella Valley Animal Campus Commission.

- ✓ Motion unanimously approved for bi-monthly commission Meetings.

Agenda Item 2: Review of the operating budget and request for commission budget.

- ✓ Motion and sub-motion unanimously approved for an extension.
 - Animals Services shared a budget presentation. Completed up to slide 3.
 - Budget Overview 24/25 budget \$34,393,460
 - Mark Sigman (Finance Manager) Animal Services discussed sub funds. The two sub funds are money that is set aside for specific purposes. If used, it is placed in the general funds and continues to roll over year after year – it's a mechanism to move money. Every month the county publishes a list of funds on their budget items.
 - Vice Chair Ty Peabody motioned to not have a budget (no fees or expenses to the Commission) and that all funds should go the animals. Seconded by Nancy Ross.
 - Steve Sanchez discussed having the cities put their monies together as separate budget. Put this on the agenda discuss own budget. Separate from the County.
 - Chair Karina Quintanilla motioned a sub-committee that allows have commission dedicated to projects. Education sub-committee.
 - Supervisor Perez recommends providing a list for the Ad Hoc Committee to determine what is needed to support efforts.
 - Loving All Animals – possible line item.

- Jeffrey Van Wagenen – The Commission should put a request of items together and we will work to fund the list of requests, instead of a line item in the budget for x dollars. Context, we would like to hear what the Commission is recommending and try to meet the Commission needs.
- Rob Rockwell sub-motioned Ty Peabody’s motion. Recommending budget for Coachella Valley. Details are suggested to prioritize to the needs of the Commission. Karina to share information with Rob. Being able to see expenditures with this campus and other county campuses is important.
- Director Erin Gettis reiterated that the remaining presentation provides a breakdown of this campus as well as expected fees. Would like to provide this information to the Commission next time.

Chair Karina Quintanilla motioned to push the balance of the remaining items to a future date respecting everyone’s time. Affirmative vote from all Commissioners.

Agenda Item 3: Approve establishment of a new Commission Orientation.

Agenda Item 4: Approve creation of an education committee and 4 proposed educational sessions.

Agenda Item 5: Request funding from BOS for support of education sessions by education committee.

Agenda Item 6: Update of state legislation impacting animal welfare.

Agenda Item 7: Study session/workshop schedule and status.

Agenda Item 8: Remote attendance of commission meetings.

CONTINUATION OF ITEM 4 ANIMAL CAMPUS UPDATES (HEARD LATER IN MEETING)

- **Tom Snyder:** Working with Riverside as Animal Samaritans is under renovations for a new surgery suite. The process remodeling will take up to 6 months. Being able to spay and neuter at the Coachella Valley Shelter will help control some of the over population. New rescue coordinator: Maddie, doing a great job thus far! Michelle Bergeron retired. Did have a conversation with Wings of Rescue to be able to offer spay and neuter plans to transport. Received a check from Houston Foundation last month for \$50,000, grant focusing on large dog spay and neuter for East Valley for the next twelve months. A big thanks to Lauren Mikinnis as she has donated generously our organization.
- **Tamara Hedges:** A two-sided Impact report was given, and the budget was over \$6 million to operate. We have 62 employees, and our population is high. Our census is the highest it has been in past 6 yrs. It is extremely hard to pull from other shelters, we have not had room for the last year in half. Our shelter is designed for 168 animals. We need sanctuaries and assistance with animals not coming into the shelter. We give transparency as you can see that we had to euthanize two dogs this year for at risk behavior. Everyone should be providing free microchips. We offer affordable spay and neuter as well as community pet meals.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Minutes from May 02, 2024, were approved.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next Animal Campus Commission Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 03, 2024; at 9:30 a.m. in person at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:46 p.m.