**DURHAM COUNTY ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of March 23, 2021**

**Present:**

*Committee Members:*Shannon McCabe, Jan Paul, Capt. Marianne Bond, Kari Linfors, Brian Mulligan, Amanda Gardner, Joy Nolan, Dr. Kate Bremser

*Non-voting Members:* Commissioner Heidi Carter, Capt. Tim Deck, Capt. Mark Manning, Leah Santelli

*Community Members and Observers:* Rodney Jenkins, Lt. R. Rose, Wendy Pinner, Sarah Reichman

*Presenters:* Dr. Carl Williams, Scott Anderson

Committee Counsel: Willie Darby

**Next Regular Meeting:** Tuesday, April 27, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. – Virtual Meeting

**Item I - Introductory Remarks**

The special meeting was called to order by acting Chair, Capt. Tim Deck, at 7:01 p.m. The topic of this second special meeting is the issue of community cat management. Capt. Deck welcomed and introduced the presenters. The meeting was recorded on GoToMeeting.

Presentations were provided relating to the issue of TNVR were made by the following:

* Scott Anderson, Bird Conservation Biologist, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

Stated that the NCWRC does not have an official position on free-ranging, native cats. As a practical matter, given that feral cats cannot be eliminated, the goal is control. Stated that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and that the effectiveness of various cat control programs and methods, including TNVR, should be thoroughly examined. Addressed bird conservation as a whole, and the goal of reducing impact on birds. Noted that there are no endangered birds in Durham County. Annual vaccinations of feral cats is important. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agents has made available a Toolkit to Address Free-Ranging Domestic Cats. Randolph County, NC, has a successful program for population control, including sterilization and adoption. Trapping/removal is unpopular, and the least desirable or humane. Important factors are a combination of multiple control techniques, consistency, public participation, stakeholder buy-in, and adequate resources.

The question-and-answer period following this presentation was a discussion of the importance of agreed-upon goals, including reducing the population and public health impacts. Sterilization and repeated vaccinations are key components.

* Dr. Carl Williams, NC Division of Public Health, State Public Health Veterinarian. Has done extensive study of rabies virus and disease control. The CDC and the State Division of Public Health have no official position statement on feral cats. A 2013 publication of EPI Notes addressed feral cats with recommendations for TNVR. Public Health is responsible for rabies control: physicians must treat, veterinarians need to ensure animals seen are vaccinated; animal services must enforce mandatory vaccination requirements. Discussed several approaches: (1) legal ownership of or personal responsibility for feral cats; (2) “owned” cats, dogs, ferrets must be vaccinated; cat colony caretakers must oversee; (3) colony caretakers need pre-exposure rabies vaccination, and to consider liability issues, including medical insurance for people exposed or bitten; (4) the critical need to define goals.

During the question and answer period following this presentation, there was discussion about how ownership requirements could have a chilling effect on people who would feed, trap, sterilize, or vaccinate, thus increasing the number of feral cats; the fact that rabies is a preventable disease; vaccine hesitancy.

The Committee had a general discussion regarding the need to modify/clarify definitions in our ordinance; liability; the shelter’s resources and means; the need for multiple agencies to collaborate; and the goal of vaccination of feral cats.

Following the presentations and discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Janice Perrin Paul

Committee Secretary