

MINUTES FROM THE JULY 24TH MEETING
STAMFORD ANIMAL CONTROL TASK FORCE

The Animal Control Task Force met in the Democratic Caucus room of the Government Center on Thursday, July 24th. In attendance were Dr. Steve Zeide, Arthur Layton, Eileen Heaphy, Mary Ann Kleinschmitt and Brendon Leydon. Annie Taylor was not present, but participated in the meeting via telephone. Invited speakers included Mr. Ray Connors, Chief Animal Control Officer of Connecticut, Nancy Jarvis, State Animal Control Officer, Tilford Cobb, Stamford ACC, John Franzetti, Stamford ACC, Kathryn Emmett, Stamford Corporation Counsel, Ted Jankowski, Director of Public Safety and Health, SGT Jennifer Pinto, and LT Nick Montanese of Stamford's Police Department. Also present were John Fontneau, Chief of Police, and Jim Metheney, Assistant Chief of Police.

The meeting started at 12:05 PM. Tilford Cobb reported on the current status of the Animal Shelter. There are 19 dogs there; 16 are available for adoption, 1 is in quarantine and 2 are waiting for the owner to retrieve them. In the last month 3 dogs have been adopted and 2 cats were adopted. The dog named Tigger was sent to Bully Breed Rescue.

All dogs are being exercised. Five kittens are at the shelter and will be adoptable in a few weeks.

Tilford reported that he and Mary Ann Kleinschmitt along with the Police Department have been working on volunteer interim guidelines. They expect to have a draft available next week.

Ray Connors spoke next. He said the ACO function is about public safety and animal welfare. It started as rabies control and has evolved over the years. All ACOs are now required by state statute to complete 80 hours of classroom time and at least six hours per year of continuing education.

There is a need to educate Connecticut residents about how to fix their problems with dogs. ACC function is to round up strays, quarantine sick and vicious dogs. He added that ACC's are not designed for long term handling of dogs. Statistics about animal welfare are reviewed at the state level.

He believes that volunteers work well at shelters. A volunteer coordinator is needed. Work attitudes are important for volunteers. Their functions must be supervised.

Mr. Connors felt the existing structure in Stamford is solid but lacks cosmetics. It is not a consumer-friendly building. It needs an adoption room and area for volunteers. Donations of money and consumables needs to be better coordinated. He recommended we look at the MSPCA facility in Methuen, MA.

Dr. Zeide asked about state rules about the health and welfare of dogs. Mr. Connors responded that illnesses or injuries should be treated ASAP by a Veterinarian. Their emotional health will be improved as state statutes improve with better physical plants. He also mentioned that the state

only allows a \$5 fee for adoption.

In the fall, a legislative task force of the Connecticut General Assembly will be created to look at regulations for animal control shelters.

Dr. Zeide asked if there was a database of adoptable animals from all shelters. This isn't available yet. This question generated discussion about computer technology and records at the animal shelter. Chief Fontneau said this be improved in the future.

Chief Fontneau spoke briefly and asked for questions. He said we all have the same cause; health and safety of dogs and staff. He is working with the City's legal department to develop policies for the volunteers and adoption process.

Art Layton asked Mr. Connors if an adoption process was mandated by the State. He said it wasn't, and that each City can develop their own procedures.

In response to questions, Chief Fontneau reported that communications with the Animal Control officers was a higher level than in the past. He referenced daily activity reports that are sent to him from the ACOs.

Art Layton reviewed his draft of criteria to select a site for a new shelter. These include: adequate land for structures and parking, proximity to geographic center of ACC complaint calls, cost of land acquisition and improvements, quiet location for dogs and neighbors, zoning, neighborhood resistance/support, acceptance by the ACC staff and time for construction. Other task force members suggested the addition of space for volunteer functions, intake/quarantine space and the potential of retro-fitting a city building.

At the end of the meeting, Chair Heaphy explained why we met at noon. She had received emails accusing the task force of having this meeting during the day to prevent the public from attending and of not acting in good faith. She clarified that this meeting was held to accommodate state officials participating and also because several task force members live far from Stamford. She also asked those attending the meeting to stop spreading reports that the city wants to turn the ACC into a "Kill" shelter. There is no intention of doing so and such tactics make it harder to work together for our common goal of a good ACC for the public and the animals.

The next meeting will include a public hearing and will be held on August 5th at 7PM. Further details will be available on the city's website, www.stamfordct.gov. Ms. Heaphy explained to those attending how to retrieve that information. The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted
Art Layton, Co-chair