

LOUISIANA ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY TASKFORCE MEETING
AUGUST 22, 2018
VETERANS MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD, 1ST FLOOR
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70806
PROCEEDINGS

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Deputy Commissioner Brent Robbins, DVM.

PLEDGE

Board member, Ashley Delrie, led the pledge of allegiance.

Emily Andrews, LDAF General Council, gave a procedural review.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken by John Walther, LDAF Assistant Commissioner for Animal Health and Food Safety.

Members present: Deputy Commissioner Brent Robbins, DVM, Chalyn Fayard, DVM, Hilton Cole, Ashley Delrie, Shelly Fontenot, DVM, Ellen Abington and Chip Fitz.

Commissioner Mike Strain, DVM thanked the members for their service. He spoke on how the Advisory Taskforce was set up from the Governor's office to be handled through the state veterinarian's office. The taskforce was to set up to work with local animal control entities to help them meet the uniform standards. He gave figures on the number of completed inspections and those that were found non-compliant. He said the methodology will be to send out letters to parish president, head of the police jury or whatever system of government they are. We will continue to do re-inspections to help work with them to advise them to follow the rules and regulations. He said we are hitting our target numbers.

He thanked the team that worked with Plaquemine Parish shelter when the A/C system failed. Everyone worked together to mobilize to get them support. He received correspondence back from the Parish President thanking us.

He talked about the second pet trailer and that we have two units (Banfield and LSART) now that will house up to one hundred animals.

John Walther mentioned that the Banfield pet trailer will be on display this Sunday at Pet Smart. We will be out there along with law enforcement and other response agencies

Commissioner Strain said that the mission will continue to grow and that Louisiana co-location and cohabitated sheltering is being looked at as a national model for other states to follow.

Dr. Robbins talked about the Plaquemine A/C failure. He said that within a matter of minutes we had air conditioners and generators headed down there. We want to be able to support our shelters when they need it.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Robbins asked for public comment. When there was none he asked the new veterinary medical officer to introduce herself. Dr. Ashley Prejean introduced herself and talked a little about herself.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dr. Robbins asked about approval of the minutes. Chip Fitz made a motion to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Ashley Delrie. Motion was approved by the board members.

OLD BUSINESS

Robbie Averett gave an update on the shelter inspection program. She gave an overview of the facilities that were compliant and non-compliant with the minimum standards at the time of inspection. She said that they were currently working with the facilities that were re-inspected and still did not meet the minimum standards at the time of inspection.

Robbie Averett discussed the shelter assistance we recently provided to St Charles Parish and Plaquemines Parish during facility maintenance (St Charles) and AC outage (Plaquemines).

Dr. Robbins asked Robbie a question about the shelter visits that had not been done. Out of 72 we have inspected 53 and inquired when the other 19 would be complete. Robbie said the other 19 would be scheduled by end of this week and should be completed by November. Dr. Robbins mentioned that this committee provides the legislature with a report that is due by February 1 and asked if the inspections would be complete by January and Robbie said yes.

Dr. Robbins also asked Robbie about how many we have re-inspected. She said 4 have been re-inspected and that some that were non-compliant won't need a re-inspection because they already had a plan in place to correct the issues. Additionally, others specifically requested a re-inspection, so we are in the process of going back to those just to recheck and reassure them that they are in compliance.

Mr. Hilton Cole discussed how this committee is raising the level of pressure politically so that the shelters can achieve more of their goals for the humane treatment of the animals and the shelters are glad to have the oversight of this committee and the awareness that it brings to their needs.

Commissioner Strain also communicated that the department operates thru our adjudicatory boards and not the media. He stressed that we are here to help the shelters.

Ellen Abington spoke about Robbie and Lily's inspection at their facility and that it helped them feel like they were doing a good job and that will help them reach out to other shelters that may need help.

Dr. Chalyn Fayard said it is helpful to have outsiders come in and go thru the checklist and help keep them focused on the big picture.

Ashley Delrie asked Robbie about the shelter's reception of the registration law and even though it is voluntary at this point, are the shelters receptive to this registration. Robbie said they have been well

received and they are almost at 100% registration. We are also at 100% on the emergency plan submissions.

Chip Fitz asked what do we find are the specific reasons for the non-compliance of the standards. Robbie said that most people do not know that there are minimum standards prescribed by law. She stated we normally email the standards to the shelters ahead of the inspections, then we sit down with them during the inspection and review those standards. She stated we do not say that shelters "fail", but rather they are either compliant or non-compliant because we are here to help them meet the standards.

Commissioner Strain discussed the news he heard this morning on the radio about an Adopt A Thon they just had in Florida where six or seven entities came together and all the animals were adopted... a "clear the shelter" program.

Dr. Shelly Fontenot asked if we are certain that we have identified all the shelters in the state. Robbie said no, we still have a few parishes in the state that we are waiting to hear from. Shelly asked of the 18 of the 90 that have no shelter, is this due to a lack of funding or a lack of need. Robbie said they did not ask that question. She explained that some parishes may use other parish shelters because they don't have their own but they are making an effort to get the animals into shelters. Shelly then asked about the shelters who have inventories exceeding their capacities and can we get those shelters to identify their capacity. Robbie said they recently did an inspection and those issues were apparent and so they had given the task force members phone numbers so they could call regarding assistance.

Ellen Abington questioned is there not a law on the books for every parish to have a shelter and how the funding that may come in goes to salaries and never gets to the animals.

Ashley Delrie stated that the law reads that the parish must have some sort of impounding facility, not necessarily a shelter. The minimum is that they have a holding facility to hold an animal for a minimum period of time and then have a plan of how to care for the animal after that. She said there is no state law requiring any parish or municipality to have a shelter.

Ashley Delrie stated that in terms of transparency, a lot of people in the animal welfare community would like to see a list of the 90 facilities that have been inspected so that the public knows what is going on with the program.

John Walther stated that we are currently updating our website with the list but it has yet to be decided if it will be made public which ones have been inspected. She said she often gets phone calls saying a specific facility needs to be inspected, but it would be great if the public could access that list before calling.

Robbie Averett discussed further that this is something they are working on, including a map.

Lillie Wiley noted that some of the parishes that state they have no shelter really mean they have no public shelter, but rather have private shelters.

Ashley Delrie asked if the private shelters are subject to the voluntary registration as well. She then noted that it would be helpful for citizens of parishes that don't have a public shelter to know what private shelters are available.

There was discussion between Ashley Delrie, Dr. Shelly Fontenot, Robbie Averett, and Ellen Abington regarding publically identifying places where animals can be brought if the parish does not have a public shelter.

NEW BUSINESS

John Walther said based on the success of the program so far we would like to move on with the next step. He reminded everyone that one of the objectives set forth in the first task force meeting was to develop training modules so we would have a product to deliver to the parishes. The board also authorized Robbie to work one-on-one with the members to develop these types of products. Robbie Averett began the discussion of the different training modules assigned:

Shelter Management Module

Chip Fitz & Hilton Cole are coordinating with us on enforcement of state laws; training of ACOs, kennel staff, and office staff; also the importance of passing of a millage, and then LSART (Louisiana State Animal Response Team) will develop the evacuation training module, which has already been given to Robbie. They made a date to meet and discuss these modules in order to have them fully prepared by the next meeting.

Hilton Cole spoke of Chip Fitz, being the new president of LACCA and the recent name change to LACCA (Louisiana Animal Care and Control Association). He spoke at length of LACCA'S mission and philosophies and discussed training that LACCA would like to this advisory board to participate in.

Chip Fitz then spoke of a planned LACCA symposium of shelter directors and stated they would like for the task force to come to the meeting and introduce themselves and speak to all the directors about our mission. Robbie agreed that she would attend and speak.

Ashley Delrie spoke of a conversation she had recently with Dr. Shelley Fontenot, regarding the future of animal welfare in this state, and that unequivocally, it is the development of partnerships around the state between the public and non-profit organizations.

Robbie Averett asked Chip to set a date for the 2nd week of September to go over the training module and discuss what part he wants us to play in the symposium.

Shelter Operations Module:

Robbie Averett stated that Dr. Shelly Fontenot is the lead on this training module that includes rabies sanitary codes, shelter hygiene, health & basics. Dr. Fontenot gave an updated on the progress she has made in writing the module.

Grants Module:

Ashley Delrie discussed at length the Grants Module that she is writing. She discussed their importance, the lack of information about writing them, what kind of services are available for grant writing, and partnerships with grant writing businesses.

Discussion was held between Robbie Averett, Ellen Abington, and Ashley Delrie regarding meeting to discuss partnerships.

Robbie Averett let everyone know that LSART is hosting a pet evacuation and shelter training in Monroe/West Monroe on the following Saturday. She encouraged everyone to encourage their staff to attend because it is important information and free.

Discussion was held about the smaller agencies not being on the same level as the bigger agencies and then discussion ensued about larger agencies helping the smaller agencies....a "buddy" program of sorts.

Self-Assessment/Best Practices

John Walther, Robbie Averett, and Ashley Delrie discussed the draft copy of the shelter's self-assessment tool that was included in the member's packets. Robbie asked that the members review it and give comments/suggestions so that they can get a final draft prepared by the next meeting.

Further discussion ensued when Hilton Cole and Ellen Abington asked questions about transports and using the Self-Assessment for standard operating practices.

Minimum Standards for Animal Shelters

John Walther says they have started the process of gathering statutes from other states so that we can update our standards.

Voluntary Pet Database

John Walther discussed that we want to be very careful that the shelters understand that this is a different database from the registration and data matrix. Ashley Delrie said that this database is an oversight and should not have been included in the statute and she would like to see it removed from the statute. John said he will talk to the commissioner about it.

Ethics

Emily Andrews discussed the required by law ethics training that every member must complete and reminded all that they have to do this every calendar year.

Public Records & Open Meetings Laws

Emily discussed the laws and encouraged all members to read the laws. She reminded them of the definition of public records and open meetings and encouraged the members to be aware when there are 4 or more of them together and receiving information over which they have advisory authority over, then that is considered a quorum and their emails regarding work on this task force are public record. She discussed walking/rolling quorums and the use of technology, the retention schedule, and the 3 year minimum retention of public records.

Dr. Robbins said he wanted everyone to know that he is very impressed at the amount of work they have accomplished already.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for January 9, 2019 at 10:00 AM.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn by Dr. Shelly Fontenot and seconded by Hilton Cole. Motion passed unanimously.

