

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
March 15, 2011

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Winters presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:45 p.m.

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Michael J. Winters, Bill Bronson, Fred Burow, Mary Jolley, and Robert Jones. Also present were the City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Directors of Fiscal Services, Park and Recreation, Planning and Community Development, Public Works, Executive Director of the Housing Authority, Fire Marshall, Police Chief, and the Administrative Secretary.

1. ANIMAL SHELTER PRESENTATIONS

Deputy City Manager Jennifer Reichelt reported the Animal Welfare Reform Cooperative (ARC), a local group, and the American Pet Association (APA), a Florida group, submitted proposals in response to the City's RFP for operation of the Animal Shelter. Staff has reviewed both proposals and submitted questions to both proposers. Ms. Reichelt reported Marcie Sapp, representing APA, and Nora Norum, M.D. on behalf of ARC, would make presentations and answer questions.

Ms. Sapp, APA Director of Humane Services, provided a DVD presentation on the APA proposal. She explained that she would personally oversee the project if selected by the Commission.

Ms. Sapp stated the American Pet Association was founded in 1991, with a primary goal to promote responsible pet ownership. A major focus of the operation has been on humane agencies. This year APA launched the non-profit division, the Society for the Protection of Companion Animals (SPCA), specifically for the purpose of operating humane agencies.

Ms. Sapp noted remarkably similar problems have occurred with humane agencies nationwide over the past 20 years. The order of frequency and severity include: (1) financial mismanagement; (2) inability to hire qualified staff; (3) lack of overall business skills; and (4) the loss of compassion towards animals.

Ms. Sapp reported APA SPCA is designed to provide the support team of individuals that specialize in each of the required skills. In some cases staff would be trained, and in other cases service and support would be provided from outside the Shelter. Because mismanagement of funding always ranks highest in humane agency failures, APA SPCA is structured to have the finances be handled outside the Shelter by a comptroller specifically assigned to the Shelter. The director would not have direct access to funds and would be required to comply with a system of checks and balances.

Ms. Sapp noted staff management can be especially challenging at a shelter due to the emotional nature of the job and the close quarters in which the employees work. Because of extensive experience with the issue, she feels confident APA SPCA would be able to maintain

professionalism and high levels of customer service, while providing quality, compassionate care for the animals as well as each other. She added their intention is to retain all qualified current employees and hire Montana residents whenever possible.

Ms. Sapp reported the average volunteer is inexperienced and turnover is high. It is also an area of high liability. APA SPCA experience is that the Shelter should not be structured with a reliance on volunteers. All primary functions of the Shelter should be carried out by paid staff to insure consistent care of the animals and high levels of customer service. Volunteers would be used in fundraising efforts, community awareness programs, and to provide extra services for the comfort and well being of the pets in their care.

Though a goal of APA SPCA is to operate the Shelter as a No Kill shelter, the ability to maintain a No Kill shelter is greatly dependent upon the community and the best efforts of staff. APA SPCA would strive to be a No Kill shelter with great hope and realistic responsibility.

Ms. Sapp stated a goal is to make the Shelter as financially independent as possible. The budget was made with the assumption the City would keep all animal control fees, and APA SPCA would retain fees from adoptions, cremations, animal donations, and fundraising. With that assumption, APA SPCA would require \$321,516 annually from the City, an estimated savings for the City of \$117,000 the first year. APAA SPCA is very experienced in fundraising and has resources available which would be donated by APA. They would initiate an innovative fundraising sharing program that would reduce the financial responsibility of the City based on fundraising efforts.

APA SPCA would institute policies that allow each animal one-on-one interaction each day to aid in the comfort and well being of the pet and increase its adoptability. As much as possible would be done with the current shelter to make it a better habitat for the animals and more friendly to visitors. APA's high standards would be seen in the cleanliness, animal health, and attitude and professionalism of staff.

Ms. Sapp believes the lack of cooperation between the shelter staff and local government is a significant problem for many humane agencies. A core value of the APA is to maintain positive and productive working relationships with all parties. APA would respect the culture and customs of the City of Great Falls and would take seriously the advice and concerns of citizens.

Ms. Sapp responded to questions through Skype video calling.

Commissioner Jolley questioned how fundraising efforts may be impacted by the Animal Foundation. Ms. Sapp responded the Animal Shelter needs funding and care by an organization now, not in the future when the Animal Foundation has enough money to build a shelter. She believes they would have some impact on APA efforts, but not enough to cause great distress. However, she believes their spay/neuter program is a great program.

Commissioner Bronson questioned if APA intends to make similar proposals in other communities across the United States, hoping to operate several facilities. Ms. Sapp responded they would not be involved with other shelters until the mission at the Great Falls Animal Shelter is a success (between six months to a year). There would be between one and three APA staff members at the Shelter and extensive procedural records would be kept to benefit future shelters.

Commissioner Bronson questioned the roles of APA SPCA staff at the Animal Shelter. Ms. Sapp responded she would oversee all operations and staff. A team of one to three people would be involved at any time, depending on the qualifications of the current staff, to help with training, shelter improvements, public service announcements, and fundraising programs.

City Manager Greg Doyon inquired the kinds of shelter improvements that would need to be completed. Ms. Sapp responded that an affiliate visited the facility and reported there are some challenges to be met. She stated some cosmetic and aesthetic renovation would need to be done. The details would be assessed during the operation of the facility.

Commissioner Burow asked if the list of questions proposed by staff would be addressed individually. Mr. Doyon asked Ms. Sapp to respond to the questions in writing. A response will be provided by Friday, March 18, 2011 to be included in the Weekly Review.

Commissioner Burow asked what local or national organizations APA SPCA would work with. Ms. Sapp responded they would work with any ethical, professional organization that benefits the mission of the Great Falls Animal Shelter.

Commissioner Burow questioned which national organizations APA SPCA aligns with. Ms. Sapp responded the APA is a standalone organization that has been developed that way to make sure there is no bias. The APA SPCA division is new division with a different non-profit mission. When operating a shelter, it would be necessary to work with other groups to find homes for adoptable animals. Since submitting the proposal, Ms. Sapp noted they have been solicited by more than a dozen agencies that want to work with them.

Mayor Winters questioned if staff would be brought in to train new hires. Ms. Sapp responded their goal is to retain current, qualified staff and plans are to hire Montana residents if new staff is needed. Ms. Sapp stated she would be moving to Great Falls to oversee the operation; the only other staff that would be brought in for consulting purposes.

ARC representative Nora Norum, M.D. provided a PowerPoint presentation on the ARC proposal. Though ARC is a new organization in Great Falls, members have been working in animal welfare in the community for many years providing rescue, adoption, fostering, working with other rescue groups in Great Falls, and working with other community members on animal welfare issues.

Dr. Norum reported ARC was formed to bring the No Kill solution to Great Falls. No Kill is a program where no savable animal is euthanized, and ARC believes this is the direction to take the Animal Shelter. No Kill is proven in other communities to bring shelter save rates up to 90% and higher. The Humane Society of Western Montana in Missoula announced a 98% save rate for their shelter last year. To achieve that goal in Great Falls, ARC plans to use local people and local resources to solve local problems. The Spay of the Falls twice yearly spay/neuter clinics have over 200 volunteers; the volunteers are here in Great Falls ready to work.

Dr. Norum explained that The No Kill program includes 10 steps: (1) Trap/Neuter/Release is the only way to control feral cat colonies. Feral cats are wild cats that coalesce in neighborhoods, and people feed them. Euthanizing the colonies doesn't work; more cats just move in. ARC

plans include using volunteers to train people to use humane life traps in neighborhoods that choose to participate. The cats are then neutered/spayed and released. She reported the Pet Paw-see has spayed and neutered an entire colony in a large trailer park. That colony is now under control and no cat was euthanized. She believes Spay of the Falls would let ARC use their twice yearly clinics to achieve that goal.

(2) Dr. Norum reported on low income, large volume Spay/Neuter Programs. Since 2006, Spay of the Falls has spayed and neutered approximately 4,000 animals. ARC would make sure every animal that leaves the Shelter is spayed, neutered, or on the way to the veterinarian of the owner's choice.

(3) Dr. Norum reported on collaboration with Rescue Groups. She explained that rescues focus on a particular breed of a cat or dog. Utilizing these groups frees up scarce kennel space. Though the Pet Paw-see and Mysticatz are two model rescues in the community, ARC would verify the quality of any rescue group. She noted transportation is free via the On the Road Again program.

(4) Dr. Norum reported the next step is Foster Homes, another great way to free up kennel space. They also provide a place for animals that cannot manage in the Shelter. Foster Homes would be qualified, and Animal Control would approve a home for the multi-pet permit. She believes the Sheriff's Department is considering hiring an animal control officer for the County.

(5) Dr. Norum reported that Adoptions are the goal. Adoption programs must be proactive and aggressive. Statistics show that only 15% of dog and 10% of cats are adopted out of shelters. Volunteers would provide hours that are more conducive to people wanting to visit the Shelter. Dr. Norum stated the Pet Paw-see is ready to assist in one off-site adoption each month. The Montana Pets on the Net program is ready to add ARC to the web site.

(6) Dr. Norum reported the next step is Pet Retention, keeping pets at home and not in the Shelter. When a pet is brought to the Shelter, volunteer Pet Detectives would take pictures, make posters, and canvas the neighborhood where the animal was found. If a person cannot pay the impound fee or boarding fee, ARC would waive some fees or allow them to work off their debt so the pet can go home. A pet hotline can also help owners solve problems.

(7) Dr. Norum explained that Medical Care would continue to be provided by the Shelter veterinarian, Dr. Gilligan. If an animal is too sick to be humanely treated, it would be mercifully euthanized. Animals with behavioral problems would have to go to a foster home.

(8) Dr. Norum emphasized Community Involvement because the Animal Shelter is the community shelter. Transparency of operation is a hallmark of a No Kill policy. Employees must like coming to work.

(9) Dr. Norum reported on Volunteer Programs. She noted volunteers are the backbone of a No Kill shelter. Staff care for the basic needs of the animals. Volunteers improve animal enrichment in a shelter. Dogs must be off-leash playing at least twice each day, and they must be groomed and bathed. Animals must have plenty of bonding time to improve their adoptability. Dr. Norum stated the volunteer coordinator at the Lewis and Clark Humane Society in Helena, who manages over 200 volunteers, has offered to help ARC start the programs.

(10) Dr. Norum stated the last step is a Compassionate Shelter Director. When looking at effective shelters, the most common denominator is a shelter director that embraces the program. Initially, the Board would be a working board, side-by-side with the person.

Dr. Norum reported Accountant Tom Cave has agreed to provide professional accounting services. She noted ARC would comply with City requirements to obtain Workers Compensation, Liability, and Property Insurance. Hours of operation would be extended into the evening and include Sundays. Law enforcement would continue to be able to drop off animals 24 hours a day. The Shelter Director or other staff would also be available via cell phone for emergencies 24 hours a day. The holding time would also be increased from 72 to 96 hours to give an owner plenty of time to claim their pet.

Dr. Norum believes staffing needs are similar to the current shelter. She reviewed projected revenue and expenses. She explained the Guardian Angel Fund would be used to spay and neuter animals. Total expenditures are estimated to be \$450,000. ARC is proposing keeping the adoption and impound fees to allow discretion to waive or diminish those fees. Total revenue is also estimated to be \$450,000.

Dr. Norum explained the budget didn't include fundraising. However, fundraising is the fuel that drives the animal enrichment programs and the advanced proactive adoption programs. A person with extensive accounting experience is currently on the Board. ARC is a non-profit incorporation with 501(c)(3) exemption pending. Donations would be required because adoptions and impounds don't make money. ARC would be looking for a possible board member with good fundraising experience. A professional grant writer has volunteered services. The Thorndike bequest funds may also be available.

Commissioner Jolley believes an ordinance change would be needed to allow feral cats to be caught and released. She asked the number of ARC Board members. Dr. Norum responded there are currently four members, and three are being recruited. Commissioner inquired about ARC's relationship with the Animal Foundation. Dr. Norum responded ARC would be delighted to work with that group. Audience member Lisa Hudecek, address not given, explained Spay of the Falls is part of the Animal Foundation, so coordination efforts have begun.

Commissioner Bronson asked if ARC is receiving legal assistance. Dr. Norum responded she also sits on the Humane Society Board, and the President of that Board, attorney Jim Donahue, has volunteered his legal assistance.

Commissioner Burow asked if ARC is aligned with other groups. Dr. Norum responded the No Kill Advocacy Center in California is the main center of the ARC program. The Humane Society Board has given overwhelming support to help start the program. Other members of the Humane Society, the Pet Paw-see, Mysticatz, and Spay of the Falls are all aligned with ARC. She noted that Lisa Hudecek, who spoke at the Work Session in December, attended the No Kill International Conference last July.

Dr. Norum will also provide a written response to the list of questions proposed by staff by Friday, March 18, 2011.

After Commission review of the responses from both proposers, Mr. Doyon noted he would ask the Commission at the next Agenda meeting for direction to proceed.

Commissioner Bronson asked if Staff would provide recommendations regarding the proposals. Mr. Doyon responded that after the Commission determines a comfort level with one of the organizations, Staff would prepare an agreement for Commission ratification.

Commissioner Bronson commented he would like to hear Staff reaction to the proposals based on four years experience. Commissioner Jones also requested Staff evaluation of the written responses and discussion with the Commission. Mayor Winters agreed. Commissioner Burow clarified that the City would still provide animal control.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Deputy Director of Planning and Community Development Wendy Thomas provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Community Development Council (CDC), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and HOME funding recommendations. Ms. Thomas reported the CDBG and HOME funds are allocated by the federal government and administered through HUD. Last year the City was granted just over \$1 million. The purpose of the funds is to support the creation and sustainment of affordable housing within a community. The funds have also been used for community infrastructure (parks, handicap access, etc.) and anti-poverty programs.

Each year, the process includes a pre-application meeting and approval of priorities and guiding principles by the City Commission. After the application submittal deadline, Staff reviews the applications for compliance with federal law. The CDC uses a scoring matrix to prioritize the applications and make recommendations. Ms. Thomas applauded the level of performance by the CDC in Great Falls. She noted that after the Commission set the public hearing at the City Commission meeting this evening, there would be a 30 day comment period.

Ms. Thomas reviewed City priorities and policies adopted by the Commission in January, 2011. She noted there is a requirement that 75% of funds allocated last year must be spent by the end of March, 2011 in order for an application to be eligible for funding in the coming year. Commission policy also requires leveraging dollars so CDBG doesn't completely support the program. Also, CDBG funding cannot be used for salaries and benefits, or office consumables.

Ms. Thomas noted the federal budget this year is unknown. However, the CDC decided to make recommendations based on the same funding last year, but anticipated some reductions and created 20% reduction recommendations. Because of HUD timelines, recommendations may be made and revisited once the federal budget is adopted.

Ms. Thomas reported the CDC operated under the premise the public facility allocation of approximately \$332,000 would be funded initially, the amount committed for the Upper/Lower River Road sewer and water program. The CDC also believes the HOME funds will be fully funded. NeighborWorks was the only application from outside the city. HOME funds will also be used to fund the City Rehabilitation Specialist position. Ms. Thomas added the CDC allocated HOME funds for sewer and water hookups for Upper/Lower River Road low and

moderate income families to hook up to the infrastructure.

Ms. Thomas reported all of the Public Service allocations will be met under the 100% funding. She noted some allocations were at a reduced rate. When making their presentation, some of the groups offered to do with less so other groups could also receive funding.

The CDC recommended the Economic Development application not be funded based on City policy that 75% of the funds allocated the prior year be expended. The Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA) has been unable to utilize the \$50,000 allocated last year. GFDA can hold on to the \$50,000 for another year, but not be granted additional funding.

Commissioner Bronson asked how unprogrammed funds are used. Ms. Thomas responded the funds have been used for unexpected expenses, especially for infrastructure projects. Commissioner Jolley questioned if unprogrammed funds must ever be returned. Ms. Thomas responded there haven't been unprogrammed funds carry over year to year.

Commissioner Burow questioned funding to Paris Gibson Square. Commissioner Jolley noted they are receiving two pottery wheels. Community Development Council member Tina Cabbage responded Paris Gibson Square is implementing a couple of therapeutic pottery courses that would meet low to moderate income guidelines.

Mr. Doyon thanked the CDC for their service.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Winters adjourned the work session of March 15, 2011, at 6:37 p.m.