



Coachella Valley Animal Campus Commission Meeting (Minutes)

Thursday – December 05, 2024
9:30 a.m.
Commission Meeting
In-Person

Animal Campus Commission

Voting Members

Cathedral City

Nancy Ross
Mark Carnevale (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

Charissa Leach
Dr. Kimberly Youngberg
Kasey Saldarelli
Kristen Hassen (Consultant)

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Councilmember Gary Gardner, Desert Hot Springs.

2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Animal Campus Commission Meeting was called to order on Thursday, December 05, 2024, at 9:37 a.m. in person by Mayor; Karina Quintanilla (**Chair**), City of Palm Desert.

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

Members in Attendance: Quorum Met

- Cathedral City, Mayor Mark Carnevale
- City of Coachella, Councilmember Frank Figueroa
- City of Desert Hot Springs, Councilmember Gary Gardner
- **Vice Chair:** City of Indian Wells, Councilmember Ty Peabody
- City of Indio, Mayor Lupa Ramos Amith (Not Present)
- City of La Quinta, Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick (Alternate)
- **Chair:** City of Palm Desert, Mayor Karina Quintanilla
- City of Rancho Mirage, Councilmember Michael O’Keefe
- County of Riverside, Supervisor V. Manuel Perez, District 4

Ex. Officio’s in Attendance:

- Tom Snyder, CEO, Animal Samaritans (Not Present)
- Michael Phipps Russell, Loving All Animals
- Tamara Hedges, President, Palm Springs Animal Shelter
- Dan Rossi, Executive Director, Palm Spring Animal Shelter

Staff in Attendance:

- Charissa Leach Asst. County Exec. Officer, RCDAS
- Kim Youngberg, Interim Director, RCDAS
- Kristen Hassen (Outcomes for Pets), Outside Consultant for RCDAS
- Kasey Saldarelli, Executive Assistant and Commission Sect., RCDAS

3. Election of Chair (February 2025):

- The election of officers took place and Mayor Nancy Ross, Cathedral City was voted Chair (5/3), and Councilmember Steve Sanchez, City of La Quinta was voted Vice-Chair (7/1).

4. Updates to the Agenda: No updates brought forward.

5. Approval of Minutes: Motion passed with approval of minutes for October 03, 2024.

6. Staff Reports and Action Items: No Staff Reports or Actions were submitted.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Joyce Cain – Handout given. Joyce describes the experience of animals in the shelter. Suggested that the shelter be NO KILL. Two speakers (Larry Bolman and Cheryl Mitty) have yielded their time to Joyce Cane.

Larry Bolman – Yielded time to Joyce Cane.

Cheryl Mitty – Yielded time to Joyce Cane.

Judy Garland – Doubts that members care enough about the animals. Animal Services is not doing enough. Judy stressed the importance of spay and neuter.

Erin Hyland – Suggested that we must come up with solutions for larger dogs to be adopted and fostered. Staff need accountability. Double size of facilities. All animals need to be spayed or neutered.

Ev Levin – Opposed contract with Outcomes for Pets. Hire staff. Expand shelter and educate the public.

Tiffany Lobue – The animals deserve better. Lead with compassion. Revoke contract.

Leslie Locken – Explained her own personal story of fostering a dog.

David Kirk – A solution needs to be found for the kill rate that takes place. Revoke contract.

Kim Hardy – Expressed the importance of spay and neuter and how education is needed.

Lisa Blodgett – Supervisor Perez is not participating enough.

Rudy Kazooty – Plans on being a future speaker. The attorney general will be notified. The books have been cooked. Revoke the contract.

Janet McAfee – Against the contract with Hassen. Build more kennels. Hire pet counselors. Staff are doing a good job at the shelters. Dog trainers can help! (Marie Marcinko yielded time to Janet McAfee)

Georgia – Concerned for the voting of Chairs that are not present. Cancel contract with Outcomes for Pets.

Marie Marcinko – Yielded time to Janet McAfee.

Peggy Crowley – Discussed the process of euthanasia. Cancel the contract with Hassen. Open shelters on Sunday. Lower cost of surrendering fees.

Christine Ziegler – Use taxpayers funds for animal care. (submitted only)

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(*Written Comments)

- * Lindi Biggi
- *Joyce Cane

8. ANIMAL CAMPUS COMMISSION MEMBERS AND DIRECTOR COMMENTS:

➤ 8.1 Commission Members

- **City of Indio – Mayor Lupa Ramos Amith or Alternate Jonathan Nicks** – (Not Present)
- **Cathedral City – Councilmember Mark Carnevale** – Left Commission 10:15am.
- **Desert Hot Spring - Gary Gardner** – Left Commission at 10:35am. I appreciate all the work you all do. Have a good holiday. Folks in the audience, keep up the good fight.
- **City of Coachella – Councilmember Frank Figueroa** – Discussed personal experience with humane euthanasia. How can we provide a caring animal campus for our surrounding communities? Private facilities are too expensive. How do we collaborate? We do not have a dog park in Coachella. The 12% that did not get spay/neutered, how do we go after that? Maybe we should provide a mobile clinic for 20-pound dogs! In Coachella, they like bigger dogs as a safety net.
- **City of La Quinta – Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick** – Councilmember Steve Sanchez had a government meeting and is truly dedicated to serving on the Commission and seeking a community resolution. The City of La Quinta relies on the County for animal services as we cannot hold our own shelter. We are paying a full cost recovery contract with the County. All of us want to see a resolution that all of our community members/residents can live with. This is about education. Community service officers would do a world of good with education and enforcement as we expect this in our contract. There were great ideas from some of our public speakers. Everyone would like to see a solution that everyone can agree upon. As the alternate, I will be present when Steve Sanchez is unavailable.
- **Riverside County Supervisor V. Manuel Perez** - Great ideas have been brought forward. I'm working with my colleagues at the Board of Supervisors to get us where we all want to be and at the same time trying to figure out how to improve the situation for our cities. My colleagues are also looking at their districts and aiming at a no kill zone. It is unfortunate to hear the stories of those who have lost their pets or have gone to a county facility and did not have the best experience. We will do better!

The numbers, the data points need to be able to be presented to you all on a consistent basis if provided on the internet, or with DAS or council members. Kathleen Fitzpatrick-La Quinta brought up a good point regarding “What are we paying for?” Cost recovery – cities are paying a certain amount of funding but what is being received. Let’s be partners and work together to get to a place where potentially we can say that we have done a better job and are getting closer to a no kill area.

Our meetings at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus are not conducive for everyone to be here. We should be able to see everyone eye to eye. We will be working with our cities as well as the community centers to see where we can host our ongoing meetings. (Cont. Page 4)

I would like to move forward with some type of audit, I heard someone mention an external forensic audit. An internal audit is one potential idea, but some might see no truth. I am interested in increasing spay and neuter clinics. Everybody here is doing their part, but we can do more!

We will be launching a campaign, and we need to do it loudly. I aim to have spay and neuter clinics weekly, but it all comes down to the data. I appreciate the cities for stepping up and being a part of the solution and ensuring that we are providing that type of effort. We also have some folks here that have been doing spay and neuter for quite some time, and it's much appreciated. We have non-profit organizations and others that raise the money on their own and they figure out a way to have 200 people seen. We should be learning from them and continue those projects.

I am concerned about the 72-hour hold and want to know more about the length of stay in the shelter before euthanasia is considered. We need to work with our communities and invite them into our shelters. Why is the shelter not open on Sunday? Can we shift the budget to accommodate staying open on Sunday?

The idea of a 2-million-dollar contract continues to be brought up and I will be bringing that back to my colleagues for discussion. I would like everyone to have access to the budget, specifically the line-itemized budget. People have asked how funding is coming to Coachella Valley verses going to the Western Riverside shelter. People should know these numbers. The numbers are provided but not through a budget where people can see where the money is going and how it is being spent. We need to continue to advocate for the animals and do a better job.

Unannounced, I visited the Coachella Valley Animal Campus on Saturday and walked the shelter viewing the animals and was able to talk to staff. I met Marisa, the shelter manager, and she has been with the County for 26 years. We all need to be leaders and build a positive culture for Riverside County and ensure the community we care. I look forward to setting up a meeting with staff to listen to their opinions and hear their concerns. I want to know how we can improve and what is needed to be successful for the animals and our constituents. Please work with me.

We ask that you look over the budget provided, we want to hear your feedback. We as a Commission have agreed to alternating locations and I would like to consult our IT department about their expertise in equipment needed to be able to have our meetings in real time.

The budget is 9 million. Are there specific areas to target spay and neuter clinics? How can we identify locations where we can try to hit hard areas? Instead of people coming to the shelter, let's bring the clinics to needed areas of concern. It is up to each city and their ordinances with backyard breeding. I can have a policy typed up, but if the cities are not going to enforce it, then it is out of our jurisdiction. I ask that you take this back to your community to discuss. Charging individuals for citations is probably not the best plan when it could be used on spay and neuter services for in-home pets. So rather than having a fee, I think we need to start educating and providing services at low cost/free or we will end up in the same situation. There will always be folks who abuse
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the system, but we need to focus on the people who really need help! Michael Phipps Russell's efforts and knowledge along with his expertise of this Commission gets the attention of the public and they listen. I know Michael will improve our situation.

- **City of Indian Wells - Councilmember Ty Peadbody (Vice Chair)** – Supervisor Perez has asked me to serve on the Ad-Hoc committee. Raised \$40,000 when the shelter was flooded. Attacking people does not solve problems. Give credit to people who work hard. The supervisor is dedicated and working towards the issues and putting together a comprehensive plan both short/long term with updates on a regular basis. Covid changed everything. I appreciate Supervisor Perez and his team's efforts. Please reach out with any information or recommendations. We will solve the problem!
- **City of Rancho Mirage – Councilmember Michael O'Keefe** – Rancho Mirage is a pet friendly city, and we had great success with our rescue rally. My email suggests that we participate every month. I have received several complaints about the contract and am unable to respond to them. We need regular feedback or progress reports so we can tell residents within our cities the plan and what we are doing to achieve those plans. There is a huge demand for spay and neuter. The city of Rancho Mirage has offered its chambers for upcoming meetings.
- **City of Palm Desert Mayor Karina Quintanilla (Chair)** – I look forward to receiving the itemized budget that can be shared with the public. Suggested that handheld chip readers should be available at fire stations. I would also like to see the Commission be held at other locations. Another issue of concern is the technology for the public to have access to view these Commission meetings online. Since February, we have been told that a fee study is in the works! This becomes problematic as I don't feel like I can support a 3-year budget without a fee study. It is beneficial to know what services are being received. Transparency is needed.

We should prioritize spay and neuter clinics at dog parks. Short term solution, people do not know that food banks receive pet food donations. I believe it is under reported by the public who can keep an animal in their home. Asked for the county's support with encouraging and eliminating the barriers that keep pets from being able to enter subsidy housing. Some people will lie and say it is a service animal. A lot of high schools have health academics that can help with intake or have large advocacy. Puppy mills are a county wide issue with a source of income for some people, it also results in inbreeding. We need a county wide policy in place. Palm Desert recently had a study session.

➤ **8.2 Riverside County Department of Animals Services**

- **RCDAS Interim Director Kimberly Youngberg** – Department of Animal Services has found a location at the Thousand Palms Community center for future meetings. An itemized budget is in your packet. This information is offered electronically if needed, please reach out to Commission Secretary Kasey Saldarelli. We also have a map of the 4th districts territory. There are links on the website for all information. We wanted to highlight SB1233 that passed requiring veterinary medical schools to provide high quality spay neuter certificate programs as elective coursework and to be offered to veterinary professionals. We are working on an orientation handbook and hoping to have it ready by the next meeting in February. (Cont. Page 6)

There has been a lot of discussion around euthanasia, so we have included a handout on those procedures. Information on renters with pets should be on the RCDAS website. There has been great success in targeted spay/neuter. Canvassing has been successful. Many animals we encounter are from unintended litters. This population usually gets a dog from their neighbor. As a county, we have an ordinance that if their pet gets out and they are not spay/neutered or licensed, we do enforce mandatory altering. Many residents do not get altering services because they cannot afford it. We do limit the number of animals that you are allowed to have without a kennel permit (4 dogs and 9 cats). The problem is identifying and enforcing the individuals.

- **Outcomes for Pets – Kristen Hassen** – Shelter updates for October are on the DAS website. Many recommendations have been discussed with the Department of Animal Services. One recommendation was to stop the unnecessary euthanasia of cats. Our cat numbers for euthanasia are 4K less than the previous year. I am ultimately concerned about the dog intakes numbers as they have increased. We need to bring in national experts. The problem with animal welfare right now is that there is a shortage of animal shelter directors and veterinarians. We will provide the public with monthly data reports for intakes, outcomes, and length of stays. We are bringing in resources and will get this right! We want to craft a plan of what the community wants and needs.
- **Companion Animal Survey by Daniel Polk** – presented PowerPoint. With our final report we will conduct extra analysis to see geographical differences.

➤ **8.3 Ex-Officio Members**

- **Ex. Officio Tamar Hedges – Palm Springs Animal Shelter** – The presentation from Companion Animal Survey is useful information when we are looking at our own programs and determining what grants to go after. I was a little surprised at the HOA question as it comes in extremely low on the survey, but it is very high at our shelter. We often hear that people cannot have a certain size, number, or breed of canine. The landlord issue is greater than what came out in the survey. Low incomes areas are the way to go for spay/neuter clinics. It is important that people understand the numbers of Palm Springs. Our budget has been provided for each of you in the handout provided. Please consider meeting with us, we would love to explain how we took Palm Springs Animal Shelter from high kill to no kill. We did not sign a contract with anyone, we hired an executive director. It was an investment. Volunteers are essential in lifesaving.
- **Ex. Officio Dan Ross – Palm Springs Animal Shelter** – Palm Springs Animal Shelter is strayed beyond its borders. This is not something we can do long term. We implore that this committee really work hard to fix things so that the entire valley can be no kill. We are committed to doing more! We are in the process of doing what is required to open our other facility in early 2025. We are partnering with Desert Hot Springs to reopen the old Humane Society. We hope to bring low-cost veterinary care.
- **Ex. Officio Tom Snyder – Animal Samaritans CEO** – Not Present
- **Ex. Officio Alternate Michael Phipps Russell – Loving All Animals** – The statistic that stood out from the survey was the animals that were going from household to household. (Cont. Page 7)

The number is significant from being opposed to shelter to household, so there are no alter services being provided. It is likely the number will increase. We had a great turn-out for our pasta luncheon and raised funds of \$163,000 and \$80,000 have been allocated to spay/neuter. I want to thank Palm Spring, DAS, Traveling Pawz and Animal Action League. I have concerns about stats on the website. I intend to submit agenda items for policy changes, review of contracts definition of – treatable 1834 and make recommendations for euthanasia services. Suggested a change in the contract to better reflect a more consistent policy. I think we should be engaging the cities beforehand and including them as part of the discussion. The education committee was authorized to hold workshops. Those workshops discussed licensing and euthanasia policy. We are still waiting for updates.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next Animal Campus Commission Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 06, 2025; at 9:30 a.m. in person (location TBD).

10. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:16 p.m.