



Coachella Valley Animal Campus Commission Meeting (Minutes)

Thursday – October 02, 2025
9:30 a.m.
Commission Meeting
In-Person

Animal Campus Commission

Voting Members

Cathedral City

Nancy Ross **Chair**
Ernesto Gutierrez (Alternate)

City of Coachella

Frank Figueroa
Yadira Perez (Alternate)

City of Desert Hot Springs

Daniel Pitts
Dirk Voss (Alternate)

City of Indian Wells

Greg Sanders
Bruce Whitman (Alternate)

City of Indio

Glen Miller
Kim Hardee (Alternate)

City of La Quinta

Steve Sanchez **Vice Chair**
Kathleen Fitzpatrick (Alternate)

City of Palm Desert

Evan Trubee
Karina Quintanilla (Alternate)

City of Rancho Mirage

Michael O’Keefe
Eve F. Edelstein (Alternate)

District 4

Supervisor V. Manuel Perez
Ty Peabody (Alternate)

Non-Voting Members

Animal Samaritans Ex-Officio

Tom Snyder
Aurora Wilson (Alternate)

Loving All Animals Ex-Officio

Michael Phipps Russell
Jessica Castillo (Alternate)

PSAS Ex-Officio

Dan Rossi
Tamara Hedges

RCDAS Staff

Mary Martin
Dr. Kimberly Youngberg
Dr. Amy Raines
Outcomes for Pets
Veronica Perez
Kasey Saldarelli
Marlo Clingman

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Frank Figueroa, City of Coachella.

2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Animal Campus Commission Meeting was called to order on Thursday, October 02, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. in person by Mayor Nancy Ross, Cathedral City.

A roll call was conducted by Chair Nancy Ross with Cathedral City; it was determined a quorum was met. The following Commission members were present:

Members in Attendance: Quorum Met

- Cathedral City, Mayor Nancy Ross (**Chair**)
- City of Coachella, Councilmember Frank Figueroa
- City of Desert Hot Springs Daniel Pitts (**Not Present**)
- City of Indian Wells, Councilmember Greg Sanders
- City of Indio, Councilmember Glenn Miller
- City of La Quinta, Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick (**Alternate Vice Chair**)
- City of Palm Desert, Councilmember Evan Trubee (**Not Present**)
- City of Rancho Mirage, Councilmember Michael O’Keefe
- County of Riverside, Supervisor V. Manuel Perez, District 4

Members in Attendance: Quorum Met

- Ad Hoc Members Kim Hardee
- Ad Hoc Members Ty Peabody

Ex. Officio’s in Attendance:

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

Staff in Attendance:

- Braden Holly, County Counsel, Riverside County
- Mary Martin, Director, RCDAS
- Kim Youngberg, Asst. Director, RCDAS
- Dr. Amy Raines, Chief Veterinarian, RCDAS
- Stephanie Filer (Outcomes for Pets), Outside Consultants for RCDAS
- Veronica Perez, Public Information Officer, RCDAS
- Lesley Huennekens, Interim Commander of Field Services RCDAS
- Marlo Clingman, CVAC Manager, RCDAS
- Kasey Saldarelli, Commission Secretary, RCDAS

3. Updates to Agenda:

- (Chair Nancy Ross – Cathedral City): Purpose and intent, Decorum, and removal from the Animal Campus Commission. Our bylaws are in place to ensure civil and orderly meetings.

4. Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes from August 07, 2025, were approved. Councilmember Greg Sanders with Indian Wells motioned for approval of minutes; and Vice Chair Alternate Kathleen Fitzpatrick with City of La Quinta seconded the motion.

- 5. Agenda and Staff Reports:** This is the time and place for Fourth District Supervisor and Representatives, RCDAS Staff and Ex-Officio's wishing to address the balance of the Commission.

5.1 Fourth District and Ad Hoc Committee Members Ty Peabody and Kim Hardee

Supervisor V. Manuel Perez – Supervisor commends the progress that has been made and the collaboration with various stake holders. He will continue to work toward our goal which is to become a no-kill county. He discusses the need for legislation to bring veterinary health care centers/services to rural, underserved areas, similar to FQHC model. Policy efforts should be worked on to ensure we introduce legislation or work with someone who is familiar with legislation. Supervisor highlighted the importance of community support and the role of youth advisory councils in the advocating for animal welfare. The tick disease outbreak in the Oasis mobile home park was mentioned along with the importance of public health. Moving forward, it is the Supervisors goal that when working on housing developments or parks to always include a dog/pet park to assist with a safe space for the communities who have animals.

Ty Peabody – Ty is truly grateful for the progress with the County and the support given by everyone! He mentioned the need for the public to start taking responsibility for their pets and not to turn them into the shelters or we will never solve no-kill. We need the public's help!

Kim Hardee – We have been able to have a monthly clinic every month this year! Fantasy Springs Casino allowed us to have 2 indoor clinics, and we were able to have 3 buses participate – Humane Society of San Diego, RCDAS and Animal Action League.

All of us coming together completed 180 surgeries. We are faced with challenges with flat-faced and large dogs. A special clinic was held in July for the flat face breed. It should not be this hard to get your animals spayed and neutered, the community is faced with too many barriers when it comes to services for their pets. Coachella Animal Network will continue to work with Loving All Animals, Soar, RCDAS to accomplish much needed spay and neuter services. Kim charges \$30 for spay and neuter services and she explained that she currently has an extensive waiting list. It is not the County's responsibility to spay and neuter your personal pets. We are all just trying to help. Every home and child should be able to have a pet and that is why she continues to support our communities!

5.2 Riverside County Department of Animals Services

- **RCDAS Director Mary Martin** – Mary begins with a tribute to Dr. Jane Goodall's passing, sharing personal experiences and anecdotes about her interactions with the renowned primatologist and anthropologist. Quote from Dr. Goodall, "What you do makes a difference, you just have to decide what difference you want to make."
 - ✓ Volunteer Spotlight – Shout out to all DAS volunteers! There are significant contributions of over 23,000 hours with 629 active volunteers.
 - ✓ One of our longtime volunteers named Joey has joined the RCDAS team as an employee.
 - ✓ We have a wonderful Dog Day Out program aimed at getting dogs out of the shelter to get them seen and possibly adopted. We encourage everyone to be a part of this program and share the news.
 - ✓ The significant growth in transport activities was highlighted but also the need for more partners. Sometimes we travel for fewer animals, but every life matters.
 - ✓ Partner shout out - Maren Ledesma with Animal Samaritans was introduced; she works out of the Coachella Valley campus to help rescue and adopt pets. Her hard work is much appreciated.
 - ✓ Mary acknowledges the support of various organizations, including Palm Springs Animal Shelter and Coachella Animal Network for spay and neuter services that are so kindly offered to our communities.
 - ✓ Challenges of Lifesaving
 - Resource disparity, high demand for shelter space, need for more foster care, competing for market share in pet adoptions and program implementation.
 - ✓ We are currently mapping hot spots with GIS and locating the demand for services – more to come!
 - ✓ Extended operating hours start on 10/02/2025. Tuesday – Friday 11am to 6pm and Saturday – Sunday 10am to 4pm. Monday – closed.

- ✓ Rivco Rise – building a no kill community. We are aiming at 90% save rate or higher.
 - ✓ The DIBS Program is in effect; this allows adopters to put a hold on animals before their stray relief period ends. (KESQ News Channel 3 local headlines video)
- **Outcomes for Pets Stephanie Filer** – Stephanie presented a detailed three-year comparison of department-wide data, focusing on live release and intake rates. (Presentation available upon request)
 - ✓ There has been progress made in live release rates, noting a significant increase from 72.8% in January 2023 to 80.7% in August 2025.
 - ✓ Continued data is broken-down of intake and outcomes data for dogs 2023, 2024 and 2025. The gap in animal intake and outcomes was further explained, noting that shelters are full due to a higher number of animals entering the shelter than leaving. Out of the four shelter locations, Jurupa Valley campus is taking in the-most animals and they are coming in as strays.
 - ✓ Reasons for euthanasia can be divided into categories, treatable, untreatable and out of control. There has been a decrease in euthanasia rates, noting a significant reduction from 3400 in 2023 to 2000 in 2025. There are challenges of balancing the need to decrease euthanasia with providing humane care and treatment. Specific examples were given of animals at risk for euthanasia due to space constraints. The shelter is currently 214% over capacity for dogs (critical levels) and dog live release rate is 88.4%.
 - **Interim Commander of Field Services Lesley Huennekens** – Lesley discusses the role of animal control officers in investigating animal cruelty cases. She shares two case studies involving the seizure of underweight and injured dogs and a severely neglected horse. Lesley explains the process of investigating animals’ cruelty cases, including obtaining search warrants and submitting cases to the district attorney’s office. She also emphasized the importance of working with animal owners to retain their pets and provide necessary care. Lesley has been with our department for over 20yrs. Lesley continues to advocate to protect and be the voice for the animals!
 - **RCDAS Public Information Officer Veronica Perez** – If you would like for RCDAS to share any information at the Commission meeting, please reach out to PIO Veronica Perez at veperez@rivco.org.
 - **Chief Veterinarian Dr. Amy Raines** – Dr. Raines mentions the Bissell Pet Foundations “Fix the Future” program, which provides veterinarians to perform spay and neuter surgeries. This is a new opportunity in the veterinarian division, paying daily fees for vet doctors to come to our shelter as relief doctors. She also highlights the increase in veterinarian per diem rates to attract more veterinarians to the shelters. Our shelter has a collaboration with Animal Balance and San Diego

Humane to provide spay and neuter services. Dr. Raines also mentioned the need for more veterinary technicians and vet assistants to support the growing number of veterinarians. We work with Animal Samaritans weekly. Mobile clinics, first Saturdays at Blythe and expanding opportunities. Dr. Leigh Kirk continues to support RCDAS with spay and neuter on TNR Tuesdays. We also have Dr. Gail who is from Texas assisting at the Coachella Valley campus assisting with spay and neuter one week at a time.

5.3 Ex-Officio Members

- **Ex. Officio – Dan Rossie - Palm Springs Animal Shelter** – Dan provides an update, noting the high number of animals and the success of a recent pet food drive. The public came out in amazing force; we got over 10,000 pounds of kibble and about 6,000 cans of food. We have fed over 6,883 animals! This is a big sign that assistance is needed. Current inventory is 348 animals, little over double the normal capacity. Thirty-two of those animals are ones who have been with PSAS for over a year. Dan highlights the activities of the Desert Wildlife Center aiding 114 injured wildlife and the success of the Desert Community Animal Center in Desert Hot Springs which has completed 931 appointments which consisted of wellness check-ups, sick, vaccination appt. and 80 spay/neuters.
- **Ex. Officio - Tom Snyder– Animal Samaritans** – (Not Present)
- **Ex. Officio – Michael Phipps Russell – Loving All Animals** – Michael announced the acquisition of a veterinary clinic in Cathedral City, which will focus on spay and neuter services for cats and dogs. This acquisition was a donation which will include the clinic, a veterinarian and staff – formally the “The Cat Clinic.” We are working on signing the new lease and ordering dog supplies. We are actively involved with the East Valley on their Tick situation but also continuing to spay and neuter cats at the “The Cat Clinic.” It’s exciting that there will be more resources for the community. We are also launching a microchip training program with local East Valley residents through the Torres Martinez Tribe. Barrier - there are no readers in that whole section.
 - ✓ Request for the county to provide data snapshot report specific for the Coachella Valley Animal Campus.
 - ✓ Request to present to the community Petco Love Lost Program.

6. Commission Member Comments: This is the time and place for any Commission members wishing to address the balance of the Commission.

- **City of Rancho Mirage – Councilmember Michael O’Keefe** – N/A
- **City of Indian Wells - Councilmember Greg Sanders** – Greg reminded Mary of an invitation for her or designee to present at their upcoming City Council meeting on October 16th.
- **City of Indio – Community Member Glenn Miller** – N/A

- **Cathedral City – Councilmember Nancy Ross (Chair)** – Purpose and intent, Decorum, and removal from the Animal Campus Commission. Our bylaws are in place to ensure civil and orderly meetings.
- **City of La Quinta – Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick (Alternate Vice Chair)** – Impressed with the data that was presented. Kathleen recommended adding to the volunteer portion of the presentation that 23,000 volunteer hours are approximately 10 full employees and 21 part-time employees.
- **City of Coachella – Councilmember Frank Figueroa** – Frank thanked Mary and her staff for the wonderful presentation and for the breakdown on different items, it is visually more appealing. The numbers are impressive and continued work in progress but to see that visually makes a difference as we slowly aim at no-kill!

7. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** This is the time and place for any person wishing to address the Animal Campus Commission on items not on the agenda. Comments require a speaker card including name for the record and are limited to 3 minutes per person, unless determined otherwise by the Commission chair.

- **Angel Sullivan:** Angel discusses the overcrowding at the DHS shelter and the need for more space and resources. Mentions the lack of support from DHS and the reliance on volunteers and private citizens to rescue animals. Stop euthanizing and create a better link between rescue organizations. She has hopes that someone will donate for a compassion center to assist with more resources. The community is willing to help and transport.
- **Christine Ziegler:** Christine emphasizes the need for more space to accommodate the increasing number of dogs. She mentions a plan to build another adoption center and the importance of temporary space as a solution. It was also mentioned that we should start working on space as the shelter was built many years ago. Disney and Amazon are building communities, and we should get a jump start on expansion.
- **Wendy Hedges:** Wendy mentioned the need for a larger shelter to accommodate the increase in animal population. More space is needed!
- **Dale Balukas:** The gestation period for a dog is 2 months. Can we enforce or put legislation on breeding? It is the root of overpopulation. If there are HOA's not allowing animals – such a shame! If we have judges slapping wrist for animal cruelty, they are adding to our problem.
- **Tabitha Davies:** Tabitha calls for a systemic reform within the county to address the strain on animal services. She emphasized the need for humane force, free training, and behavior support to prevent relinquishment. She also discussed the importance of fear-free sheltering practices to reduce stress and illness on the animals, but also staff and volunteer training. She brings up the need for preventative medical care, pet food support, and crisis hoarding advocacy. There should be accountability and better enforcement of animal welfare laws. This meeting should be accessible; it should be offered as hybrid or virtual so that participation can be offered for people who have full-time jobs or caring for loved ones. The 2.5-million-dollar contract should be cancelled and utilized more effectively.
- **Lisa Blodgett:** Lisa reiterated that she mentioned the Tick Oasis Problem a year ago. There are many starving animals at the Oasis Trailer Park. She expressed frustration

with the lack of focus on animal care despite the time and resources spent on presentations. There was also mention of the Hayden Act, which mandates medical care for sick and injured pets.

- **Jean Iovino:** Jean is here on behalf of the animals she has seen on the red list and for the animals who have been euthanized. She mentioned that nothing has really changed but the presentation was a lot better. The reason we should have shelters is to save lives. The shelter is not in the grass roots and dogs under a year old are being euthanized for space. That 2.5 million dollars could have been used for more kennels, more employees, vet care and lastly finding homes. We need expansion at each of the shelters. HOA and pet limitations, maybe we need to have meetings with some of these organizations.
- **Alan Woodruff:** Allan provides an update on the work being done in the Eastern County to address animal needs. He mentioned the trust built with the community and the importance of speaking Spanish. We are going into the trailer parks to spay and neuter and this is a big part of becoming no-kill, the other component is the foster program. We will need more space, but that's another issue. We need to focus on the Eastern County and the problems involved there.
- **Ginney Weissmen:** Jenny discusses the issue of high pet fees in affordable housing and its impact on pet abandonment. She mentioned the need for funds to help people afford pet fees and the importance of making it affordable to live with pets. Ginney would like to find a solution to make it affordable for people to keep their pets. We need community support.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

8.1 The next Animal Campus Commission Meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, February 05, 2026, at 9:30am.**

(Location: Desert Recreation Metro 8: 81725 Highway 111, Indio, Ca 92201)

9. ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 11:19 am.