

# ***Animal Issues Advisory Committee***

## ***Meeting Minutes***

July 16, 2015

### **I. Call to order**

Patti Morris called to order the regular meeting of the Animal Issues Advisory Committee at 1805 hours on July 16, 2015 at the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, Port Angeles, WA.

### **II. Roll call**

The following members were present: Paula Creasey, Patti Morris, Marc Reinertson, Diane Royall, Barbara Sanford, Tommy Schwent, Brian Smith and Mary Beth Wegener. A quorum was established.

The following Sheriff's Office staff members were present: Animal Control Deputy Tracey Kellas, Administrative Coordinator Lorraine Shore.

The following citizens were present: Valerie Jackson, Maria Belair, Bonnie Mayesh, Madelaine Nisik, Pepper Gamroth, Liz Bungaree, Randy Kceri (sp?)

Members introduced themselves and gave a brief background to those present for the benefit of the citizens in attendance.

### **III. Public Comment**

Patti asked the public in attendance to present their comments at the outset of the meeting.

Maria Belair said she was a neighbor of John Dashti and wanted to know if this meeting was to address his animal cruelty case. Patti advised her that the AIAC met on a quarterly basis to address a variety of issues involving animals so they could serve as an Advisory Board to the Board of County Commissioners. The AIAC Meeting was not called to address the Dashti case.

Animal Control Deputy Kellas stated that Valerie Jackson of OPEN had concerns about the rescue effort involving the animals on Dashti's property and she sent an email to the AIAC.

Valerie Jackson said Diane Royall, OPEN representative on AIAC, was going to give an overview of the Dashti case according to her information. Diane said she invited Dashti's neighbors to the AIAC meeting in the event they had evidence for Deputy Kellas.

Most of the citizens in attendance were neighbors of John Dashti interested in the status of the investigation. They expressed concern about how he treated his animals over the years. They also wanted to know if Public Health issues could be addressed and were referred to Department of Community Development Director Mary Ellen Winborn.

Deputy Kellas explained that the Animal Cruelty investigation was submitted to the Prosecutor's Office with recommendation to charge [Animal Cruelty 2<sup>nd</sup>](#). She explained that the elements of the crime had to fit State Law under [RCW 16.52 – Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#).

Madeline said she wanted to thank Deputy Kellas and OPEN for their responsiveness to the Dashti issue and wants to find the best way for the public to help agencies with animal cases.

Lorraine explained that a great public education program existed with the Sheriff's Office providing Community Presentations on Neighborhood Watch which provides information on how to properly communicate with local law enforcement and crime prevention strategies. Anyone interested in a program needs to call Lorraine at 360-417-2262 to schedule a meeting.

Bonnie said she has been aware of the Dashti situation for the last seven years and wanted to know why it takes so long to address issues. She wanted to know how to speed up the process.

Patti asked Deputy Kellas to describe her job duties and the process she works through to investigate animal issues.

Deputy Kellas explained that people need to call Dispatch to report suspected animal abuse as there was a misperception among the Dashti neighbors that numerous calls had been made over the years regarding suspected animal abuse, however that wasn't the case. Kellas stated the #1 problem is the fact that the State Animal Abuse laws are lacking and there is no "Neglect" language in the laws. They state only that the animal has to be suffering which is difficult to prove in court.

Kellas became aware of the Dashti Animal Abuse issue on 6/1/15 and he was in jail at the time. Dashti was released from jail on 6/11/15 and on 6/15/15 when Deputy Kellas was going to serve a warrant at his residence; someone posted information on Craigslist which put a stop to everything. Eventually the investigation resulted in a search of his residence and seizure of his animals.

Deputy Chief Brian Smith explained how PENCOM (Dispatch) works. The non-emergency number for Dispatch is 360-417-2459 and they dispatch all law enforcement officers in Clallam County. When a citizen calls Dispatch to report suspicious circumstances or to report a crime, the call is logged into the system and a dispatcher

sends a Sheriff's Deputy, PAPD Officer, Forks Officer or Sequim Officer depending on where the caller is located.

#### **IV. Approval of minutes from last meeting**

Motion was made by Tommie Schwent to approve minutes of March 19, 2015 AIAC Meeting. Motion was seconded by Brian Smith and unanimously approved.

#### **V. Old Business**

##### **a) Review of proposed ordinance changes**

- No action from AIAC required as they are ready to go to BOCC for public hearing.

#### **VI. New Business**

##### **a) Dashti Animal Abuse Investigation**

- a. Deputy Kellas provided a brief overview of the investigation into allegations that John Dashti abused his animals and noted the investigation was currently awaiting prosecutorial charging decision.
- b. Deputy Kellas advised the concerned neighbors they could contact the Prosecutor's Office if they wanted to give input regarding the case.
- c. Valerie Jackson stated she appreciated the opportunity for citizens to vent about their frustration regarding Dashti.

##### **b) Update from Rescue Representatives**

- a. Mary Beth Wegener, Clallam County Humane Society AIAC Representative gave a brief overview of the status of their new building. She said they were planning on moving in November 2015. The facility is state of the art for dogs with modular buildings for veterinary care, feline care and administration.
- b. To date they have raised 1.26 million of their projected goal of 1.4 million. There are 52 inside/outside dog kennels in the new facility.

#### **VII. Announcement**

The next meeting will be Thursday, September 17, 2015 at 1800 hours in the BOCC.

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

Patti Morris adjourned the meeting at 1917 hours.

Minutes submitted by: Lorraine Shore