



Columbus Consolidated Government

Georgia's First Consolidated Government

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Audit Authorization

An audit of Animal Care and Control of Columbus (ACCC) was requested by City Councilor John House and was approved by City Council on August 9, 2022.

Background

In the 1970s, the Muscogee County animal shelter was built near the Columbus landfill off Schatulga Rd. The facility had 25 dog runs and 15 cat cages. By 2009, a new, larger capacity building, was constructed at 4910 Milgen Rd.

General Audit Process

The audit began with an entrance conference on August 15, 2022, with Interim Division Manager, Contreana Pearson, Field Operations Supervisor, Lt. Paul Syck, Shelter Supervisor, Sara Welsh, and Forensic Auditor, Elizabeth Barfield. The scope of the audit included all aspects of the operation: Field Operations, Shelter Operations, Front Desk Operations, and the Office of the Interim Division Manager. In addition to ACCC operations, discussions with and observations of the ACCC Advisory Board and the ACCC Volunteers were performed.

For three weeks, beginning on November 29, 2022, audit work was stopped by Executive Management and deemed "unauthorized." The Auditor's access to the work site, communication with employees and questions regarding collected data were denied to the Auditor for no discernible reason. Due to the holidays and staff vacations, work was not resumed until January 3, 2023.

An exit interview was conducted with the Public Works Director, Drale Scott, Interim Division Manager, Contreana Pearson and, Shelter Supervisor, Sara Welsh on January 10, 2023.

Field Operations

Animal Control Field Officers are responsible for taking dispatched calls from Muscogee County citizens. Dispatched calls are received from the Front Desk Operations at ACCC during normal business hours (Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.). E911 dispatches calls directly to ACCC Officers weekdays from 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 a.m. and after 5:00p.m. On the weekends, E911 dispatches calls from Friday at 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. Monday mornings.

Calls dispatched range from citizens calling about stray animals, trapped animals (possum, racoon, etc....) to complaints about neighbors' animals, animal cruelty and noise. A Field Officer frequently meets with citizens while out on dispatched calls, they serve citations for any animal control offenses and report to environmental court on the first and third Wednesday of the month.

ACCC's Field Operations work in three shifts: the morning shift (6:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.), the evening shift (2:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.) and the midnight shift (10:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m.). Each shift, except the midnight shift, is covered by a city-wide officer (the Special Enforcement Supervisor), an officer assigned to the north side of Columbus and another officer assigned to the south side of Columbus. The boundary between the north side and the south side is at Wynnton Rd. /Macon Rd. This staffing model allows for efficient travel from call to call, citizen interaction and provides safety measures for officers needing help with dangerous animal encounters.

Findings & Recommendations

Staffing, through October 2022, is reflected below.

Field Operations	Fully Staffed	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Special Enforc Supr	1	1	1	0	1	1
Animal Control Officer I	7	6	6	7	4	4
Animal Control Officer II	2	2	2	2	0	0
	10	9	9	9	5	5

ACCC has one field officer with 28 years of experience at ACCC; he plans to retire in 2023. The remaining staff has an average tenure of less than 1.5 years. As of November 14, 2022, 2 field officers were on light duty (only able to complete desk duties).

Low staffing levels have resulted in:

- 1) the "midnight shift" becoming an "on-call" shift; this change occurred in October 2021. Field Officers are now "on-call" one weeknight each week and at least 2–24-hour weekend shifts each month. There is an average of 3-5 calls each night for after-hours calls (priority calls); after hours calls are limited to hurt or injured animals, animals involved in accidents, instances of animal cruelty and any requests from the Columbus Police Department/Sheriff Department. These calls are reflected as overtime for these officers.
- 2) Reduced coverage and increased safety issues for Field Officers when in need of assistance or dealing with dangerous animals.
- 3) Discontent, frustration, and high stress levels among staff.

When speaking with the Department of Health, incomplete bite reports being filed and inconsistent processes among staff were identified.

The Interim Division Manager was made aware of these concerns. A policy was implemented at ACCC to try and resolve the incomplete paperwork and Field Officer procedures.

Shelter Operations

Shelter Staff

Shelter Operations is responsible for all aspects of the animals once they are brought in by the Field Officers for impoundment.

Responsibilities include scanning for microchips, administering intake vaccines, entering the animals into the ACCC software system, taking pictures of the animals, and updating the website for citizens searching for missing dogs, cats or hoping to adopt. The intake process must be completed within 24 hours of impoundment.

ACCC's capacity levels:

40 regular runs for dogs	houses both adoptable dogs and those awaiting the end of 5-day holding period.
+ 6 runs for dogs quarantined	houses biting dogs that must be held 10 days; NOT adoptable, most have owners and are undergoing rabies observation by the Health Department.
+ 6 runs for dogs in isolation	houses sick, injured dogs or those recovering from medical treatment.
+ 6 runs for dogs in holding	houses the most recently impounded dogs awaiting the intake process.

= 58-dog capacity.

ACCC also has a kitty room that houses a minimum of 25 kittens and cats, cat quarantine has capacity for 11 cats, and the puppy room has a capacity for 8 puppies and small dogs.

In addition to performing the intake process, shelter staff cleans all runs and crates twice daily which includes washing all animal bedding and changing cat litter. Dogs and cats are fed in clean bowls and watered once daily; any animals requiring medication are treated as directed by the consulting veterinarian.

Volunteer Coordinator

ACCC's Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for all aspects related to volunteers donating their time; oversight and administration of offsite adoption events and helps administrative staff with daily operations.

Findings & Recommendations

Staffing, through October 2022, is reflected below.

Shelter Staff	Fully Staffed	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Animal Res Ctr Sup	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maintenance Worker I	1	1	1	0	0	0
Animal Control Officer I	3	2	3	2	2	2
Volunteer Coordinator	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	6	5	6	4	4	4

The Shelter Supervisor has 37 years of experience at ACCC and plans to retire in 2023; the remaining staff has an average tenure of less than 1 year. Shelter Operations has two employees that are not reflected on Animal Control's payroll. One employee is funded by Integrated Waste; the second employee has been borrowed from another area in Public Works and has worked on-site at Animal Control for approximately 4 months.

During the months of September and October 2022, the Shelter Staff fed, watered, medicated, and processed an average of 100 animals per day.

On Thursday, October 27, 2022, other than the Shelter Supervisor, none of the shelter staff were able to report for work due to illness. One (1) of the borrowed employees from Public Works came in on a previously scheduled day off. Three (3) volunteers were present in the morning to clean the facility and care for the 82 animals in the center.

Major concerns for this staff involve extremely high stress levels and compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is defined as the physical, mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those that care for sick or traumatized people/animals over an extended period.

Summary of Monthly ACCC Statistics 2022

	Impounded		Adopted from ACCC		Euthanasia		Owner Surrender		Rescues	
	Dogs	Cats	Dogs	Cats	Dogs	Cats	Dogs	Cats	Dogs	Cats
Jan-22	152	92	9	0	21	6	24	6	85	79
Feb-22	163	83	12	8	13	6	31	9	96	71
Mar-22	158	113	19	2	13	11	21	8	94	98
Apr-22	190	107	25	3	13	9	22	9	91	87
May-22	168	254	8	8	16	16	19	6	114	193
Jun-22	208	265	13	25	12	27	16	5	120	190
Jul-22	188	176	34	11	14	15	25	4	85	129
Aug-22	223	135	34	13	47	10	31	4	106	121
Sep-22	224	162	32	13	24	16	34	2	135	99
Oct-22	179	140	22	21	37	13	14	3	88	125
Totals thru Oct 2022	1,853	1,527	208	104	210	129	237	56	1,014	1,192

When comparing 2022 with 2021 during the same period (January – October):

2022 average animals impounded/month: 338 (down 10% from 2021)

2022 average animals adopted from ACCC/month: 31 (up 22% from 2021)

2022 average animals euthanized/month: 34 (up 53% from 2021)

Owner Requested: 57% (2020, 2021 and 2022)

Aggressive Animals: 9% (2020, 2021 and 2022)

Capacity: 1% (2020, 2021 and 2022)

2022 percentage of animals adopted from ACCC by rescues: 65% (down 18% from 2021)

Although impoundments are down 10% for 2022, the month of May had 422 impoundments, June had 473 impoundments and September had 386 impoundments; this is well above the average of 345 impoundments per month for the last 34 months. Seventy-four percent (74%) of ACCC's euthanasia procedures occurred during this 6-month period.

During observations at ACCC, there was one impoundment of 10 animals. This speaks to the nature of the impoundments not being expected or consistent; stable occupancy levels at ACCC are immediately threatened due to instances such as this. Additional factors resulting in the increase of animals at ACCC include the current economy and the rising prices of animal care, the COVID effect (pets brought into the home during isolation; now, people are returning to work at the office, family travel and activities outside of the home have increased) and the lifting of the eviction ban in July 2022.

Crates

In July 2022, in an effort to reduce the number of euthanasia procedures, ACCC began using crates to house impounded dogs; this is not a best practice. At one point during the audit, 14 crates were occupied. In speaking with staff, as many as 21 crates have been utilized.

Maintaining crates is labor intensive and requires two times the manpower; one animal control officer must handle the dog while another animal control officer is cleaning the crate. Because the chance of spreading disease is heightened, all crates must then be moved to clean the floors. Cumbersome processes such as these require large amounts of time that is valuable to an organization struggling with staffing issues.

On November 10, 2022, the Georgia Department of Agriculture completed an onsite inspection. At the time of the audit ACCC had 78 dogs and 28 cats impounded; 13 crates were in use and animals had been housed in them for longer than 24 hours. ACCC received its first violation regarding structural strength (i.e. the use of crates and the length of stay in the crates). A follow up inspection was scheduled for November 22, 2022; the visit will be to confirm the issue has been resolved. If the issue persists, ACCC could be limited on their intake of impounded animals. According to the Inspector, all 9 facilities she inspects are experiencing capacity issues. UPDATE: 11/22/2022 review conducted by The Department of Agriculture removed violation for compliance.

Medical

Questions regarding the medications provided and medical treatment of the animals at ACCC were addressed.

At ACCC, veterinarian services are provided on a contract basis in the amount of \$125.00 per hour, not to exceed \$1,200 per month as well as the provision of drugs and other medical supplies on an "as needed basis" for the estimated annual contract value of \$20,000. In November 2022, the service contract was renewed by a local veterinarian for an additional year. During the audit period, the veterinarian was on-site approximately 3 days per week and was available on-call.

Euthanasia paperwork and practices were reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the consulting veterinarian at ACCC and the Department of Agriculture; both sources, independently, concurred that the procedures being followed meet the standards for animal control facilities. Each person administering this procedure must be trained and approved by the consulting veterinarian. One staff member, currently conducting the euthanasia procedure, is not on the list and must perform this training.

It should be noted, in the State of Georgia, animals are considered the "property" of its owner. If an owner requests their animal be euthanized, even if healthy, ACCC must comply.

An inventory of the medications housed at ACCC found 18 different medications on hand. Four were expired. Distemper/Parvo for cats had an expiration of 09/13/2022 (it can be used up to 5 months after expiration). Dexamethasone, an antibiotic for dogs, had an expiration date of 04/2022. Vitamin B, for dogs and cats had an expiration of 10/2018. There were also 2 bottles of Amoxicillin, for dogs, that expired 01/2022. The remaining medications had no expiration dates, or dates of expiration in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Equipment

At the time of the audit, ACCC had 2 washing machines (1 of those is donated) 1 works, 3 clothes dryers (2 of those are donated) 1 works, 2 dishwashers (1 of those is donated) 1 works. It is recommended that the inoperable equipment be removed from the premises and new equipment purchased. UPDATE: a volunteer solicited the donation of both a washing machine and clothes dryer. The equipment was received the third week of November.

Shelter Documentation

Impoundment statistics and supporting documentation for ACCC were reviewed from November 2019 to current. The audit observed the processes for impoundment, the recording of information through adoption, rescue, or euthanasia. The numbers reported are reflected accurately but the documentation and paperwork are not managed or organized to fully support the numbers presented. It should also be noted that zip code information is not consistently recorded or entered in the system. Zip codes are a vital piece of information in determining high risk areas and areas in our community needing increased education or assistance. Much of this is due to not having an experienced staff processing paperwork and filing in a consistent manner. It is recommended that files be organized by type of transaction and day processed and that all relevant information be entered into the system. This will make any future research and proper re-filing easier on the staff.

When reviewing the Adoption and Return to Owner paperwork for 2022, documentation was present 92% of the time for return to owners and 98% of the time for adoptions. Seventy-one (71%) percent of the files had correctly attached receipts (the receipts matched the impound paperwork). The remaining paperwork either did not contain copies of the receipts or the receipt did not reconcile with the animal's impoundment form. A process has been implemented which states that the Shelter Staff complete the amount owed by the citizen; the front desk staff collects that pre-determined amount and completes the receipt.

ACCC is still using a LOTUS notes program; paper files are kept for each animal. During my time at the facility, I observed staff repeatedly looking for paperwork. At one time, preparations were being made to replace the LOTUS notes shelter software with another in-house created software; the efforts were discontinued due to the prospective move to PAWS, Humane. It is recommended that shelter software be purchased that includes the ability to follow the animals completely through the process at ACCC and all files are stored in the software (cloud).

Volunteer Coordinator & Volunteers

The Volunteer Coordinator position was vacant from June 21, 2022, to October 22, 2022. The vacancy of this role at ACCC has contributed to a decrease in volunteer activity.

ACCC has a volunteer log for volunteers to sign in and out of when volunteering. This log was reviewed for 2020, 2021 and 2022. The findings are as follows:

	<u># Volunteers Logging in</u>	<u>Time Spent Volunteering</u>
2020	574	approximately 2 hours
2021	106	approximately 2 hours
2022	49 (thru October)	approximately 1.5 hours

The decrease in the number of volunteers and the amount of time spent volunteering can be pinpointed to the vacancy of the Volunteer Coordinator position and the morale issues at Animal Control. Speaking with, and observing, volunteers uncovered feelings of being "in the way" and not needed. The stress of the staff very much affects the tone of the environment. ACCC is making efforts to address these issues with a realignment of staff and a more organized approach.

The Coordinator and volunteers play a crucial role in the success or failure of operations at ACCC. Because of the staffing issues at ACCC, the volunteers give the animals the time and attention that the staff may not have the ability to give. Volunteers are also resources that can be directed to pick up on routines not completed by ACCC staff.

Volunteers rely heavily on the Coordinator for guidance and organization of duties. It is recommended that the Volunteer Coordinator be prepared with a variety of duties available for completion; the volunteer can then choose duties based on his/her interests and help fulfill immediate needs at the same time. The Volunteer Coordinator should be easily accessible if the volunteers need assistance.

Front Desk Operations

Front Desk staff is responsible for assisting citizens at the front counter during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays) and dispatching those calls to the Field Officers via software in LOTUS Notes and hand-held radio. Front Desk staff works with citizens at the customer counter completing paperwork on adoptions, returning pets to owners, and the intake of surrendered animals. The collection of fees and the payment of city permits accompanies many of the citizen visits to ACCC. Monthly, Front Desk staff works with local veterinarians by delivering city permit supplies, retrieving permit payments collected by the veterinarian offices and collecting rabies vaccination information. A daily deposit is completed by the Front Desk staff.

Collected vaccine data is entered into the ACCC software by Front Desk staff and any staff that maybe assigned to light duty.

The Front Desk, along with the Special Enforcement Supervisor in Field Operations, is responsible for the issuance, maintenance and follow up of the information for the spay-neuter vouchers.

The spay-neuter vouchers are an effort to control the animal population in our community. At the time of adoption, ACCC collects payment from the citizen for animals to be altered within one month. The voucher is remitted by the citizen to the veterinarian performing the procedure as payment, the veterinarian returns vouchers to ACCC for their reimbursement. If ACCC does not receive vouchers submitted for reimbursement, a postcard is sent to the citizen as a friendly reminder to have the animal altered. If efforts are not made to alter the animal, citations are issued.

Findings & Recommendations

Staffing, through October 2022, is reflected below.

Desk Operations	Fully Staffed	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Comm Officer	3	2	1	3	3	2

The staff members have been in their positions less than one year.

A review of daily bank deposit processes reveals that daily reconciliations are in place and effective. Staff was reminded that any time cash is handled it should be under dual control.

Paperwork maintained by the Front Desk staff for spay-neuter vouchers reflects that the program is 40% effective. Paperwork tracking the altering of animals is not up to date, the follow up with citizens via postcards is not being completed nor is the issuing of citations. The reasons given for the incompleteness are new, inexperienced staff and manpower.

Office of Interim Division Manager

Findings & Recommendations

Staffing, through October 2022, is reflected below.

Interim Division Manager	Fully Staffed	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Veterinarian	1	1	1	1	0	0
Division Manager	1	0	0	0	0	0
Admin Coord	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	3	2	2	2	1	1

The Animal Control Veterinarian position is vacant. In 2018, 2019 and 2020 this position was reflected as filled and on payroll as “Temporary.” It is a G23 with an annual salary of \$67,777.45 (\$32.58 per hour). CCG’s recent Evergreen compensation study may reflect updated salary amounts and paygrade identifications. Research reflects earnings for a “junior-level” veterinarian in the state of Georgia is approximately \$78,780 (\$37.87 per hour). “Mid-level” veterinarian earnings began at \$100,660 (\$48.36 per hour).

The Division Manager of Animal Control position is vacant. The position is classified as a G21 with an annual salary of \$55,628 (\$26.74 per hour). The current salary is \$57,017 (\$27.41 per hour). The Administrative Coordinator has held this interim position since 2017 (5 years). An Administrative Coordinator is largely responsible for the principles and practices of modern office administration, records management, and operating standard office equipment. Again, CCG’s recent Evergreen compensation study may reflect updated salary amounts and paygrade identifications.

The Division Manager of Animal Control is responsible for reporting to the Department of Agriculture and the public. Observations on the completion of these reports are inefficient. There is keying and re-keying of the same information for different formatted reports. This handling and re-handling of data results in human error; large amounts of time is then invested tracking down the errors. It is recommended that there is a streamlining of reporting efforts via improved data collection tools and a shelter software. It is also recommended that this position evolve into a more active participant outside of the office spending time with the animals. Making these changes to the office routines will address concerns about the lack of involvement by the Interim Division Manager.

Website

An audit of the website was completed. Items reviewed included the information on the website, and responsiveness to user commands.

Findings include:

- 1) slow response to user commands (especially when scrolling through the pictures of the animals up for adoption),
- 2) no obvious appearance of a “processing” indicator, or other indicator, confirming user requests are being processed,
- 3) outdated information was posted throughout the website (i.e. hours of operation, inspection reports, etc....),

- 4) a calendar whose last posting was in March 2020,
- 5) an automatic scrolling information board that the user is unable to control.

It is recommended that the ACCC website be updated and possibly re-designed. Videos of animals at ACCC going on walks, having meet and greets and playing would be an opportunity to increase adoptions. Informational videos of animal control officers addressing most frequently asked questions may help reduce the negative impressions of some procedures and requirements of ACCC. Posting inspection reports, dates, and hours of operations, etc.... in one location and having links to one source of information would reduce inconsistency of information posted in multiple locations on the website. Remove features on the website that are not being maintained. It is also recommended that links to the ACCC website be placed on ACCC Facebook page.

Conversations with board members and rescues prompted research of the website for Maricopa Animal Care and Control in Arizona (www.maricopa.gov/5268/Animal-Care-and-Control). They have a Stray Animal Map Tool (click on "Lost or Found a Pet") that helps citizens retrieve lost and found animals. It is user-friendly and caters to some citizens tendency towards internet use. Maricopa County was very excited and proud of the tool and explained that they continue to add features. They also offered to share the code with CCG's GIS department and would help get us up and running. Maricopa Animal Control explained that there was very little, to no, maintenance by the shelter staff.

Why would this tool be beneficial to ACCC? THIS TOOL COULD PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN REDUCING THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS COMING TO ANIMAL CONTROL FOR IMPOUNDMENT. In 2019 the Dallas Animal Services Shelter in Dallas, TX, completed a study covering the relationship between stray intake and Return to Owner (RTO) rates, the distances traveled from home by RTO strays, microchip use across the city and its relationship with RTO rate and the length of stay of RTOs and other outcome groups. Findings show 70% of RTOed strays traveled, at most, 1 mile away from home and 42% up to one block away. At-large, adult strays that had a microchip had a 71% RTO success rate compared to 39% success rate without one. Implementing tools such as this is a path to saving significant shelter space, time, costs and helps keep animals with their caregivers and communities.

Budget

The budget for ACCC was reviewed for FY2019 through September 2022 (FY2023).

Each year the *total* budget was "under-budget." The leading driver is Government Salaries-General (object code 6105).

In FY2020 and 2021, employment expenses were approximately \$95,000 under budget. In FY2022, employment expenses were \$257,000 under budget. This large increase in salary savings (170% increase) is a result of the loss of employees due to the "prospective" move to PAWS, Humane. A premature release of information regarding discussions of potential changes precipitated employees leaving ACCC for other employment.

Operating expenses were slightly over budget in FY2021 and FY2022 (\$2,317 and \$1,169 respectively).

In FY2023, it is possible ACCC will maintain the "under-budget" status in employment expenses and, if spending remains constant, possibly in operating expenses.

Because of the severe staffing issues and the change of the midnight shift to an "on-call" shift, Overtime (object code 6115) could go over budget by \$50,000. In the past, ACCC utilized 3 inmates. It is recommended that ACCC re-implement the use of Inmate/Offender labor; this would require adding the position of a POST-Certified Officer to supervise the inmates. After speaking with the Public Works Director, the addition of a maintenance worker in the Shelter staff would be of greater benefit. Currently a maintenance worker is borrowed from another area in Public Works. His primary responsibility is not only maintaining the building but working with the animals in the runs.

As documented in the Shelter Staff recommendations, the removal and replacement of inoperable equipment should be considered.

Water (object code 6742) is consistently over budget. A walk through of the facility shows many faucets in the building leak; users must spend time trying to turn the faucets off. Frequently, the time is not spent to do so. It was also explained that in June 2022, there was a water leak at ACCC. Columbus Water Works made needed repairs and communicated with Public Works. Any expense incurred from this will be reflected in the FY2023 expense numbers.

During the month of November, a dog in the holding area was able to jump on top of the run fencing (approximately 6') and walk along the top of the fencing of the other runs. This was extremely dangerous for the dog, dogs in other runs and the shelter staff. Staff discussed fencing to top all runs; another, possibly less expensive, idea maybe the installation of "coyote-rollers" in each run. Below is an example:

RESULTS

Sponsor



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Pack of 5 Coyote Rollers, Load/Unload for Kayak Raft Trailer, Making Outfeed/Infeed Support Rollers, Fence Jumping Dog/Cat Stopped by Homemade Coyote Roller

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Lastly, medications have increased by 18% and dogfood prices have increased by 5%. Over a 4-year period, approximately 23 bags of dogfood were purchased per month; this has recently increased to 30 bags per month.

City permit revenue, from FY2017 thru October 2022 (FY2023), was reviewed. This revenue has consistently declined year over year falling to 17.57% below 2017 revenue. Several veterinarian offices in the community were collecting this city permit fee as a participant in the one-stop rabies vaccination--- pet registration program. The program allows the participating veterinarians to issue the permits at the time of the rabies vaccine and collect a handling charge of up to \$5 for each permit issued. In 2017, 14 veterinarian offices participated; currently, 11 offices participate.

A review of the finance paperwork, including daily bank deposits, found finance information to be in order.

Animal Care and Control Advisory Board

According to Columbus' city ordinances the board has three main objectives:

- 1) Monitor the operation of animal control and enforcement division and renders guidance and assistance as deemed appropriate encouraging responsible pet ownership.
- 2) Review the annual budget prior to submission.
- 3) Make decisions regarding the classification of dangerous or vicious dogs and cats.

Board meetings are scheduled by the Board Chairman; the Board is required to meet semiannually.

Findings & Recommendations

Frustration regarding board responsibilities, board involvement, number of board meetings and a general ineffectiveness of the board has been expressed by board members.

A review of 2020, 2021 and 2022 board minutes found successes:

- 1) the introduction of the Community Based Instruction (CBI) group from the Muscogee County School District,
- 2) a joint effort with PAWS to get animals altered,
- 3) a donation of 500 microchips (rec'd 250 to date),
- 4) a joint effort with PAWS helping consult owners about alternatives to surrendering their pets.

Other meetings invested time in:

- 1) dangerous dog hearings,
- 2) proposed ordinance changes, and
- 3) potential projects for volunteers.

The ideas and the intentions behind the ideas discussed are valuable but, the Board has mentioned the frustrations, time invested and seemingly lack of success making simple changes to ordinances. It is recommended that, at this time, "immediate" concerns of ACCC should be the focus of the Board. The Board has expressed interest in becoming more involved in the budgeting process and the creation of standard operating procedures for ACCC. The board's perception that it's request for more involvement has been met with resistance. It is recommended that board involvement will help the relationship and improve communications between the Board and ACCC by establishing more of a "unified" effort between the two. Including the board in discussions regarding standard operating procedures and budgeted funds may help expand the understanding and acknowledgement of issues and possible limitations not previously understood.


Summary

My time at Columbus Animal Care and Control included spending time with the staff, the Board, volunteers and lastly the animals. I was made to feel extremely welcomed by the Director of Public Works, the staff and the many other organizations affiliated with this operation. Ideas were readily flowing; recommendations were welcomed, and many implemented immediately.

Unfortunately, some in the community do not have a complete understanding of the operations at Animal Control. Opinions and issues are discussed publicly without having all the facts. During my time at Animal Control, I experienced emails, internet posts and citizens' complaints sent to Council Members, the Mayor and various online websites that simply were not true. Posting and reporting of incomplete/inaccurate information, perpetuates failed relationships, lack of trust with those working with Animal Control and low morale among the staff. If you feel improvement needs to be made at Animal Control, please become a volunteer; get involved and make a positive difference!

Prepared By:







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Department of Public Works

DATE: January 17, 2023

TO: Elizabeth Barfield, Internal Auditor

THRU: Lisa Goodwin, Deputy CM

FROM: Drale Short, Director of Public Works

SUBJECT: Response to Animal Control Audit/August 15, 2022

* * * * *

Audit Authorization – no comments

Background – no comments

Page 1 - General Audit Process

- 1. "The audit began with an entrance conference on August 15, 2022 with Interim Director, Contreanna Pearson, Field Operations Supervisor, Lt. Paul Syck, Shelter Supervisor, Sara Welsh, and Forensic Auditor, Elizabeth Barfield."

Correction: Interim Director should be Interim Division Manager.

Page 1 & 2 - Field Operations

Clarification of Shifts Worked

Normal Shifts/Before Staffing shortages:

- Sunday – Saturday
- 1st Shift – 6:00 am. – 2:00 p.m.
- 2nd Shift – 2:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
- 3rd Shift – 10:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m.

Due to shortages the hours of operation are as follows:

Monday – Friday

1st Shift – 6:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

2nd Shift – 2:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

3rd Shift – ON CALL for Emergencies Only/No Patrols

Saturday – Sunday

1st Shift – On Call

2nd Shift – On Call

3rd Shift – On Call

On Call Services are Emergency calls only pertaining to Injured Animals, Animal Cruelty/Neglect. CPD/Sheriff Dept requested support.

Under normal circumstances “Each shift, has additional coverage; except the midnight shift, by having a City-Wide Officer. With the shortages coverage is down to either one officer covering the entire city or One ACO in the north and the other ACO handling the South. Coverage is solely dependent on the availability of ACO’s.

Page 2 Findings & Recommendations

Low staffing levels have result in:

3) Discontent among staff. Please include low staffing levels have also resulted in “Compassion Fatigue for staff as well as increased stress levels.

“When speaking with the Department of Health, incomplete bite reports being filed and inconsistent processes among staff were identified.”

Incomplete Bite Reports – During the time that these few reports were observed and reported as incomplete. The Field Supervisor was out due to illness in which he was out of work for several weeks. To preclude this from happening in the future, the Division Manager and or Shelter Supervisor will check these reports for accuracy and completeness and once completed they will be forwarded to the Department Health for processing. This process has been corrected.

Page 2 & 3 - Shelter Operations

Findings & Recommendations

“Shelter Operations also has two employees that have been borrowed from other areas in Public Works; they have been at ACCC for approximately 4 months and ae not reflected on ACCC’s payroll.”

Position 1 – Personnel action of moving a long-term troubled Maintenance Worker from Stormwater workforce to ACC to save a long-term employee from termination. He has been assigned to this area to assist with cleaning the shelter and has been in place for the last four (4) months.

Position 2 – A Waste Equipment Worker position that has been funded in the Integrated Waste budget; but reports to and supervised by the Shelter Supervisor. This position is responsible for collecting all the deceased animals found on the road, at homes etc. This position has been handled in this way since the State turned over Animal Control duties to the City.

Page 5 - Shelter Operations (Cont.)

Crates

“In July 2022, ACCC began using crates t house impounded dogs; this is not a best practice. At one point during the audit, 14 crates were occupied”.

Please include this statement “, but upwards of 21 crates have been used to prevent euthanasia. The challenges of cleaning and caring for these additional animals with three (3) shelter staff often required staff to work overtime to ensure all were cleaned properly to ensure cleanliness for the next occupant.”

Since this audit the use of crates has been reduced due to State Law which only allows an animal to be crated for 24 hrs.

Medical

“An inventory of the medications housed at ACCC found 18 different medications on hand.”

Inventory of the medications at this facility showed some medication to be outdated based on the terms on the bottle, but under the direction of our veterinarian who would often advise us to continue using due to the potency (several months) than what is printed on the labels, i.e. Vitamin B. Other outdated medications were disposed of as should have been done initially.

“It should be noted, in the state of Georgia, animals are considered the “Property of its owner. If an owner requests their animal be euthanized, even if healthy, ACC must comply.”

Also please add those totals affect the live release rate in our reporting.

Page 5 - Equipment

“Currently ACCC has 2 washing machines (1 of those is donated) 1 works, 3 clothes dryers (2 of those are donated) 1 works, 2 dishwashers (1 of those is donated) 1 works.....”

Concerned that the way this first paragraph is worded that it implies we don't replace appliances. We do replace them when the need arises, but fortunately, we've received several donations of appliances. Some last and some don't, but once they stop working they dispose of these appliances at the landfill, but must be taken separately from the deceased animals.

We receive inquiries monthly on the donations of old appliances.

Page 6 - Shelter Documentation

“It should be noted that zip code information is not consistently recorded or entered in the system”.

We recognize the importance of “Zip Code” information and our current system accepts only Muscogee County Zip Codes, but we don't always have a person who lives in Muscogee County calling us to pick up an animal from a location within Muscogee County.

To ensure all zip codes are encoded, staff has been instructed to use the zip code where the officer was dispatched to identify the location on the impoundment record. Example: If it's someone who found an animal in the Wal-Mart parking lot, they are to use the Wal-Mart address and zip code for the Impoundment Record.

Currently, the ACC is using a Lotus Notes “in house” designed database system to handle all records pertaining to the ACC. ACC has requested funding to purchase an appropriate Animal Shelter/Field Officer Software that will handle Impoundment Information as well as Dispatch Records and all other functions of Animal Control.

Page 8 – Findings & Recommendations

The ACC Website is being upgraded by the IT Department and these improvements have been ongoing with IT for the last 2 years. We understand the staffing shortages that have interfered with the completion of this upgrade. They are actively working to upgrade this site and have it published soon.

All recommendations will be considered and implemented where appropriate. Some recommendations or changes can only be implemented with increase in staffing.

However, we really felt the Mapping Tool would be a tool that our residents can use to match animals to find lost and found animals. This tool is in process and we are hopeful on line and being used by the end of this month.

Page 9 - Budget

“In the past, ACCC utilized 3 inmates. This was discontinued due to increased security measures put into place by the new Warden”

In the past ACC has had the ability to obtain 1-3 Blue Card Inmates, but due to the shortage of trustees, they have not had any since Covid. MCP is aware of our needs and is diligently working to place blue card inmates at the ACC.

A Red Card inmate possess a higher security requirement (Correctional Detail Officer). ACC does not have any Correctional Detail Officers budgeted. To obtain a position of this nature, it would have to be funded under the Public Safety Pay Plan, the individual would have to obtain his/her Post Certification to supervise inmates with this security level. Blue Card inmates don't require this amount of security, but there is a shortage of these inmates.

If we had a Post Certified Officer, it would be easier for MCP to fulfill our inmate needs.

Page 10 – Budget Cont.

“During the month of November, a dog in the holding area was able to jump on top of the run fencing (appx 6') and walk along the top of the fencing of the other runs.”

Coyote-Rollers, we will be ordering one set to use and install in one run to ensure it will work within our facility. If successful we will outfit all runs with this roller to stop animals from being able to escape their runs.

Page 11 - Animal Control Advisory Board

“(3) a donation of 400 microchips”

Only 250 microchips have been received from the donation.