

# Washoe County Regional Animal Services

## Advisory Board

Friday, February 21, 2025 @ 9:00 a.m.  
Washoe County Commission Chambers  
1001 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Building A, Reno NV  
and available via Zoom and YouTube

### **Members Present:**

Naomi Duerr, Chair  
Clara Andriola  
Trudy Brussard  
Diaz Dixon  
Jill Fisher

### **Members Present via Zoom:**

Julie McMahon

### **Members Absent:**

Joe Rodriguez

#### **1. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum [Non-Action Item]**

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. and a quorum was present.

#### **2. Salute to the Flag [Non-Action Item]**

Member Clara Andriola led all those convened in the pledge of allegiance.

#### **3. Instruction for Providing Public Comment via Zoom/Telephone [Non-Action Item]**

Jennifer Gustafson, Deputy District Attorney, provided instructions for members of the public to join the meeting via Zoom or telephone and provided instructions for how members of the public could provide oral public comment via Zoom or telephone.

#### **4. Public Comment [Non-Action Item]**

There was no public comment offered at this time.

#### **5. Approval of October 18, 2024 Meeting Minutes [For Possible Action]**

Member Jill Fisher pointed out a spelling & grammatical error on page 12 of 12. Member Trudy Brussard complimented the board clerk on the excellence of the recent minutes. Member Brussard moved to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2024, meeting of the Washoe County Regional Animal Services Advisory Board with the following corrections. Member Diaz Dixon seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously by the board with no opposition, with the corrections so noted.

“Pheonix and Arizona” will be corrected to “Phoenix, Arizona” on page 12 of 12.

## **6. Director’s Report [Non-Action Item]**

Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) Director Shyanne Shull presented the Fiscal Year 2025 quarter two report. She opened by welcoming Member Clara Andriola to the Animal Services Advisory Board. She then went on to discuss the personnel challenges including the time, effort, and resources that have gone into onboarding new team members as well as how vacancies impact service delivery and efficiency. WCRAS has 46 full-time positions and 1 half-time position allocated to the department. The small department operates seven days per week, 365 days per year and all vacancies or light-duty assignments have a significant impact on the department. During the last quarter WCRAS hired one animal services officer (ASO), one caretaker, and one program assistant.

The onboarding time for one ASO is three to six months, which includes pulling a field training officer from their regular routine to train the new officer, so it is very labor intensive. Currently the department has one ASO vacancy and one caretaker vacancy, with interviews in progress for both positions, as well as two full-time employees on modified duty which significantly impacts the department’s coverage ability. In addition, recent labor negotiations increased available vacation time for employees which also impacts WCRAS’ ability to provide coverage with the same level of service. This affects service delivery, call response times, and overall efficiency as well as redirecting services and onboard training and takes away the ability to provide efficient field service coverage, shelter coverage, and round-the-clock service. For those reasons and respectfully understanding that Washoe County has significant budget constraints, the department is requesting an additional lead ASO position. WCRAS currently has only one lead ASO who is responsible for internal training and bringing on all new ASO recruits. This position has been overwhelmed and not able to balance the number of new recruits in addition to the internal training that the department has been trying to provide to the ASO’s without having to send them away for training. This type of train-the-trainer program has proven to be more efficient, not only for training new officers, but also for the ongoing recertification that are required.

Another significant achievement accomplished during quarter two was developing a shared behavior protocol with the Nevada Humane Society (NHS) through the respective behavior consultants. The goal of the shared behavior protocol is to help identify unsafe behavior in dogs and evaluate the level of risk to our community and to our shelters. WCRAS is largely a lost and found shelter with limited holding capacity and has never provided this service before. Shifting the focus to include behavioral assessments meant that staff was going to be taking on additional work to learn and also document and record a lot of additional behavioral data. Behavior notetaking has been integrated into our shelter so that notes are taken by staff from the first contact by field staff, intake staff, and medical staff. In addition, the caretakers are performing a full behavior assessment on each dog where the animal is taken out of the kennel to a

quiet area and its responses to human interaction, touch, resource guarding, other dogs, and more are measured. These assessments require two caretakers, out of seven total employed by the department, and take 30 to 45 minutes per dog. The goal is to assess the risk of each animal for safety to the community and not put those that present significant risk, meeting the threshold based on the shared behavior protocol, on the transfer list for the NHS or other rescue transfer partners. This has created a significant shift in workload and is not sustainable with the current number of staff. For that reason WCRAS is also requesting a Transfer and Behavior Coordinator position. This will be a brand new position to be a conduit of information, behavior evaluations, and liaison with rescue partners including working to bring on new rescue and transfer partners to help with the animals that do not get transferred to NHS.

Chair Naomi Duerr asked for clarification on the behavior assessments since both WCRAS and NHS are doing them. Director Shull explained that each agency is doing their own respective evaluation and that WCRAS' evaluation is very different than NHS' evaluation. WCRAS does an evaluation so that the department can develop a pathway plan for the animal and not rely 100% on any specific transfer partner to take the animal. NHS' criteria is very different and although they may decline to transfer an animal it doesn't mean that the animal isn't adoptable. WCRAS networks with other rescue partners and having that behavior assessment helps the department to do that networking and to ensure that the animal is safe to put back into the community. Chair Duerr followed up with another question regarding the timing of NHS' evaluation. Director Shull explained that WCRAS' goal is to make sure that all animals have had an assessment by the end of the 5-day stray hold and a pathway plan in the works. Only on the sixth day, when the animal is available to be transferred, and if it has not been deemed a risk to the community, does NHS come over and perform their assessment of the animal. Chair Duerr expressed that she was seeing two different processes with WCRAS performing their assessments over a several day period and NHS is performing their assessments over perhaps a one-hour period. Director Shull agreed that they are very different. Because WCRAS is a limited holding facility there is not the opportunity to really interact with the animal outside of the sheltering environment and so this process is what the behavioral consultant, Kelly Bollen, has suggested to determine who the dog really is. Chair Duerr asked for further clarification regarding how many animals are returned to their owner so that she could have a better understanding of how many animals are affected by the behavioral assessment. Director Shull offered that in 2024 approximately 60% of stray dogs that came into the facility got returned to their owners. She also reminded the board that some of the animals in the shelter are case animals or quarantine animals and are not stray animals. Member Diaz Dixon explained to the board that cortisol levels in dogs in shelters are three times higher than a dog at home. The first three days are really critical when the cortisol levels are really high. Cortisol is a hormone that helps regulate stress, blood pressure, and many other things so you can't do a quick evaluation on a dog. He commended WCRAS for making sure the evaluation is done over a period of time which is hard for the department to do, but it is the right way to do it.

At this point in time the meeting was interrupted by an incidence of “zoom bombing”. The Zoom meeting was closed at this point and a new meeting was created for Member Julie McMahon, WCRAS staff members, and anyone else who may have reached out to WCRAS staff for access to the meeting.

**7. Establish ASAB Meeting Dates for 2025 [For Possible Action]**

The board members present discussed available dates for 2025 and proposed the following for the quarterly meetings of the Animal Services Advisory Board.

May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025  
October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**8. Election of Officers [For Possible Action]**

Member Trudy Brussard volunteered her services as Vice-Chair. Member Diaz Dixon motioned to elect Member Trudy Brussard as Vice-Chair and re-elect Chair Naomi Duerr. Member Clara Andriola seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by the board with no opposition.

**9. Washoe County Regional Animal Services Advisory Board Member and/or Staff Announcements, Requests for Information, and Selection of Topics for Future Agendas [Non-Action Item]**

Jennifer Gustafson, Deputy District Attorney, announced that she will be stepping back from representing the Animal Services Advisory Board and will be replaced by Andrew “Cobi” Burnett, Deputy District Attorney, as legal counsel.

Chair Naomi Duerr asked for clarification regarding the play area that Washoe County Regional Animal Services is preparing versus the play area that the Nevada Humane Society is preparing. Director Shyanne Shull explained that the two areas were completely separate with different purposes and that the Nevada Humane Society’s area was being constructed behind the facility at 2825 Longley Lane where the old shelter was located.

Chair Naomi Duerr acknowledged the zoom bombing that occurred earlier during meeting and the offensive nature of the material that was shared. She assured the board that a review would be made into the processes that led to this happening with the goal of preventing any further such occurrences.

The following items were proffered for future agenda items:

- a. Chair Naomi Duerr would like to see a report on all of the newly enhanced

spay/neuter programs in Washoe County with an invitation to representatives of those programs to attend.

- b. Member Andriola would like to have a discussion of bylaws for revision including specifying term-limits for board officers and clarity of timeline for the Director's Report to the Board of County Commissioners. Chair Naomi Duerr suggested also adding a presentation to the City of Reno and the City of Sparks.
- c. Member Trudy Brussard would like to hear an update on the state of the Washoe County Regional Animal Services building, and specifically the HVAC systems.
- d. Chair Naomi Duerr asked for an updated PSA. Director Shull proposed an update to the work being done on the shared protocols and other agreements.

#### **10. Public Comment [Non-Action Item]**

A question was proposed in the Zoom chat but the community member was having audio complications and was not able to address the board. Her question, in the form of an email, was also sent out to the Animal Services Advisory Board while the board was meeting. There was no other public comment offered at this time.

#### **11. Adjournment [Non-Action Item]**

Chair Duerr declared the Animal Services Advisory Board meeting of February 21, 2025, adjourned at 10:51 p.m.