

**THE GOVERNING BOARD
OF THE JOINT POWERS AGENCY OF THE
STANISLAUS ANIMAL SERVICES AGENCY (SASA)**
Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting

Thursday

August 15, 2024

Members Present:

Jewel Warr, Alternate for Stanislaus County-Chair
Scotty Douglass, Alternate for City of Modesto
Mike Pitcock, City of Waterford
Dominique Romo, City of Hughson
Mike Willett, Alternate for City of Patterson
Doug Dunford, City of Ceres

Staff Present:

Jesus Mendoza, Deputy County Counsel
Stephanie Loomis, Business Manager
Megan Morriss, Confidential Assistant IV
Regina Menezes, Manager
Connie Hooker, Operations Manager

Guests and Dignitaries: None

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Chair, Jewel Warr.

1. **Welcome:** Jewel Warr-Chair.
2. **Roll Call (Silent):** Welcome and introductions
3. **Presentations:** None
4. **Public Comment Period (Limit of 5 minutes per person):**
 - A. Darla Chayrez-Statement to the Board. I am here to express sadness and anger to the decision to euthanize the dog, King Kong. Some of you may be aware of the petition I created urging the Mayor, MPD and the City Council. The petition has garnered more than 2000 signatures and supported KK's release. I also attended and testified at the trial. Despite our dedication to establish a Rescue out of state, a transporter to drive him to his new destination, and a certified trainer to work on the skills. You made a permanent decision to lead him through death's door and end his life. On July 31st, despite our attorneys urging, KK was killed. This was unjust and fueled by power and ignorance. This amazing and resilient dog spent 141 days in a small, confined space without sunlight, mental stimulation, or any human touch. He embodied a spirit to remain calm and happy even though he was deemed a vicious bite dog. KK's

presence will be missed by plenty that knew his true self. The staff that visited him regularly, his human family that loved him and the volunteers and trainers who had the opportunity to spend time with him and assess him. Last year I fostered and rescued a bite dog from SASA. She is the sweetest dog, has never bit anyone in my home or in my presence. She loves every dog, cat, puppy, kitten, or livestock animal that stays on our property for rehabilitation. Dogs are not humans and do not have the ability to communicate words. They do so through their visual cues and vocalizations. KK clearly communicated his fears and concerns and proceeded to act. His natural instincts ultimately cost him his life and the people behind the decision are cowards. KK's fight is not over. Even though he is no longer present, his case and circumstances we will never forget. We as a community of taxpayers, the ones that elect and pay for your compensation, are sickened, and disheartened by the cruel conditions these dogs are subjected to. We are angry about your collective decision to not let KK live out his life in North Carolina. Let me end by saying, what's more unsettling and haunts me is the email communication from attorney Ms. Jensen on July 31st at 4:59pm to the City Attorney and County Counsel. She informed them that an appeal would be filed the next day and to not proceed with the euthanasia. But the next morning, KK was no longer in his kennel and all that was left was his bowls and harness. What a tragic and preventable end to this dog's life because he mattered. As a social worker, I am passionate about serving my community...fighting for justice. My drive is about bringing awareness, helping those that are vulnerable, voiceless, and innocent. Our mission isn't over, it's just the beginning. Thank you-

- B.** Linda Ford-Good morning to the Board, SASA staff and guests. My name is Linda Ford and I was confidential assistant for 33 years...well not the whole 33 years but quite a long time. I would tell you what I did hear but it is Confidential. Today I wanted to share some items that have been on social media-Facebook and neighborhood applications. People are getting to where they no longer trust Animal Services personnel to do their jobs. The problem is that citizens cannot get animals picked up by the Shelter due to overcrowding. So, the general public is finding fosters, who in turn find homes for these pets with no records as to where they go. No records as to finding a lost animal and things like that. These animals are not being reunited with their owners. Additionally, the animals they are placing are not being spayed/neutered nor are the vaccinated. The Shelter unfortunately is exacerbating the pet owner population problems that they fought so hard to get under control. The Shelter cannot hold onto animals forever, which is causing overcrowding. There has to be a balance somehow. The following are questions I have:
- i. Can we put out a request for 501(c)3 Rescues to be created?
 - ii. Can we get a faster turn around time for Rescues to get the animals out of the shelter?
 - iii. Can we increase the size of the Shelter?

Don't get me wrong, I am all for animal welfare. I think it's great, but I think there needs to be some planning and balance. It's sad to read about so many owners never find their animals again because they aren't going to the one place where they should look to find their

animals. Animal shelters are where people would find their pets, leave lost reports and check found reports. Additionally, overcrowding could soon aid in the destruction of a state-of-the-art facility. Lastly, on social media many have shared the following information:

- iv. Animal Services tells them to leave an animal in the street because they have no officers available.

After asking some jurisdictional questions they are usually talking about Modesto Animal Services. Modesto has its own animal services unit. Shouldn't they be available 7 days a week and on call at night? Or maybe they would like to revise a contract and let SASA do it, so they have 7 day a week coverage? Many people don't know there is a difference for City of Modesto, so they blame SASA for everything. Thank you-

Diane Dominguez-I have a simple question. I need to know the procedure how to get on the agenda for the SASA JPA Board? How does the public do that?

Answer by Jewel Warr-The office staff set the agenda, so I don't believe we have an avenue for that. Action items come from staff. However, you can speak during public comment.

Jennifer Hefferman-My name is Jennifer Hefferman and I'm here concerned citizen of Stanislaus and an animal activist. But I am also here as one of the legal professionals who worked on King Kong's appeal case. So, there are many things and many questions we have for you as an agency. Many questions have come to light when we worked on this appeal. The problem we are toughing on today is it seems like when we filed the appeal there were many flaws and inconsistencies as an agency when euthanizing and destroying animals. It was very confusing to us when we tried to save King Kong's life. It came to light that you had the power as an agency and the County of Stanislaus had the power to save his life. We need to know why? Many of you sitting at the table today were on that decision to euthanize King Kong. We need some accountability. Why didn't you use your power and authority to make a decision to save his life. We had knowledge of two rescues before we even filed this appeal that said we will come and pick him up. We have transportation. We wanted to see who he is, is he a viable animal that could be placed in a home to be loved. Truthfully, he had an owner who did not properly train him, did not properly take care of him. I think with proper care he could have. But there were decisions made that took that away from him. We want to know why? I know Diane was saying, how to we get on the agenda and on the list? How do we get our answers? Can you answer that today for me? We tried a lot. We tried through our filings and things that we emailed to you. In our Public Records Request we got emails between you and Rescue groups, and nothing was done. Why? We need to figure out how to maybe get on an agenda to talk about looking at those codes that you guys hide behind. The City of Modesto took control of this and gave you guys orders when I think it was your ability to come to a decision. So, we need some answers. I don't know if you can answer that for me today? We will be at other meetings too besides today. We will be addressing your logs for euthanasia. On King Kong's log it said Euth, behave, hist. What does that mean? Can anyone here tell me? There is a

disconnect between the County and the City. And the City oversees making the hearing notice and giving interested persons notice of that hearing?

Answer by Jewel Warr-The agency staff would be who you would contact to answer those questions. We are working on replacing our director. Public Comment is not a back in forth forum so we would not be able to answer those questions at today's meeting.

Jennifer Hefferman-No one knew about this hearing. No one could go to the hearing and fight for King who didn't have a voice. To say, this wasn't my fault. I need someone to fight for me. I've created a form-A special request form. Anyone here who after the meeting can come get one and meet me outside. We would like to be a little more present during those hearings. I think that is one of the flaws. No one was given notice of that hearing until later. Even the owner, who didn't know what he was doing, knew the severity of it. That is just one of the inconsistencies we are finding. We are trying to rectify this by this form. I appreciate all of your time. I'm not trying to point anyone out on this or point fingers, but it is a concern and everyone here as animal advocates, I would hope, would want to resolve that with us. Thank you for your time.

Karen Paul- I became aware of King Kong's plight through following on Facebook. I am an animal advocate and have been my whole life. I guess my question is, in following this case, what is the role of the Shelter? I thought the role of the shelter is to advocate for these animals. This innocent dog displayed no viciousness. He was assessed and it was stated by a certified person that this dog is not a danger/is not vicious. Like everyone hear has said, speaking about King Kong, is he had placement. It was a sure thing. He had somewhere to go. He had 2000 people backing him and advocating for him. 2000 who did know him and were following the petition. A handful of people determined that he was vicious, that he needed to be killed. That he needed to be murdered. I thought the role of the shelter is to advocate. At what point...where's the obligation...what is ethical to say No. To say I am here in this building and I'm seeing this dog. This dog is not vicious, this dog is not kennel stressed. This dog was not that. But yet a determination was made to destroy this dog. I don't understand that. I wrote an email that it makes me sad to be part of the human race if this is what it is. I couldn't quote it exactly but there is a quote from C.S. Lewis that says, "What ordinary people do is shut their eyes to the facts." The facts are that he was not vicious. He proved himself in the 141 days of isolation. I don't think a human being could do 141 days and still be normal. Let alone a dog who doesn't have a voice and can't talk. But yet here we are because he is no longer here. I am just a concerned citizen and it's sad that that's where we are. Change has to start with us. One step at a time. And I believe that collectively if we are all on the same page, we can get those answers. We can go forward to make sure there are no more King Kong deaths. That no more blind eyes to the facts. I want to be part of this change. I want to be part of this movement. I want to be part of justice for King Kong. That's all, I'm sorry. Thank you for your time.

5. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- A. Motion to approve the Agency Board Meeting Minutes from August 15, 2024 (City of Waterford/City of Ceres; 6-0)

6. **Correspondence:** None

7. **New Business:**

- A. Motion to approve the acceptance of two LOVE Clinic donations of \$15,000 & \$10,000. (City of Modesto/City of Waterford;6-0)

8. **Committee Reports:**

Business Manager's Report-Highlight the SASA Love clinic grand opening. I believe everyone received an invitation for Wednesday, August 28th at 12:00pm. We would love for you to join us. We also wanted to highlight that because we received the HEART grant, we received an additional \$5000 award for innovation and initiative. The HEART initiative goes into low-income communities and provides license, rabies vaccine, microchip, and license. If dog gets lost, they can get reunited with their families. We successful applied and received through Petco Love a RVT scholarship for one of our staff. We did an application process and Kathleen Beckhart was selected. Great opportunity for us.

We are mostly staff. We have vacancies for RVT and Executive Director. The rest of the positions are filled.

June and July monthly report statistics. High animal intake for June and July. We had quite a few adoptions as you can see. 429 adoptions in July and 223 in June. We also continue to have quite a few calls for service for our Animal Control Officers. 755 calls in June and 773 calls in July. The shelter remains busy. You can see a chart in your handout of the animal intake numbers. We continue to trend high. 2024 is projected to increase significantly. 2023-2024 YTD comparisons is in the handouts. Rescues/Transfers are up 33%. Adoptions are up 28%.

Monthly specials-Freedom Forever and our Cat BOGO. Funded by the JPA. 57 dogs and 45 cats, 42 people took home a free cat.

Sponsored adoptions-Adopt-a-Palooza at Modesto Toyota resulted in 35 dogs and 29 cats. ASPCA-California adopt a pet resulted in 14 dogs and 14 cats adopted. Partners do receive the income from these adoptions. Questions or comments?

Mike Pitcock advised that it is nice seeing the adoption numbers go up. As staff continue to build relationships with the rescues, we will do what we can to mitigate or find homes for many of these pets as possible.

Stephanie Loomis-Chandra, our Rescue supervisor works hard at getting animals out. Decline in availability in Rescue's because they are full too. She networks really hard.

Mike Pitcock-It is nice to see these numbers trending up.

Budget Ad Hoc Committee-Scotty Douglass advised that the committee continues to meet and zeroing in on is the revenue piece. At this point there are some significant increases that weren't anticipated. So, we are trying to do a deep dive into the Revenues. Hopefully we will get wrapped up next month. Jewel Warr advised that it is a lot of digging in and understanding the nuances to things. We appreciate staff's assistance. Scotty advised that we are looking bigger than this one budget. What can we do now to start setting some really positive progress and opportunities for the future. We are also looking at some policies and procedures that will provide some continuity for the future.

9. Informational:

10. Closed Session:

- A. Public Employee Appointment (Government Code Section 54957(b)(1) Temporary Executive Director, Stanislaus Animal Services Agency

Public comment-Who makes the decision on that? Public was advised that it is the Board.

Public Comment-I hope we can keep working together to address the underlying issues that is causing the overcrowding. To address what is causing this influx of animals. I'm glad you guys are working so hard as a shelter to work on this. I recently adopted a dog here. I've had a dog runaway, get picked up and brought here. Found her online. I'm not mitigating anyone's concerns here. I am entirely empathetic. I wanted to thank you for the work that's already been done and hopefully we can continue to improve on it because it does seem there is an underlying issue we can all address as a city, community, and State. This lapse in our concern for animals. My general comment is thanking you guys for what you are doing so far. I'm looking forward to more integrative communication. Good luck in finding a more permanent person for this position.

The Chair announced in accordance with Government Code Section 54953(c)(3) that in item 10 on the agenda would appoint Craig Gundlach to serve as the Stanislaus Animal Services Agency Interim Director.

Craig Gundlach-Thank you. I do look forward to working with you. Lots for me to do and lots to learn. I appreciate it. I look forward to working with all the staff.

11. Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn: None

Adjourned: 10:20 am

ATTESTED: Megan Morriss, Clerk
of the Governing Board
of the Joint Powers Agency
of the Stanislaus Animal Services Agency
State of California