

***Animal Services Advisory Board Meeting -ASAB**

***Date: 10/9/25**

***Board Members Present:** Ethelyn Riley (Chair),

Karen Gaskins (Asst. Chair),

Courtney Pearce (Director of Paws, Inc.-non-voting member), Anna-Claire Daniels, Kirven Boyce

*Absent: Donna McGinnis, Matt Gilbert, Danielle Saunders

***Discussion:**

Ethelyn announced that Dr. Jo Brown, Veterinarian at Uptown Veterinary Clinic, has been approved by the City Council to join the ASAB Board. After she is sworn in by the mayor, she will sit with the Board members at the meetings.

Courtney believes we should not look at/review the Ordinances document piece by piece because she doesn't think the whole document needs to be reworded. She knows a lawyer who specializes in reading over the Ordinances, who can update them to 2025.

The next topic of discussion concerned a resident of Bradenton, Florida, who has been in constant communication with Courtney and the ASAB Board. This person has asked the Board to form a Task Force to work to solve the "spacing overload of animals" situation. Courtney explained that Paws does internally look at data and it does have a transport system. Ethelyn said that she has tried to explain to this person numerous times that the Board cannot function as a Task Force. The Florida resident is constantly in touch with the Board asking them to do things that are not within its mandate. Ethelyn said the Board is keenly aware of the overcrowding issues and is working tirelessly to resolve those issues. The well-being of the animals in our care is our priority! She believes it is possible that this person does not understand the Columbus, Georgia Ordinances, and what we are designated to do. The Board has tried to explain these ordinances to her, but she doesn't seem to understand.

Karen said that the Board has done everything possible to explain all these points to this person. Ethelyn also added that there's not a solution for the "spacing overload" until people follow the laws to spay and neuter. Ethelyn said that if concerned advocates want a Task Force, then they should feel free to do so. Karen said that a Task Force could identify specific problems, research, Think Tank, and come up with a plan.

Courtney stated that the University of Florida gathered data about the effects of COVID, and it undid many years of progress. Courtney is interested in public opinion because the public is Paws Inc.'s Stakeholders. Becky Carter said that we don't need a Task Force to duplicate what Paws/Courtney is already doing. Karen said to tell people about Think Tanks.

An audience member suggested a solution for spay/neutering. He said to pay people \$10 to those people who can't afford the cost of spay/neuter. Courtney said Paws will help with the costs of spay/neutering. Paws will receive any money from a person who wants their animal to have spay/neutering. Courtney said that spay/neutering can't be mandated. She asked Karen to let her know of special circumstances who need services—so they are not "double -dipping". Courtney said that transportation is an issue. Paws is not set up for Emergency Care. She's discussed cases where people don't have the money during per/animal emergencies. Paws does have an "Outreach Program". Courtney is trying to fill in the gaps of the community, especially those with financial issues.

Dr. Jo addressed population issues. She said that all rescue organizations need to be on the same page. She wants all animals from rescues to be spayed/neutered BEFORE adopted out. Karen said that she could ask Carmen Rice (State Legislator) to try to pass this.

Courtney mentioned the voucher system and said that she knows people who take their animals from other towns outside of Muscogee County and bring them to Columbus to use the vouchers. She said the City Government gets \$10-12,000 yearly from Paws from the income from the city permit.

In discussing the Ordinances review and updating by the Board, Courtney offered to have a lawyer, who she knows who specializes in this, to read it and update it- to bring it up to 2025.

The "Roxanne and Bolo" Case- Paws can't keep them forever and has had them since January 2024.

Tethering: Courtney said to ask if there's a statute for it because we don't need to contradict state law. It's a very broad view of outside temperature requirements. Becky Carter said it needs to have a narrower range of temperature.

Karen said to make sure that Officer Training covers it and learns it and knows how to look out for it. Officer discretion based on their training. Courtney said it will come up multiple times, and also, we shouldn't tell people how many animals they can have. Ethelyn said there's not a time limit to tether. She discussed the use of the 3-Pulley System and said that a pulley/trolley system indicates movement. Karen said it's "iffy" to get the "Tether" part of the Ordinances to pass from City Council.

Courtney asked what are our top 3-5 issues to change in Columbus? The lawyer will give her recommendations.

Top issues:

1. Microchip (instead of City Permit): We want all animals microchipped. Ask her if it can be enforceable?
2. Overpopulation: What do we change in the Ordinances to help the overpopulation?
3. **????**

("1 litter per household" is the City Ordinance.)

Dr. Jo said that whatever we do, it needs to match state law. There's a city fine for a 2nd litter during the year. There's a City Ordinance fine for those breeders. You need to have a Breeder Permit.

1st Offense-Need to microchip

2nd Offense-monetary fine

Karen is helping her Sears Woods subdivision neighbors with dog issues.

Anna-Claire asked how we can help those dogs find their owners?

Dr. Jo said that people get upset with overpopulation and ask, "Is Paws Humane going to euthanize for space?" Dr. Jo said that our response should be: "Well, how many times have you fostered dogs?"

Becky Carter said that we have educated the public that Rescues/Shelters can handle all problems.

Courtney said that the date has been set for Oct. 30th for the Animal Officers/CPD All-Day Class Training located in the COD's training room in the basement. There will be speakers for the training, some of the public will be invited and the PAWS Board of Directors.

Courtney said she will send the lawyer all the Ordinances we have worked on and will keep us posted.

Minutes submitted by: Kirven Boyce

Minutes approved by: Ethelyn W Riley_____

Signature: *Ethelyn W Riley* **Date:** _____