

City of San Antonio



Animal Care Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 5:55 PM
4710 State Hwy 151, San Antonio, TX 78227

I. Call to Order:

Board Chair Braeutigam called the meeting to order at 5:55 p.m.

II. Roll Call:

Present: Amin Tohmaz (Mayor), Lorena Havill (Dist. 2), George Garcia (Dist. 3), Rita Braeutigam - Chair (Dist. 4), Karen Speer - Secretary (Dist. 5), Kathleen Davis (Dist. 6), Valerie Moore (Dist. 7), Susan Beldon – Vice Chair (Dist. 9), Sallie Scott (Dist. 10)

Ex-Officio Member: Michael Shannon, David McCary

Absent: Charlene Ducote (Dist. 1), Katie Jarl (Dist. 8),
Ex-Officio Members: Dr. Marilyn Gotbeter

Ex-Officio Member Gotbeter arrived at 6:01pm

III. Chair's Statement

IV. Director's Report

Assistant City Manager, David McCary, discussed the following items:

1. The continued search for the next ACS Director and that current Development Services Department Director, Michael Shannon, will serve as the ACS Interim Director. The finalist candidates have not been removed from consideration, however recruitment for additional candidates for this critical role will continue.
2. A high-level overview of ACS' year-to-date (October 2023 – June 2024) metrics and performance measures.

Assistant City Manager, David McCary, turned the floor over to the new ACS Interim Director, Michael Shannon. Michael Shannon discussed the following items:

1. The critical role ACS plays in serving the community and the importance of partnerships.
2. Preparations for Fiscal Year 2025 budget and the upcoming community input meetings. December 19th will be the official date for the City of San Antonio to adopt the budget. Additional information on the process and timeline can be found on the City's website.

V. Public Comment

- a. Stephanie Garcia of Yellow Rose and HRH Carriage Company of District 2 talked about the San Antonio having one of the strictest ordinances in the country regarding horse carriages. She discussed the personal importance of her horses and the high standard of care they receive. She referenced Dr. Espy discussing that there is no indication of horses working downtown is bad for the health, and that it is good for them to have work. She expressed her concerns over having the City take her horses and put them into an overcrowded rescue where they would not receive the same level care they currently receive with her.
- b. Skylar Newman gave her time to Stephanie Garcia
- c. Kirstin Nickell gave her time to Mike Kucik
- d. Kathy Stephens of District 2 from Bluebonnet and Lollypop Carriage companies talked about her horses being bred for work and her concerns about the horses being put in a pasture with limited medical care. She talked about the horses providing income that provides both care for the horses as well as income for families. She mentioned having an open-door policy with inspectors. She concluded with urging the ACS Advisory Board to consider that these are working animals and that while she welcomes change to the ordinance, she does not believe horses should be removed from pulling carriages downtown.
- e. Eliza Guerra gave her time to Laura Linam
- f. Mary Anne Rives gave her time to Laura Linam
- g. Jacqueline Fonseca of District 1 stated that she supports the removal of horses from working downtown, and that horses should be free of the noise and pollution of downtown. She stated that she would like to see a discretionary fund be implemented in the upcoming budget so that ACS could have money available that is not specifically designated for one purpose. She provided examples of using a discretionary fund to help residents repair fences to help address roaming dog issues as well as providing additional financial support to partners such as Daisy Cares.
- h. Robert Ramos of District 3 talked about the success he has seen thus far serving as a Spay & Neuter Ambassador for District 3. He noted that to-date they have helped 110 pets. He talked about how he sees and supports both sides of the animal welfare community, but that the biggest issue is the lack of communication between the organizations and groups.
- i. John Atwood of District 6 stated we should be encouraging the public to help and not ridiculing them. He stated that City leaders should be held accountable for their taxable income and that taxpayers deserve better leadership.
- j. Laura Linam of District 10 read a letter from a rescue partner, A Place for Ace. The letter provided feedback and suggestions regarding the care and placement of pets from the San Antonio shelters. Suggestions included making sure pets that were confiscated from cruelty cases are marked as rescue-only and not made available for public adoption due to potential health issues, a more thorough adoption screening process, and mandatory, preliminary seminar on what it means to own a pet prior to adoption. It expressed concerns about the number of unaltered dogs being released from San Antonio shelters back to their owners.

- k. Mike Kucik of District 6 talked about the important role animals play in supporting our mental health and well-being. He provided his military background. He discussed his views on comments made by former ACS Director, Shannon Sims. He discussed the right of the public to request records through the Public Information Act. He noted that ACS would do better to work with members of the animal welfare community.
- l. Lea LaPort gave her time to Mike Kucik
- m. John Bachman provided the Board with a statistical handout. He discussed concerns about ACS' statistical report and provided examples of annual goals that would not be met based off the numbers currently provided.

VI. Consent Agenda:

- 1. Approval of the Minutes from the ACS Advisory Board Meeting on March 20, 2024
- 2. Approval of ACS Advisory Board Statistical Reports for March and April 2024
- 3. Approval of the ACS Advisory Board Contracts Performance Report
- 4. Approval of the ACS Advisory Board Facility Inspections for March and May 2024
- 5. Approval of the ACS Fiscal Year 2024 Quarter 2 Report

Board Member Havill pulled Item 2, ACS Advisory Board Statistical Reports for March and April 2024.

Board Member Braeutigam pulled Item 3, Advisory Board Contracts Performance Report.

Motion: Board Member Tohmaz moved to approve Items 1, 4, and 5 of the Consent Agenda.
Board Member Moore seconded the motion.

Vote: Ayes: Tohmaz, Havill, Garcia, Braeutigam, Speer, Davis, Moore, Beldon, Scott

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ducote, Jarl

Action: **MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES, 0 NAY, 0 ABSTAIN, AND 2 ABSENT.**

VII. Items for Individual Consideration

- 6. ACS Advisory Board Statistical Reports for March and April 2024.**

Board Member Havill discussed wanting to see her previous recommendation to add something to the Statistical Reports that would allow Board Members to see how current metrics are comparing to the year-end goals.

Board Member Garcia discussed adding in information regarding when stray animal sweeps are conducted and the results of those sweeps. Board Member Garcia also mentioned concerns about microchipping pets that belong to homeless individuals, and he wanted to know how the animals are supposed to be returned to the individuals when they do not personally have an address. Board Member Davis and Board Member Speer stated that many individuals in this situation have arrangements with either family members, friends, churches, or other groups that allow the homeless pet owner to use their address for the microchip in the event they become separated from their pet.

Board Member Moore requested that information be added to the report regarding the number of citations/violations that resulted in an actual penalty being applied by Municipal Court. She also requested that information be added in regarding ACS' "sting" operations to disrupt roadside pet sales.

Motion: Board Member Moore moved to approve Items 2 of the Consent Agenda.

Board Member Moore seconded the motion.

Vote: Ayes: Tohmaz, Havill, Garcia, Braeutigam, Speer, Davis, Moore, Beldon, Scott

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ducote, Jarl

Action: **MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES, 0 NAY, 0 ABSTAIN, AND 2 ABSENT.**

7. ACS Advisory Board Contracts Performance Report.

Board Chair Braeutigam wanted clarification on Spay Neuter Network having two separate performance measures on the Contracts Performance Report. ACS Assistant to the Director, Shannon Oster-Gabrielson, replied stating that Spay Neuter Network has two separate City contracts. One contract is for community spay-neuter surgeries that are provided at no cost to residents. The other contract is for their operation out of the Brackenridge Clinic where they provide low-cost services to residents.

Motion: Board Member Tohmaz moved to approve Items 1, 4, and 5 of the Consent Agenda.
Board Member Moore seconded the motion.

Vote: Ayes: Tohmaz, Havill, Garcia, Braeutigam, Speer, Davis, Moore, Beldon, Scott

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Ducote, Jarl

Action: **MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES, 0 NAY, 0 ABSTAIN, AND 2 ABSENT.**

7. A Briefing on Horse Carriages in Downtown San Antonio.

SAPD Assistant Director, Rick Riley, provided an informational brief regarding the City Council Consideration Request (CCR) filed on November 28, 2022, by Councilman McKee-Rodriguez (D2) and Councilwoman Viagran (D3). The brief talked about horse-drawn carriages in downtown San Antonio, possible alternatives, and SAPD's Ground Transportation Unit timeline for collecting input from different Boards and Committees.

Following the brief, ACS Advisory Board Members provided input.

Board Chair Braeutigam (D4) stated that the District 4 Council Office stated that Councilwoman Rocha Garcia is still gathering information and is very interested in more conversations and discussions about the topic. She understands that this is a sensitive issue for both the constituents and the operators of the carriage companies.

Board Vice Chair Beldon (D9) read a written statement provided by Councilman Courage. The letter discussed bringing balance between the role the horse carriages play in San Antonio culture and the importance of animal welfare and the goals and values of San Antonio in the future. The letter mentioned the high standards of San Antonio's existing ordinances, but that the feedback from advocacy groups and constituents cannot be ignored. The letter goes on to propose possible solutions such as stricter regulations on hours of operations for the carriage companies as well as alternative work locations in order to preserve a cherished San Antonio tradition while being committed to animal welfare.

Board Secretary Speer (D5) provided input from Councilwoman Castillo. The provided input suggested alternatives to the outright ban on horse carriages in order to allow the carriage companies to maintain operations. Councilwoman Castillo proposed alternatives such as hours of operations that start in the evening as well as alternative work locations such as City of San Antonio parks.

Board Member Havill (D2) read a statement from Councilman McKee-Rodriguez which supported a transition to electric carriages. Councilman McKee-Rodriguez stated concerns with using horses as it relates to driver behavior downtown, climate change, and unsafe road conditions. He proposed moving to the electric carriages, noting the success of such a transition in Florida, so that the operators still maintain a successful operation.

Board Member Garcia (D3) did not have a response from the District 3 Council Office at the time of the meeting.

Board Member Davis (D6) did not have a response from the District 6 Council Office at the time of the meeting, but stated she would be advising her Council Office to keep the horse drawn carriages based on her personal experience working with horses and that San Antonio has one of the best ordinances regarding it currently.

Board Member Moore (D7) stated that the District 7 Council Office said Councilwoman Gavito is still researching and fact-finding and has not made a final decision regarding her stance on the subject.

Board Member Scott (D10) stated that the District 10 Council Office said Councilman Whyte is still researching the topic.

Board Member Jarl (D8) was unable to attend the ACS Advisory Board meeting but provided her written statement prior to the meeting. The statement provided quotes from Councilman Pelaez which shared his concerns regarding the health and wellbeing of the horses. Board Member Jarl cited a letter that was sent from a coalition of over 100 veterinarians to the Transportation Committee which outlined health concerns these horses face such as respiratory issues, heat-related and humidity concerns, and spooking risks.

VIII. Determination of Next Meeting Date

The next ACS Advisory Board meeting will be a Work Session and the date, time, and location are to-be-determined.

ACS Advisory Board Work Sessions will not have regularly scheduled Agenda items such as the Consent Agenda and Public Comments.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

APPROVED

Rita Braeutigam, Chair
Animal Care Services Advisory Board
City of San Antonio