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CITY OF PROVIDENCE NOVEMBER 2009

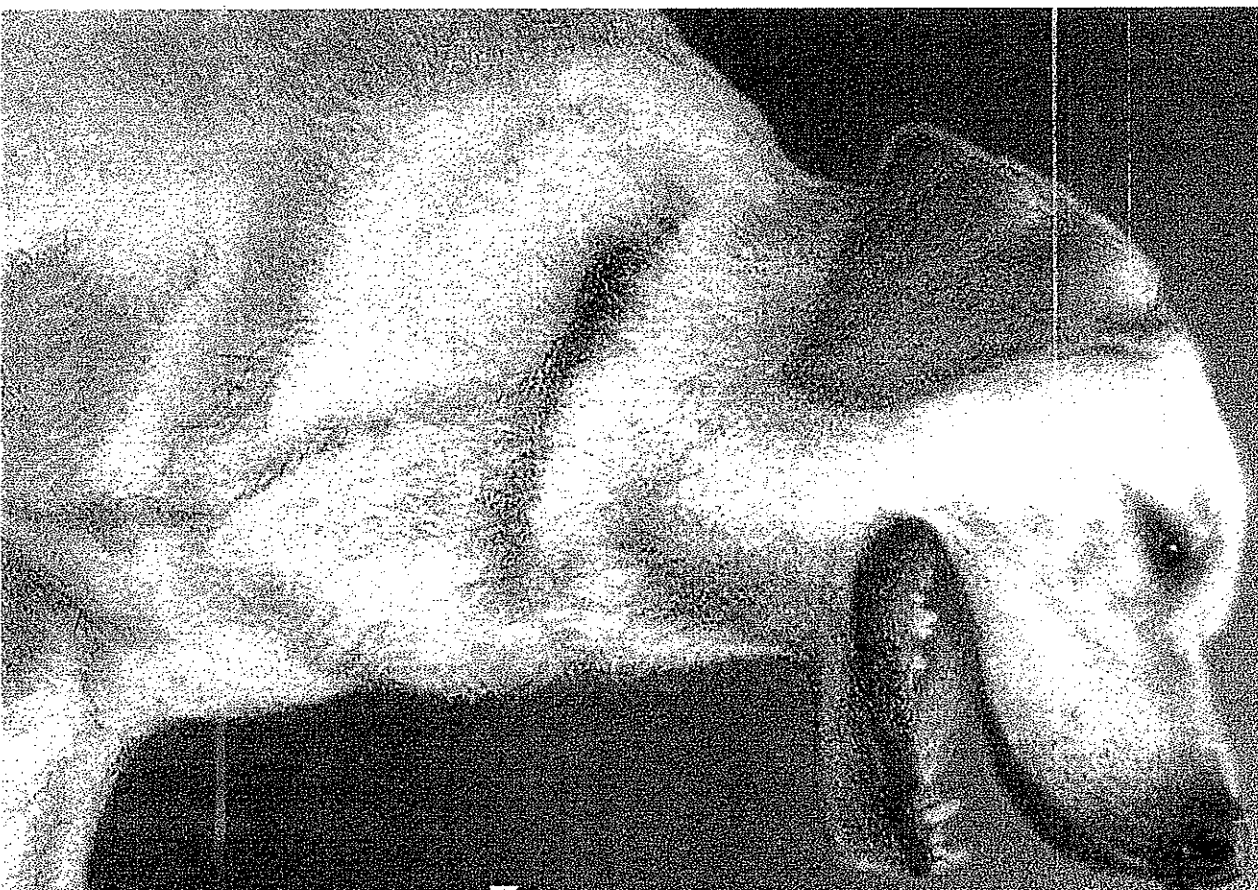


PROVIDENCE ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER



**A Report of the
Special Commission
to Investigate and
Make Recommendations**

**Regarding the
Administration
and Operation of the
Providence Animal
Control Center**





Office of the City Council City of Providence

November 2009

Dear Reader:

The Special Commission to Investigate and Make Recommendations Regarding the Administration and Operation of the Providence Animal Control Center (PACC) began meeting in July to address the concerns and deficiencies that had plagued the PACC for many years.

The Commission consisted of an impressive group of professionals in the field of animal care, including animal behavior specialists, doctors of veterinary medicine, directors of animal welfare organizations and municipal shelters, and members of the public. As such, the members thoroughly examined the PACC, and based their analysis upon best practices and standards for animal care and control.

The recommendations outlined in the Commission's report include both short- and long-term objectives, and nearly all may be implemented without additional expenditures. The Commission believes that if the proposals are adopted in a timely fashion, the PACC image and reputation will vastly improve, and that animals at the PACC will be cared for more compassionately, efficiently and humanely.

On behalf of the Animal Control Center Commission, I would like to thank Council President Peter S. Mancini and the members of the City Council for supporting the creation of the Commission. I also would like to thank the staff of the Office of the City Clerk, and the staff of the Office of the City Council for assisting the Commission in its work. Of special note, I would like to recognize illustrator Cathren Housley, and designer John Housley, who volunteered their talents to create the beautiful report cover. Finally, it has been my pleasure to serve with the dedicated and impassioned members of the Animal Control Center Commission, who individually and collectively do inspiring work on behalf of animals in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John J. Lombardi".

John J. Lombardi, Chairman

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Special Commission to Investigate and Make Recommendations Regarding the Administration and Operation of the Providence Animal Control Center was established by resolution of the Providence City Council, effective May 18, 2009 (amended to add additional members June 1st and July 13th), in response to ongoing complaints and concerns regarding the facility.

Members of the Commission, which included experts in the field of animal care and welfare, met eighteen (18) times between June 23, 2009 and November 10, 2009, and reviewed a wide spectrum of issues affecting the Providence Animal Control Center (PACC).

The Commission examined best practices for the humane treatment of animals, effective and efficient operation of animal shelters, and personnel management and resources.

As the work of the Commission concluded, a new director was hired to run the Providence Animal Control Center. The Commission is hopeful that its recommendations will be implemented by the director and staff, and that the deficiencies and issues which prompted the creation of this Commission will be resolved under the new leadership.

As such, the Animal Control Center Commission presents this report to the City Council and Mayor with eight recommendations for the administration and operation of the Providence Animal Control Center.

1. Adoption of Operations Manual
2. Establishment of a Shelter Advisory Board
3. Shelter Improvements, Redesign & Relocation
4. Facilitate Suitable Adoptions
5. Expand and Promote Public Education Programs
6. Increase Shelter Hours of Operation
7. Continuing Education for Employees
8. Evacuation Plan

ADOPTION OF OPERATIONS MANUAL

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission observed that the PACC required an updated operations manual to serve as a guide for improved animal care and services. The Commission developed the manual and adopted it on October 6, 2009. The Commission recommends that the operations manual be updated by the director and/or his or her designee—as well as be reviewed by the Advisory Board—on a regular basis, and at a minimum, once every two years, to ensure continued growth and improvement in service delivery.

COMMENTARY

A Providence Animal Control Center Operations Manual will create a baseline of standards for the overall structure and functionality of the Providence Animal Control Center. The manual shall include the following:

- Mission Statement
- Organizational Chart
- Job Classifications
- Animal Health, Safety and Welfare Policies and Procedures
- All Appropriate Federal Laws, State Statutes, Local Ordinances, and Rules and Regulations

2

ESTABLISHMENT OF A SHELTER ADVISORY BOARD

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission strongly recommends and insists upon the establishment of a volunteer shelter advisory board that will review operations, and assist and make recommendations to the Providence Animal Control Center director, the Mayor, and the Providence City Council.

COMMENTARY

Members of the advisory board shall have the authority to observe and visit the PACC, and to support the day-to-day operations, as well as to assist with education, fundraising, and grant writing efforts.

The board will consist of seven members, including:

- State of Rhode Island veterinarian
- Defenders of Animals representative
- Animal Behaviorist
- Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association (RIVMA) member with active practice
- Director of a municipal shelter
- Director of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RISPCA) or his or her designee
- Member of the public

The board will comply with all appropriate federal laws, state statutes, local ordinances, policies and procedures, and rules and regulations.

3

SHELTER IMPROVEMENTS, REDESIGN & RELOCATION

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission agreed that the construction of a new shelter that is green, sustainable, and eligible for LEED certification would be beneficial to shelter animals, employees and visitors.

COMMENTARY

Although a new shelter is currently being constructed on Terminal Road, a location that the Commission finds woefully inadequate, and most likely detrimental to the health and well-being of shelter animals, members felt strongly that the shelter should incorporate environmentally efficient building materials and techniques. The Commission emphasized a clear preference for the PACC to relocate to a quieter, non-industrial location in the city, away from highways and heavy traffic, to ease the nervousness and stress of the animals.

FACILITATE SUITABLE ADOPTIONS

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission recommends that the Providence Animal Control Center work with other city, town, and private nonprofit adoption organizations to facilitate adoptions, implement exchange programs with other licensed releasing agencies, and create a statewide database.

COMMENTARY

The Providence Animal Control Center would benefit from coordination with municipal and nonprofit shelters throughout the state, with the primary goal of ensuring and facilitating suitable adoptions. A statewide database of animals could categorize lost animals, animals available for adoption, and animals that are being treated or are preparing for adoption. Additionally, the Commission recommends that the PACC begin listing animals available for adoption at PACC on its own website, and updating the listings daily.

5

EXPAND AND PROMOTE PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

RECOMMENDATION

Collaborate with other agencies to expand and promote public education programs as an intrinsic and necessary part of the PACC mission, pursuant to the operations manual adopted by the Commission.

COMMENTARY

Community education on proper animal health, safety, and welfare, pet overpopulation, and responsible pet ownership must be a major priority for every municipal shelter. Working with schools, youth organizations, and animal welfare groups, the Providence Animal Control Center will broaden its message and find new methods for reaching Providence's diverse population.

INCREASE SHELTER HOURS OF OPERATION

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission recommends the Providence Animal Control Center increase the hours of operation to facilitate adoptions and accommodate public access.

COMMENTARY

Accessibility to the public during weekend and evening hours must be expanded. The Commission recommends the following:

- Saturdays—Open to the public from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Sundays—Open to public, but no transactions; just viewing animals
- Close PACC one weekday
- Add additional hours, to be covered by volunteers, which will allow staff to fill their proper positions, while volunteers follow-up with adoptions

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYEES

RECOMMENDATION

Continuing education of five (5) hours per year for all employed personnel of the Providence Animal Control Center will keep staff informed and knowledgeable about best practices in the public health, safety, and welfare of animals, as well as shelter operations.

COMMENTARY

The Commission felt strongly that the continuing education requirement of five (5) hours per year must be mandatory for shelter employees. Continuing education must be in a discipline pertinent to each employee's function, as determined by the director. However, it should be noted that any such requirement would be implemented so as to be consistent with any collective bargaining agreement, contract, the Providence Home Rule Charter, and any applicable laws of the State of Rhode Island.

8

EVACUATION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission recommends the PACC develop, in collaboration with the Providence Emergency Management Agency and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, a comprehensive all-hazards evacuation plan that is endorsed and accepted by all stakeholders.

COMMENTARY

The existing site—as well as the proposed new site—of the PACC is in a potentially hazardous location within a flood zone, and therefore requires the implementation of an all-hazards evacuation plan for animals residing at the shelter.

CONCLUSION

After many years of complaints and concerns regarding the administration and operation of the Providence Animal Control Center, the care of the animals at the facility came under scrutiny. During a period of transition at the PACC in 2009 — involving both the location and management of the center — the Special Commission to Investigate and Make Recommendations Regarding the Administration and Operation of the Providence Animal Control Center was established to propose improvements.

The Commission was composed of a unique cross-section of animal care experts who each contributed to the discussion regarding the future of the PACC. During the course of its work, the Commission examined the existing operations of the PACC, and identified several shortcomings. Based on its findings, the Commission summarized the shortcomings as follows:

- Lack of a comprehensive operations manual
- Lack of oversight by an entity with expertise in the field
- The planned relocation of the current facility to an equally inadequate site
- Little or no coordination with other cities and towns to facilitate adoption
- Poor effort regarding public education on animal care and pet ownership
- Limited public access to the PACC due to restricted hours of operation
- Lack of formal job-specific training for PACC employees
- Lack of an all-hazards evacuation plan

After analysis and review of the PACC deficiencies, the Commission developed an operations manual, and made specific recommendations to address the key areas of concern, detailed in this report, and summarized below.

1. Adoption of Operations Manual

The Commission recommends that the operations manual be adopted by the PACC, and be updated by the director and/or his or her designee, and reviewed by the Advisory Board at least once every two years, to ensure continued growth and improvement in service delivery.

2. Establishment of a Shelter Advisory Board

The Commission strongly recommends and insists upon the establishment of a volunteer shelter advisory board that will review operations, and assist and make

recommendations to the Providence Animal Control Center director, the Mayor and the Providence City Council.

3. Shelter Improvements, Redesign & Relocation

The Commission agreed that the construction of a new shelter that is green, sustainable, and eligible for LEED certification would be beneficial to shelter animals, employees and visitors.

4. Facilitate Suitable Adoptions

The Commission recommends that the Providence Animal Control Center work with other city, town and private nonprofit adoption agencies to facilitate adoptions, implement exchange programs with other licensed releasing agencies, and create a statewide database.

5. Expand and Promote Public Education Programs

Collaborate with other agencies in expanding and promoting public education programs as an intrinsic and necessary part of the PACC mission, pursuant to the operations manual adopted by the Commission.

6. Increase Shelter Hours of Operation

The Commission recommends the Animal Control Center increase the hours of operation to facilitate adoptions and accommodate public access.

7. Continuing Education for Employees

Continuing education of five (5) hours per year for all employed personnel of the Providence Animal Control Center to keep staff informed and knowledgeable about the best practices in the public health, safety and welfare of animals, as well as shelter operations.

8. Evacuation Plan

The Commission recommends the PACC develop, in collaboration with the Providence Emergency Management Agency and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, a comprehensive all-hazards evacuation plan that is endorsed and accepted by all stakeholders.

The Commission respectfully requests that the Honorable Mayor David N. Cicilline and the Honorable Members of the Providence City Council consider each of the recommendations made herein, and include them in a comprehensive

long-term plan for the PACC, which addresses the eventual relocation of the facility into an area that will be safer for the animals and people, quieter, and which will encourage the public to visit the shelter to adopt a homeless pet.

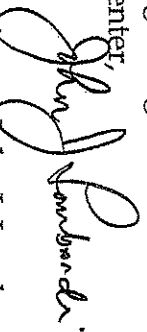
The Commission believes that if the City of Providence implements the recommendations made in this report, the image of the PACC, and ultimately, the City itself, will be improved, as the PACC will be a better facility in its physical structure as well as in its administration and operations.

Finally, the Commission looks forward to the PACC working towards and achieving the mission as stated in the proposed operations manual:

"The mission of Providence Animal Control is to ensure public safety and to enforce, without prejudice, local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and statutes pertaining to animals; and to provide humane animal control while preserving the health, safety, and welfare of those animals entrusted to our care. We provide a temporary shelter with humane and compassionate care for stray, abused, neglected and impounded animals; coordinate their adoption when possible; and promote community education on proper animal safety, pet care, pet overpopulation and responsible pet ownership."

Respectfully submitted, this day, Thursday, November 19, 2009 by the members of the Special Commission to Investigate and Make Recommendations Regarding the Administration and Operation of the Providence Animal Control

Center,



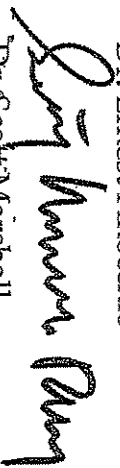
Chairman John J. Lombardi



Ann Corvin



Dr. Ernest Finocchio



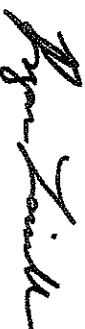
Dr. Scott Marshall



Dr. Ruth Colwill




Phyllis Dorr



Dr. Ryan Loiselle, DVM



Florette Ruggiero



Dennis Tabella

THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 218

EFFECTIVE ~~MAY 18, 2009~~ May 18, 2009

WHEREAS, The Providence Animal Control Center has been the subject of numerous local news reports highlighting the various administrative and operational problems at the center; and

WHEREAS, Several dog owners whose animals were at the shelter for brief periods complained that their dogs were malnourished and had suffered apparent mistreatment while at the center; and

WHEREAS, Administration of the shelter is a serious concern, based upon years of complaints regarding management, and in light of the circumstances under which the most recent director resigned; and

WHEREAS, The animal control officers and the shelter operations are overseen by the Providence Police Department; and

WHEREAS, Many municipal shelters have demonstrated improved conditions and effectiveness when shelter operations are overseen by civilians; and


WHEREAS, The Providence Animal Control Center and the animals under its care would benefit from a review and overhaul of management practices and operations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby establish a special commission to investigate and make recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor regarding the administration and operation of the Providence Animal Control Center, to include best practices, humane treatment of animals, and personnel management; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:


- 1) The special commission shall include one representative each from the following organizations: Defenders of Animals; the Humane Society of Northwestern Rhode Island; and the Warwick Animal Shelter, as well as two members of the City Council; and
- 2) The special commission shall make its recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor within 120 days of adoption of this resolution.

IN CITY COUNCIL
MAY 11 2009
READ AND PASSED


PRES.


CLERK

Effective without the
Mayor's Signature:


Anna M. Stelson
City Clerk

THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 257

EFFECTIVE ~~ANNNNN~~ June 1, 2009

WHEREAS, The Providence Animal Control Center has been the subject of numerous local news reports highlighting the various administrative and operational problems at the center; and

WHEREAS, Several dog owners whose animals were at the shelter for brief periods complained that their dogs were malnourished and had suffered apparent mistreatment while at the center; and

WHEREAS, Administration of the shelter is a serious concern, based upon years of complaints regarding management, and in light of the circumstances under which the most recent director resigned; and

WHEREAS, The animal control officers and the shelter operations are overseen by the Providence Police Department; and

WHEREAS, Many municipal shelters have demonstrated improved conditions and effectiveness when shelter operations are overseen by civilians; and

WHEREAS, The Providence Animal Control Center and the animals under its care would benefit from a review and overhaul of management practices and operations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby establish a special commission to investigate and make recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor regarding the administration and operation of the Providence Animal Control Center, to include best practices, humane treatment of animals, and personnel management; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The special commission shall include one representative each from the following organizations: Defenders of Animals; the Humane Society of Northwestern Rhode Island; and the Warwick Animal Shelter, as well as two members of the City Council, or their designee(s), one (1) member of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RISPCA) and one (1) member of the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture/Animal Health
- 2) The special commission shall make its recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor within 120 days of adoption of this resolution.

IN CITY COUNCIL
MAY 21 2009
READ AND PASSED

PRES.

CLERK

Effective without the
Mayor's Signature:

Anna M. Stelson
City Clerk

THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 330

EFFECTIVE ~~APPROX~~ JULY 13, 2009

WHEREAS, The Providence Animal Control Center has been the subject of numerous local news reports highlighting the various administrative and operational problems at the center; and

WHEREAS, Several dog owners whose animals were at the shelter for brief periods complained that their dogs were malnourished and had suffered apparent mistreatment while at the center; and

WHEREAS, Administration of the shelter is a serious concern, based upon years of complaints regarding management, and in light of the circumstances under which the most recent director resigned; and

WHEREAS, The animal control officers and the shelter operations are overseen by the Providence Police Department; and

WHEREAS, Many municipal shelters have demonstrated improved conditions and effectiveness when shelter operations are overseen by civilians; and

WHEREAS, The Providence Animal Control Center and the animals under its care would benefit from a review and overhaul of management practices and operations.

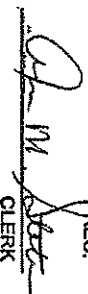
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby establish a special commission to investigate and make recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor regarding the administration and operation of the Providence Animal Control Center, to include best practices, humane treatment of animals, and personnel management; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

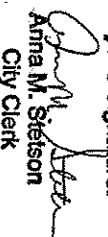
- 1) The special commission shall include one representative each from the following organizations: Defenders of Animals; the Humane Society of Northwestern Rhode Island; and the Warwick Animal Shelter, as well as two members of the City Council, or their designee(s), one (1) member of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RISPCA) and one (1) member of the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture/Animal Health; one (1) Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association (RIVMA) member active in practice and one (1) public member.
- 2) The special commission shall make its recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor within 120 days of adoption of this resolution.

IN CITY COUNCIL
JUL 2 2009
READ AND PASSED


PRES.


CLERK

Effective without the
Mayor's Signature:


Anna M. Stetson
City Clerk

THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

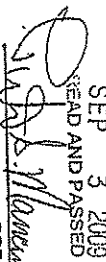

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

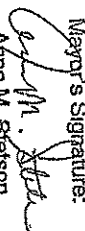
No. 398

EFFECTIVE ~~APPROX~~ September 14, 2009

RESOLVED, That Resolution No. 330, Effective July 13, 2009,

Relative to the "Special Commission to Investigate and make Recommendations Regarding the Administration and Operation of the Providence Animal Control Center", is hereby extended for an additional sixty day period, is hereby amended.

IN CITY COUNCIL
SEP 3 2009
READ AND PASSED

PRES.

CLERK

EFFECTIVE WITHOUT THE
MAYOR'S SIGNATURE:

Anna M. Stetson
City Clerk

Commission Members

The resolution establishing the Special Commission to Investigate and Make Recommendations Regarding the Providence Animal Control Center required members from the following:

Defenders of Animals (1)
Humane Society of Northwestern Rhode Island (1)
Providence City Councilors or their designees (2)
Public (1)
RIDEM Division of Agriculture/Animal Health (1)
RI Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1)
RI Veterinary Medical Association (RIVMA) member with an active practice (1)
Warwick Animal Shelter (1)

Chairman John J. Lombardi
Councilman-Ward 13

Dr. Scott Marshall
*Rhode Island State Veterinarian
Department of Environmental Management
Division of Agriculture/Animal Health*

Dr. Ruth Colwill
*Animal Behavior Specialist
Associate Professor of Psychology
Brown University*

Florette Ruggiero
Providence Resident

Ann Corvin
*Director
Warwick Animal Shelter*

Dennis Tabella
*Director
Defenders of Animals*

Phyllis Dorr
*President and Director
The Humane Association of
Northwestern Rhode Island*

Dr. Ernest Finocchio
*President/Director
Rhode Island Society for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Animals (RISPCA)*

Dr. Ryan Loisel, DVM

Meetings

The Special Commission to Investigate and Make Recommendations Regarding the Providence Animal Control Center met eighteen (18) times from June 23, 2009 to November 10, 2009.

June

23rd and 30th

July

14th, 21st and 28th

August

4th, 11th, 18th and 25th

September

1st, 8th, 22nd and 29th

October

6th, 13th and 27th

November

3rd and 10th