



# Coachella Valley Animal Campus Commission Meeting (Minutes)

**Thursday – May 02, 2024**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Commission Meeting**  
**In-Person**

## Animal Campus Commission

### 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

Meg Marker  
Lynn Mallotto (Alternate)

### Animal Samaritans

#### Ex-Officio

Tom Snyder

### Loving All Animals

#### Ex-Officio

Michael Phipps Russell

### Palm Springs

#### Animal Shelter

#### Ex-Officio

Dan Rossi  
Tamara Hedges

### District 4

Supervisor V. Manuel Perez  
Alexis Perez

### RCDAS Staff

Erin Gettis  
Dr. Kimberly Youngberg  
Jaclyn Schart  
Kasey Saldarelli

## **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Councilmember Steve Sanchez, City of La Quinta**

## **2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The Animal Campus Commission Meeting was called to order on Thursday, May 02, 2024, at 9:39 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 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 Pro Tem Karina Quintanilla (**Chair**)
- Ex. Officio Dan Rossi, Executive Director, Palm Springs Animal Shelter
- Ex. Officio Tamara Hedges, President, Palm Springs Animal Shelter
- Ex. Officio Tom Snyder, CEO, Animal Samaritans
- Ex. Officio Michael Phipps Russell, Loving All Animals
- County of Riverside, Alexis 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

## **3. FINALIZATION OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved and altered to reflect item 7 before item 6 for interest of time. Two 5-minute breaks were given at 10:19 a.m. and 11:38 a.m.

#### 4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- The Minutes from August 03, 2023, were approved.
- Lack of Quorum November 02, 2023
- Lack of Quorum February 01, 2024

5. **STAFF REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS:** Motion approved for additional non-profit Ex-Officio member Micheal Phipps Russell with Loving All Animals to sit at the table of the commission.

#### 6. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- ❖ The bylaws allow for 3 minutes per person public comments per Article XV. Order of Meetings, 7a.ii. Chair Quintanilla clarified that according to Article XV. Order of Meetings 7a.v., the Chair could limit time when cumulative comments, repeat comments or a large amount of people signed up to speak in order to help the Commission conduct business timely - limiting per person public comments to 1 minute. It was agreed upon at the meeting after concern from the public and in discussion with staff to allow 3 minutes per speaker.
  - Janet McAfee – Constituents are faced with landlord issues, promote the shelter, get your city to help with spay/neuter. Adopt a shelter dog. Be part of the solution and volunteer. In support of adding ex-officio Loving All Animals.
  - Christine S. – Educate trap/neuter & release, improve your foster program, more public outreach, feasible medical is needed.
  - Kelly Jackson – RCDAS website needs improvement with public pleas and needs rescue. Kennels need signs if at risk.
  - Tanya Petrovana – Years ago, raised funds for spay/neuter. A system in place would be a solution. Hard to volunteer at county shelters as euthanasia takes place. The system needs to be upgraded. I was on the board at Palm Springs, they have the solution.
  - Kim Hardy – Low-cost spay/neuter exist. We have a shortage of veterinarians to perform surgeries. Our communities face a big problem. Every city needs to subsidize. Coachella Animal Network has performed 23,000 surgeries.
  - David Kirk – Animal Services is non-compliant with food and Agriculture Code 32003. Forensic Audit needed for inaccurate records.
  - Alan Woodruff – Why no quorum for two quarters. Appreciation to all Commissioners. Mary Strong and Fred Rogan brought us together.
  - Erin Hyland – Our system for animal service needs change. All animals should be spay/neuter, help rescues, incentivize landlords & subsidize to allow pets. Vet schools, push more funding towards education. All animals deserve a chance. Get a robust foster program. Breeding is a huge problem.<sup>21</sup>
  - Mike Harrington – Shelter is not working efficiently to help citizens nor reduce shelter population. Get other involved to see results.
  - Wes Castles – People are willing to spend money to transform the shelter.
  - Lisa Labowskie – Free spay/neuter clinics should be offered; shelter should be open on Sundays. Stop with false statements. RCDAS needs to be transparent, no response to Mary Strong.
  - Laurie Deane – Educate, host adoption events, stop euthanasia and transport more animals to other shelters.

- Judy Garland – No more euthanasia, volunteer efforts are not brought forward, and educate the children. Responsibilities are tremendous and must be met.  
(Cont. Public Comments Pg. 3)
- Nicki Axten – Transparency is needed. Stop with false advertisement. Field officers need to spend time educating the public or give fines/warnings. Implement mandatory spay/neuter for your county jurisdiction.
- Joyce Lowder – A crime is taking place. Too many animals are labeled as sick and being euthanized. Who approves Euthanasia and what is the criteria?
- Dan Mcfrath – Biggest problem is communications. The animals are voiceless, we must do better!
- Debbie McCurry – The shelter should give free vaccines & chips. More transparency with red list. More resources for spay/neuter.
- C.R. Craig – Health certificates should be provided. The commission should meet more frequently. This meeting should be live so people can watch.
- Lisa Blodgett – Shelter needs to change inside & out. Consider a new director. Taxpayers spend millions of dollars. RCDAS refuses to change. Education is needed. No euthanasia on adoptable pets. New director needed with supporting efforts.
- Tiffani LoBue – Looking for accountability and transparency from RCDAS.
- Fred Saurident – This is a people problem. Education is needed to control breeding. Free spay/neuter should be offered to the public. CVAC can be a voice for practices on euthanasia. Lots of dumping/abandonment of animals by the public.
- Michelle Valle – Stop euthanasia on adoptable dogs. Shelter services are bad and shelter never picks up phone.
- Kirk Geiger – We have a massive need for animal welfare education. spay/neuter mandates on East Valley. Shelter needs to open on Sunday.
- Brad Anderson – Transparency is important. Many problems are avoidable.

#### (\*Written Comments)

- \* Brad Anderson – In support of adding ex-officio Loving All Animals. Accurate records must be kept along with transparency for the public. Notification of euthanasia must improve.
- \* Meg Marker – A comprehensive summary of how Rancho Mirage support the Coachella Valley Animal Campus.
- \* Sharon Mastropietro – Supports for a No Kill shelter withing a year, rectify the volunteer page, no quorum needs to be addressed, and exploring compensation for rescues.
- \* Jessica Klein – Policies need to be changed such as euthanasia, communications, and working with rescues.
- \* David Kirk - Animal Services is non-compliant with food and Agriculture Code 32003. Forensic Audit needed for inaccurate records.

#### 7. ANIMAL CAMPUS COMMISSION MEMBERS AND DIRECTOR COMMENTS:

- **City of Indian Wells – Councilmember Ty Peabody (Vice Chair)** – There are many problems for everyone. Director Erin Gettis faces budget restraints, staffing, and spay/neuter issues. There is a shortage of veterinarians. When funding is not available, these types of problems cannot be solved. The public cannot afford to spay/neuter. Shelter must take in animals daily from back door breeders. Animals Samaritan's has a low-cost spay/neuter program. This must be

a coordinated community effort to make change. I raised 40,000 when the shelter was flooded from the hurricane. Do not complain if you are not part of the solution. There are too many irresponsible people. Shelter statistics are accessible online. Leaves Commission at 12:32 p.m.

- **City of La Quinta – Councilmember Steve Sanchez** – Would like to see the overall operating budget and how it is utilized. Requesting commission to establish a budget. Questioned 2023 intake of 32K. We must think logically to solve issues. We all want the mission to be completed, but with efforts come cost. Animals are not gifts. More access to spay/neuter should be available. County and cities have limited funding and more should be added for CVAC. Education is crucial to reduce euthanasia unless medically necessary. We must investigate the cost of buses in the communities. Full analysis on outreach. CVAC to Blythe is 2 hours in distance, stretched too thin, possible regional problem. Cities should hire more officers. Cities should get together like CVAG. Non-profit efforts are amazing. Committed to help solve this crisis. Need independent funding source. Will work on suggestion from community. We must seek ways to support CVAC. Portal on county website to send red list to rescues, sign up to be on the distribution list.
- **Cathedral City – Mayor Pro Tem Nancy Ross** - First day at commission. Excited to learn more!
- **City of Coachella – Councilmember Frank Figueroa** – Would like to see the overall operating budget and how it is utilized in all aspects. Requesting commission to establish a budget. First day at CVAC Commission, alternate for his city. Would like to see cost of owner surrenders in the operating budget. Where are funds utilized. Had a personal experience with trap/neuter & release.
- **City of Palm Desert Mayor Pro Tem Karina Quintanilla (Chair)** Would like to see the overall operating budget and how it is utilized. Requesting commission to establish a budget. Need to look at factual data. COD has a vet tech program. Forensic audit needed. Looking to have study session next month. Discussed \$10 microchip scanners for front line county. We need to bring non-profits together. Education on all levels should be provided. Go to your legislators, put things in writing. Your engagement will amplify action. Would like to see on the next agenda – recommended creation for educational workshop for intake/outcome of animals and financial records of what it cost to run the animal shelter for the quarter. Requesting an administrative budget.
- **Ex. Officio Tom Snyder – Animal Samaritans CEO** – We have a new rescue coordinator, Madison. Connecting with a rescue in Oregon (large dogs). Looking to increase spay/neuter agreement. Has provided free education to local schools since 1980 K-8. Can share models with others.
- **Ex. Officio Michael Phipps Russell – Loving All Animals** - Reviewed the By-Laws and want to add creation of an education policy by species. This will educate the community with types of animals coming into the shelters. Euthanasia rates – have data available to view. 2022-2023 identifies underage group. Asking for an educational workshop to be implemented on the agenda. Will give information to help make decisions. City contracts are coming up for

renewal. Address initial intake and outcome services. Contracts are specific, written by cities to the county. Review/audit of data & flyers.

- **Ex. Officio Dan Rossi – Palm Springs Animal Shelter Exec. Director** – 2024 has been extremely challenging with 364 animals in current inventory. We are 200% over capacity. We have incentives two new incentives. Hired a transport coordinator to transport within US & Canada. Also hired a full-time trap/neuter release coordinator. Offering free microchips.
- **Ex. Officio Tamara Hedges – Palm Springs Animal Shelter President** – We are seeing problems with constituents not being able to keep their pets. Homeowners Association and landlord problems continue to arise. Working together will give solutions.
- **District 4 Board Asst. Alexis Perez** – Mobile clinics, Supervisor Perez has provided funding. First bus arrived in November, and we have funded 5 wellness clinics. Each event, 200 residents have been served. 1,000 residents served through outreach. Board of Supervisors voted to support Animals Services with two resolutions 5,000-cat challenge policy and to only admit cats in need into the shelter and not impound healthy adult cats.

#### **RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES:**

**Erin Gettis, Director:** Thank you for all the voices. We have heard you all. I have also worked in rescue and assisted with senior Shepherds. I have been on the other side. We have a high-volume issue; 32,000 animals entered the shelter last year. 90 animals enter the shelter daily. Before euthanasia is considered, we diligently try to get animals adopted, rescued, or fostered. Nobody at our shelter wants to euthanize an animal. We are working hard with all efforts. Agreed with improving more education.

#### **PowerPoint Viewed:**

- 5,000 Cat Challenge is an initiative to improve the outcomes and promote the health of Riverside County cats.
- RCDAS is no longer accepting healthy cats.
- Pet Support Program – 51% of animals supported at intake with services, supplies to keep animals in their homes.
- More than 5,800 pets were supported and did not enter the shelter since implementation in mid-June 2023.
- Refocus on Contract Cities – reduce the burden of out of county animals and improve services to Riverside County residents. Expected to result in 5,000 fewer animals.
- Increases spay/neuter – 11,170 spay/neuter surgeries in 2023, highest number since pandemic.
- Ordered two buses for mobile spay/neuter. Our first bus has been delivered and the other is in the works.
- Built new surgery center in Coachella Valley.
- Vet Expansion Plan is in the works for all shelter locations.

**8. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next Animal Campus Commission Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 01, 2024; at 9:30 a.m. in person at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus.

**9. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:49 p.m.