

Washoe County Regional Animal Services

Advisory Board

Friday, May 16, 2025 @ 9:00 a.m.
Washoe County Commission Chambers
1001 E. 9th Street, Building A, Reno NV
and available via Zoom and YouTube

Members Present:

Naomi Duerr, Chair
Trudy Brussard, Vice Chair
Clara Andriola
Julie McMahon

Members Present via Zoom:

Joe Rodriguez

Members Absent:

Diaz Dixon
Jill Fisher

1. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum [Non-Action Item]

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and a quorum was present.

2. Salute to the Flag [Non-Action Item]

Bonnie Brown, Options Veterinary Care President led all those convened in the pledge of allegiance.

3. Instruction for Providing Public Comment via Zoom/Telephone [Non-Action Item]

Andrew “Cobi” Burnett, Deputy District Attorney, provided instructions for members of the public to join the meeting via Zoom or telephone and provided instructions for how members of the public could provide oral public comment via Zoom or telephone.

4. Public Comment [Non-Action Item]

There was no public comment offered at this time.

5. Approval of February 21, 2025, Meeting Minutes [For Possible Action]

Member Andriola moved to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2025, meeting of the Washoe County Regional Animal Services Advisory Board as presented. Vice Chair Brussard seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously by the board with no opposition.

6. Director's Report [Non-Action Item]

Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) Director Shyanne Shull presented the Fiscal Year 2024 quarter four report. Before getting into the statistics, Director Shull shared that WCRAS has been involved in the 2025 legislative session and has evaluated approximately eight bills in addition to testifying on a few bills. There was quite a bit of action going on in the animal welfare arena and WCRAS has been working together with the SPCA of Northern Nevada, Options Veterinary Care, and the Humane World for Animals in addition to the County's legislative and government affairs liaison. A full update will be provided at the next Board meeting.

In a follow up to an early 2024 update to the Board regarding work sessions between WCRAS and the Nevada Humane Society (NHS), Director Shull explained that one of the work products that came out of those sessions was the shared protocols and shared agreement and goals. This is basically a guideline to help both entities pathway plan and assess dogs and their behavior and levels of dangerous behavior to help prevent animals from being placed back into the community that present dangerous behaviors. Director Shull wanted to preface the coming presentation by Kelley Bollen, the behavior consultant for WCRAS, with the explanation that Kelley Bollen is here to speak on that and talk a little bit more about the work that went into that and how it's being utilized.

The transfer agreement that is being worked on by Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro and NHS Board President Nancy Wenzel, Esq., is in revision form at this time. Several Board members have asked about the status of the agreement in prior meetings and Director Shull assured the board that it will be shared with them as soon as the update is ready. Chair Duerr expressed strong disappointment that the update was not ready and stated that the matter had been brought up six months ago for an update today. She continued that she did not feel that the Board could go another three months without an update and directed WCRAS Shyanne Shull, NHS CEO Jerleen Bryant, Washoe County Deputy District Attorney Andrew "Cobi" Burnett, and Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro to focus on getting that done. Director Shull pointed out that the professional service agreement, which is the document that governs WCRAS' partnership with NHS, is separate from the transfer agreement, which is more of the day-to-day operations. The professional service agreement has not been modified or worked on yet. Chair Duerr appreciated the clarification and stated that she has been looking for both. She stated that the transfer agreement is a must and that an update to the professional services agreement has got to be top of mind at Animal Services and at NHS.

Director Shull moved on to discussing the statistics from quarter three of the fiscal year. She started with the intake stats and reminded the Board that WCRAS only has seven animal caretakers and one kennel supervisor to take care of the animals 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Currently there is one animal caretaker in training, which does affect efficiency, but hopefully the kennels will be able to maintain full staffing for

a while as there's been a bit of turnover for the last three to four years, which always affects efficiency. In the third quarter WCRAS took in 635 cats, a 17% decrease, 298 dogs, a 5% decrease, and 274 miscellaneous animals. Length of stay had decreased for both cats at 5.6 days and dogs at 7.4 days. 17% of the cats and 47% of the dogs that came into the facility were already microchipped. WCRAS has been stressing the importance of microchipping cats and will continue to emphasize that important piece of education.

Director Shull shared that the next slide showed outcomes for all animals in the shelter by percentage and by number, categorized into died in care, euthanized, other, reunited, transferred to an adoption partner, and veterinary euthanasia. As there was nothing that stood out, she did not go through them line by line. 621 animals were picked up in the field by Animal Services Officers. Of those, 271 or 44% were returned in the field without needing to be brought to the shelter, vaccinated, medicated, or needing resources provided for them.

Member Andriola wanted to point out that 44% is the highest it's been and wanted to know if there was anything that WCRAS was doing differently to bring that number up. Director Shull explained that efforts to reunite animals in the field are multi-faceted, including microchip scanners and laptops in each officer's truck to look up owner information, a push to provide free pet ID tags at a lot of the outreach events, and smart tags provided by WCRAS' licensing partner which includes a 24-hour pet reunification service. A lot of time and effort is put in by the field staff to reunite animals in the field and WCRAS hopes to see this number continue to increase.

Of the 755 animals brought into the shelter by Good Samaritans, 237 of them were reunited. There are a variety of possible reasons why only 31% of the animals brought into the shelter in this manner were reunited, including fees associated with redemption or the owner not wanting the animal back.

The team at WCRAS takes live-saving seriously in relationship to animals that have the opportunity to leave the shelter alive. Because WCRAS does not have an adoption program, they rely heavily upon their partners at NHS which has first right of refusal, as well as the smaller partners such as SPCA, Res-Que, Pet Network, and a variety of other partners that step in should NHS decline to take the animal. NHS transferred 89.5% of the dogs and 95.7% of the cats that were transferred last quarter.

35 cats had to be euthanized last quarter, one of them for uncharacteristic severe aggressive behavior which is not something you generally see in cats. This was not a feral cat, but a domestic cat that would not have been safe to place into a home. The remaining 34 cats were euthanized for poor quality of life such as a 16-year-old cat with multiple health issues and severe dental disease. 50 dogs were euthanized last quarter. 42 for behavior, one for no rescue resources, and seven for poor quality of life. A reminder that no rescue resources means that it would not have been non-adoptable

or had issues related to behavior, but that it just needed some additional time and support that the rescue partners were unable to provide. Chair Duerr asked for clarification and Director Shull shared that these would be situations like a dog that was not socialized, doesn't know how to walk on a leash, runs from you when you approach then kennel, and basically would need extra time and resources spent on training in a foster home environment where they could become comfortable and confident, which not every rescue has the ability to provide. Next Director Shull showed the fiscal yearly euthanasia of cats which the Board had asked to see. The categories this year included lab testing, behavior, medical, surrendered cats, and poor quality of life which is a new category as of this year with the hiring of a full-time Veterinarian.

Next Director Shull reminded the Board that there were 14 Animal Services Officers with four supervisors to cover the entire county. Of these 14 officers, one is on maternity leave, one is on modified duty, and one is a new hire which amounts to sometimes there only being three officers on shift to cover the entire county. This past quarter WCRAS had the highest number of calls for service in the past five years. As the community grows and there are more people with pets, this number is not likely to decrease. 393 calls were for bite investigations, which was a significant jump from the four quarters previous and there is no clear reason or correlation as to why. Each bite investigation generally also involves quarantining an animal, sometimes at home but often in the shelter, so it's quite a bit of work that goes into each one of those calls. 331 noise complaints were handled and 1,173 miscellaneous calls which could be setting a trap, assisting another agency, etc. The lion's share of calls was for loose dogs at 2,214. Finally, there were 297 calls for unrestrained dogs and 393 welfare calls.

For the welfare-related calls, 102 were unfounded. Those generally consist of things like someone calling about a dog locked in a hot vehicle, but the vehicle was gone when the officer arrived, or a complaint about a dog that is in poor health but when the officer follows up, they find that the animal has a medical condition and is under vet care. 263 of the welfare calls had other outcomes, such as education resources being provided to resolve the situation. 28 citations were issued to address the remaining welfare calls.

Director Shull next introduced Program Coordinator Quinn Sweet to provide updates on some of the outreach efforts from quarter three. CARES support referrals, which cover things like vaccinations for individuals experiencing homelessness who are trying to get into Cares Campus, Our Place, or Safe Camp, as well as medical issues for those same animals, have significantly decreased. A lot of that is due to a decrease in some of the donation funding. The pet food for seniors program served 320 seniors which was an increase from the previous year, serving 523 pets which was approximately the same as last year. 351 pets received 553 vaccines at the vaccination clinics, which was a decrease from last year. She noted that there were two fewer community clinics provided this year. Chair Duerr inquired as to the reason for that decrease and was informed that there have been significant staffing challenges but that hopefully the

number of community clinics will be increased again next year. Additional outreach events hosted in the third quarter included an NV Energy Dog Safety presentation, a Washoe County Leadership academy tour of WCRAS, a CERT Disaster Preparedness presentation, participation in the Jordan's Way fundraiser for Res-Que which raised \$11,000 in three hours, and a spay/neuter awareness month campaign in partnership with Options Veterinary Care and SPCA of Northern Nevada leading to 542 surgeries in February. Lastly, a new partnership program was established with Res-Que and SPCA to help with providing food for the local Karma Boxes as well as additional donated supplies when available. Vice-Chair Brussard shared that she was delighted to hear about the Jordan's Way fundraiser and Chair Duerr thanked Program Coordinator Sweet and said they were looking forward to what's next.

Assistant Director Tammy Wines-Jennings provided an update on WCRAS' medical program. During quarter three the department was able to provide 112 TNR surgeries in the surgical suite which potentially avoids over 500 kittens that will not be coming into the shelter. There were also six return-to-field surgeries for cats that were brought in by community members but are not adoptable, and 17 rescue partner surgeries for those foster-based rescue partners that do not have the resources to provide their own surgeries. 38 CARES vaccinations were provided for members of the community who were trying to get into one of the homeless shelters with their animals. Previously WCRAS had partnered with Options Veterinary Care to have these done. There were four cruelty cases, and one necropsy performed which led to the veterinarian having to testify in two cases over the last quarter as well as helped with the outcome of the other cases. Finally, all of the new lab equipment has been set up including a microscope, centrifuge, central computer, chemistry analyzer, hematology analyzer, and snap test analyzer, and the new X-Ray machine was just installed the day prior to this meeting. Chair Duerr acknowledged what a game-changer it was to have the capabilities to take care of the medical needs on site and Assistant Director Wines-Jennings agreed and also pointed out that Member McMahon and her TMCC veterinary program students have also been a large help. Director Shull added that the most important element of having a full medical team is the continuity of care.

Director Shull closed out by reminding the Board that the next meeting has been scheduled for August 1, 2025. The meeting has been tentatively scheduled for the Washoe County Commissioners Chambers but if that changes Director Shull will let the Board know.

7. Washoe County Regional Animal Services' and Nevada Humane Society's Shared Dog Behavior Policy Update [Non-Action Item]

Certified Animal Behavior Consultant Kelley Bollen, MS, provided an update to the board on the shared dog behavior protocol between WCRAS and NHS. Last year WCRAS employed Kelley Bollen as their behavior consultant and NHS employed Marissa Martino to work together to come up with a policy covering identifying and handling dangerous dogs which should not be returned to the community. It's super

important for all shelters to recognize the liability around that and the safety to the community members, not only humans but other animals. The point of the shared policy is that neither organization will put out dogs that could hurt somebody. The policy includes an explanation of what causes canine aggressive behavior, a discussion of the safety and liability concerns surrounding canine aggressive behavior, a discussion of the welfare concerns of housing dogs that exhibit dangerous behavior because the dog is not going to be able to go out for walks and thing like that, and the welfare of the staff because taking care of a dangerous dog is dangerous, and a list of situations that are relevant in a thorough assessment of a shelter dog's behavior

Kelley Bollen has been working with WCRAS as she works with shelters all across the country on developing a thorough behavior assessment to know how to identify those dogs that probably should not go back out into the community. This includes a behavioral history of the dog, if known. At WCRAS most of the dogs are stray so we don't have any behavioral history in terms of a previous owner, but we do have the behavioral history of the dog in the field. Next is the behavior during the medical exam and then the behavior in the shelter. All staff have now been taught how to document the behavior so that we know if that dog is exhibiting any kind of dangerous behaviors. Next is the formal behavior evaluation procedure where trained staff takes the dog out of the kennel if it's safe to do so and spends time with the dog to make sure that this dog is handleable, is social, and those sorts of things. And then, of course any behavior in a foster home or an adoptive home is also documented. All of those things play a role in the overall assessment of a dog's behavior and they're all very important.

The policy also talks about the euthanasia criteria. Euthanasia will be an outcome of any dog with a history of dangerous levels of aggressive behavior involving a broken skin bite at a level four through six or multiple level three bites. The Dunbar scale is an internationally recognized bite scale that organizations use to classify bites in an objective way. A level one bite is an air snap where dog just snapped in the air and is saying I have a mouth full of teeth so stop what you're doing. A level two bite is when the dog makes contact with skin but doesn't put enough pressure to break the skin. A level three bite is when we have broken skin, but they don't apply enough pressure for the canine teeth to go half the length of that canine tooth. A level four bite is a bite where the dog did significant damage by really digging in with their canine teeth causing severe damage to the victim. A level five bite is considered a mauling, when there's multiple level four bites in a single incident. And then a level six bite is when a victim is killed by the dog. WCRAS and NHS as a partnership agreed that any dog who has a level four through six bite will not be put back into the community because they are too dangerous. For multiple level three bites, the point is that if dog has bitten several people at that level three, the dog is showing dangerous behavior as well because it doesn't inhibit his bite in such that it's not a level two bite and is actually breaking skin.

The situations where euthanasia is the safest and most ethical decision is: any dog with a history of exhibiting dangerous levels of aggressive behavior towards people,

including children, in a previous home; any dog that exhibits dangerous levels of aggressive behavior to humans or animals in custody including in foster care; any dog that's returned to the shelter for exhibiting dangerous levels of aggressive behavior in an adoptive home; any dog with a history of dangerous levels of aggressive behavior to other dogs; any dog with a single incident of killing another dog; any dog with a single incident of killing a companion cat that the dog has lived with; and any dog with a single incident of killing large livestock or companion farm animals. There is a subgroup for any dog that has killed multiple outdoor animals, and these dogs need to go through a full risk assessment which is a separate thing.

Possible reasons for euthanasia at both organizations are euthanasia due to dangerous levels of aggressive behavior as per the policy, and euthanasia due to quality of life in care whether medical or emotional. An example of this would be the almost feral dogs that come in from the reservations and they have no quality of life because they are not socialized to living with humans and living in a cage is just driving them insane. Other reasons are euthanasia due to high-risk behaviors as per the risk assessment, euthanasia due to a lack of rescue resources which Director Shull previously touched on, and euthanasia for space which happens when the shelter is full to capacity with animals needing to enter care and so the organization needs to make room for the incoming animals. Euthanasia for space doesn't happen much if at all but it can happen.

Chair Duerr requested clarification regarding animals being returned to the shelter for dangerous levels of aggressive behavior as a situation where euthanasia is the safest and most ethical decision. She was concerned because different people have different perceptions of aggression. For example, some people might get scared because they won't walk on the leash and other people might get scared because they're growling at the kids and maybe the dog was in a house before that had no kids. Kelley Bollen reminded the Board that the definition of dangerous levels of aggressive behavior is an objective measurement of a dog with bites at a level four or above

Chair Duerr mentioned that in Director Shull's report 42 animals were euthanized for behavior. She shared her previous experience in other communities where shelters are euthanizing animals after only 2 days in the shelter and compared that to the very different situation at WCRAS. Kelley Bollen explained that in the southeastern states in particular overpopulation is out of control. A transport program was started 20 years ago to move a lot of the animals from the southern shelter to the northern shelters where the spay/neuter message had been very successful and shelters didn't have a lot of dogs. Unfortunately, nothing is being done in the southern shelters to support spay/neuter programs, so these high-volume shelters often don't give a chance to any dog that's shown any kind of behavioral issue because they have a full house of dogs that are adoptable without that problem. She shared that we are very lucky because very few animals get euthanized here, even for behavior, and we adopt out lots of dogs that have minor behavioral issues. This policy is only talking about that small

percentage of dogs that are dangerous and both organizations agree that we are not going to put these dogs back into the community.

Chair Duerr next inquired as to Kelley Bollen's continuing role now that the policy has been written. Kelley Bollen explained that her role as the behavior consultant for WCRAS is to train the staff in how to read body language, how to do safe humane handling, and how to assess a dog's behavior. Selected people are further trained to do a full behavior evaluation. She explained that she does not have a continuing role with NHS. Chair Duerr asked if there was a plan to follow up and retroactively evaluate how the protocol is being implemented. Kelley Bollen explained that she consults with WCRAS, and that NHS has hired Shelley Walsh as a behaviorist. Chair Duerr clarified that she was more concerned that, for continuity and because it's a shared policy, the same person should be evaluating both organizations. Member McMahon shared her perspective on the checklists that she and the TMCC students use because they are handling the animals routinely. She pointed out that there is follow-up and a paper trail so that there is a consistent evaluation even from outside entities such as TMCC.

Shelley Volsche introduced herself to the Board and explained that one of the things that NHS does when applying the shared protocol and assessing bite scores is to go back and look at the forensic evidence. She is always working with the admissions team, working with the rest of the behavior team, working with dog team, and working with cat team to give them some of the forensic markers to understand the criteria. They are consistently having conversations across departments and even working with members of the veterinary clinic to make sure that they're all seeing the same bite. She shared that she would be happy to work on some sort of document that provides visuals and that they are already working in-house on some sort of job aid that would help individuals see the visuals of what the forensics of different levels of bite look like. Chair Duerr asked if NHS assessed for other kinds of behavior such as whether they were abused or overly shy. Shelley Volsche explained that they do a full assessment of these and more behaviors to make sure they have a full and complete assessment before making any decisions.

Chair Duerr offered her advice that Kelley Bollen and Shelley Volsche schedule follow-ups and cross-training to make sure that both teams stay on the same page with the same criteria. She suggested that group trainings be scheduled over the next six months.

Member Andriola asked, in regard to Director Shull's report on the numbers of euthanasia of cats versus dogs, whether there was a policy for quality of life in cats and inquired about the difference in euthanasia between cats and dogs. Kelley Bollen shared that there is not a policy on quality of life but that it is certainly something that Shelley and she could work together to develop. She shared that most of the cats that were euthanized for quality of life fell into the category of medical quality of life and that is the purview of the veterinarians. Behavioral quality of life would be talking about

emotional suffering where an animal's quality of life is not going to be good in the shelter nor is it going to be good in the home nor is the quality of life for the adopter going to be good. They take all of that into consideration, but would be happy to work with Shelley Volsche to get together and talk about behavioral quality of life in both cats and dogs in the shelter because animals in the shelter, dogs and cats, are suffering emotionally from captivity and if they were able to get out into a home, they would be fine. She believed it would be beneficial to see if they could come up with some guidelines for that kind of quality-of-life determination.

Member McMahon pointed out another difference in the canine and feline quality of life is that there is a robust TNR program where cats that are not social with people get to be returned to their comfort area and we don't do that with canines. We can't spay/neuter dogs and release them into the wild like we can with cats and so it would be expected to see a larger number of emotional or behavioral related issues in the canine population.

8. Nevada Humane Society Operational Update Report [Non-Action Item]

Jerleen Bryant, CEO, and Trent Bingham, Chief Operations Officer, provided an update to the board on the Nevada Humane Society Reno campus' second quarter 2024. CEO Bryant shared that two years ago this month she joined NHS and that moment marked the beginning of some pretty significant changes for the organization. These changes weren't easy for everyone, but they made a conscious decision to align more closely with best practices in animal welfare and that meant shifting how they operated in some pretty big ways. Today the data backs up those hard decisions and shows Nevada Humane Society is making a greater impact than it has in years.

As the public surrender facility, NHS continues to take in a large number of owned animals directly from our community, 686 animals in the last quarter. They also transferred 90% of unclaimed dogs and 96% of unclaimed cats from WCRAS. She pointed out that each animal that was transferred had unique needs and that all of this work was done without any financial support or taxpayer funding from the city of Reno, the city of Sparks, or Washoe County. NHS is primarily donor-funded and the resources required to care for these animals come from the generosity of their community.

NHS also receives what they call Good Samaritan stray which are primarily kittens that are brought in by members of the community that are often found outdoors and sometimes just hours old. In 2024 they received over a thousand kittens that were found in the community. Kitten season is just beginning right now but in just a couple of months it won't be unusual for NHS to have over 400 kittens out in foster care. Kitten season typically stretches through late fall and in some years it doesn't taper off until early winter which means months of continuous intensive care. NHS' foster department works tirelessly to place those kittens into safe and nurturing homes while the medical team devotes an extraordinary number of hours each week to provide the medical care many of these fragile kittens urgently need. The level of care required is

far beyond what would be reasonably expected of a community member, and it truly does take a coordinated professional team.

Chief Operations Officer (COO) Bingham shared the story of Nightshade, a Good Samaritan kitten that was brought in with three other newborns, all in critical condition. Nightshade was the only kitten that survived and through the hard work of his fosters and collaboration with the medical team, he is now thriving in his adoptive home.

This year has seen a significant change in the cat intake proportions with a greater proportion of them coming in as owner surrenders. This is the highest total on record uh for at least the last 5 years. Fortunately, Good Samaritans and unclaimed cats at WCRAS have been lower, likely not just due to fortune but likely due to the work of WCRAS, NHS, and all the community partners. The top intake reasons that are provided for these owner surrenders are landlord and housing issues, too many animals, financial issues, and moving. Being the final safety net for WCRAS is an important role that NHS takes very seriously.

NHS is also seeing that change of proportion in dog intakes. It seems to be a very consistent trend that more and more of the animals that are coming into our shelter are coming straight from owner/guardian surrenders. This trend shows that there's more need in our community and that as we rise to meet it and as we rise to lower barriers to owner relinquishment, we are able to get the animals in sooner and move them along in the process. Chair Duerr asked about the marked increase in "other" intakes. COO Bingham explained that NHS was able to take in some transfers from under-resourced communities in outlying areas, primarily Nevada counties but some from California as well including animals brought in from the LA fire. Chair Duerr then said that Kelly Bolan earlier stated something about the southeast moving animals to the north and asked if something like that happened here. COO Bingham explained that NHS commonly gets animals from Elko County, Douglas County, Lyon County, and Storey County. Another part of the large increase is due to having Dr. Volsche on staff as she heads up the transfer program as well so she's able to do more interfacing with the under-resourced communities. The primary reasons for owner relinquishment of dogs that were given are too many animals, not enough time, landlord/housing issues, moving, and financial reasons.

As Kelly Bollen mentioned, shelters are not great environments and we have two shelters. Even with NHS' foster programs the goal is to get towards that permanent home as soon as we can. When the Reno campus was built the goal was for 14-day length of stay. This wasn't just an arbitrary number but was picked based upon research that says after 14 days in care there is degradation and we have to increase the resources we are providing including more enrichment and more assistance to ensure that we can maintain their baseline. Lower length of stay is associated with better outcomes and greater numbers of animals moving through the shelter and into new loving homes. NHS has successfully lowered their length of stay and is close to

approaching the ideal for dogs at 14.7. There was a slight uptick for the cats but that is likely due to an extended kitten season when there were more kittens coming in from fourth quarter of last year. For cats NHS regularly has members of the public lined up before they open and almost all of their available cats become adopted the same day that they are made available so an 8.4 length of stay would be hard to beat.

Dogs show similar improvement; however, this metric hides the fact that animals who stay beyond 14 days tend to take much longer to be adopted. Dogs that don't have as strong adopter demand or maybe have some advanced issues, either medical or behavioral, take much longer to leave our system. The current length of stay for those dogs hovers more in the realm of 30 days.

The ultimate outcome for all animals in NHS care is hopefully adoption. 708 cats and 745 dogs were adopted out in the first quarter of 2025. Adoption demand remains high, with people lining up outside the door waiting for NHS to open.

Chair Duerr asked for a follow-up on the statement that if an animal is not fitting in well with the new home, NHS will take them back. She wanted to know if that was common practice. COO Bingham explained that it is certainly part of their practice, but also that it is common practice in the industry, especially with the small organizations. Chair Duerr then asked whether an animal that was adopted from SPCA, but was then surrendered to NHS, would be sent back to SPCA. Additionally, if an animal was adopted from NHS but surrendered to SPCA, would NHS expect the animal back. COO Bingham explained that they would not expect the animal back as that would be up to the owner. Chair Duerr shared a personal story where a small rescue was very upset when an animal that they had adopted out was rehomed without their involvement. COO Bingham explained that NHS wants to empower the pet owner and not add any barriers to animals finding loving homes. That includes empowering pet owners rehoming their animal without any organization getting in between that owner and a new home. Member McMahon shared that adoption is a legal transfer of property so even though an agency may have an opinion on what happens to an animal they adopt out, once ownership has been transferred it is up to the new owner to ultimately decide what to do with the animal. She added that it is highly encouraged during the adoption process to return animals to the facility that they were adopted from. Member Brussard shared that she wanted to reinforce the efforts that NHS is making in sustaining the bond because she received a card from NHS one year after adopting her pet from them and she appreciated the follow-up.

COO Bingham returned to discussing animal outcomes. There was an 11% increase in adoptions for cats and demand remains very high. Cat transfers were primarily internal transfers. There was a 7.5% increase in adoptions for dogs, and transfers for dogs include a mix of primarily internal but also some transfers to area rescues where they're a better fit. The continued increase in the owner surrender animals has led to an increase in animals that have severe risky and unsafe behaviors such as we just heard

in the presentation from Kelley Bollen. Meeting the needs to keep our community safe and supporting those who look to surrender animals which are unsafe in their homes is an unfortunate, but important role NHS plays in the community. One statistic from Director Shull's presentation that is important is the 32% increase in bite investigations. NHS has seen a similar increase in Carson City where they are Animal Control. Anecdotal reports from partners across the region and across the nation show an increase in animal to human aggression especially for dogs. Chair Duerr inquired as to the reason behind this increase. COO Bingham explained that it's a complex and nuanced problem and that we probably don't have enough information. Most of what is being seen is a mix of some unsocialized dogs, the jumping mouthy dogs that maybe don't get enough support, training, and care. They know that people are more stressed and the dogs are picking that up. They also know that the community has become increasingly less tolerant of behavior. It used to be stated that if a dog bites a man that's not news, if a man bites a dog that's news. People used to normalize dog bites but this is more and more a behavior that is very much seen as something that is not acceptable for dogs to in our community.

CEO Bryant reiterated that NHS is contracted to be the owner/guardian surrender facility for all companion animals in Washoe County regardless of where they came from. They certainly have a conversation with those individuals that want to surrender to see if there's something they can do to help them to keep that animal out of the shelter, but they respect that regardless of where that animal came from, it is the adopter's choice of where that animal goes.

CEO Bryant next announced Jennifer Fitzpatrick as the new Director of Community Medicine and Surgery. This position will be key as NHS looks to expand their community spay and neuter program, increasing access to affordable high-quality services for owned pets in the region. NHS has already performed 471 spay and neuter surgeries for cats and dogs in quarter one and 677 as of yesterday for owned dogs and cats. This is in addition to the microchips and vaccinations they continue to administer to the public. Other programs offered to the public include their Pet Pantry. In quarter one NHS provided a little over 48,000 pounds of dry food to the community to assist individuals that are experiencing hardship and having a difficult time feeding their pets. In October of 2024 NHS participated in an event with Pets of the Homeless in Carson City which was very successful. Finally, on May 17, 2025, the day following this meeting, NHS will be participating in a wellness clinic in Reno in partnership with Feeding Pets of the Homeless and the expectation is that about 200 animals will be there in need of assistance. NHS will be providing microchips and spay/neuter vouchers to help support this very important effort.

Vice-Chair Brussard asked how the general public would know about these services, especially the spay/neuter services. CEO Bryant explained that they have a very robust social media presence where the information is shared. Information is also disseminated through word of mouth, staff communicating with members of the public

that come in or call our animal help desk, through our staff, and through other partners organizations that we connect with. Julie McMahon asked for clarification regarding the public numbers related to cat neuters and spays and whether the TNR cats fall into that category, and when it was confirmed that they did, whether there was a number or a statistic about how many actual owned cats NHS worked on besides the TNR cats. CEO Bryant indicated that they have that information, but not in the slides and offered to send it to Member McMahon or break that out on a slide at the next presentation. Member McMahon asked, with the goal of increasing the volume of surgery for the public and other services for owned pets, how NHS intended to do that with the current facility structure and what resources would be utilized because they're going to be competing for the same space with the shelter animal services as well. CEO Bryant explained that Dr Fitzpatrick will be utilizing the surgery suite at the Reno campus every Saturday and Sunday when the shelter veterinarians are not using it and she will even be down at Carson City using the surgery suite there on Washoe County animals. She pointed out that the next agenda item is an update on the spay/neuter program but offered that they have a mobile spay/neuter vehicle they will be utilizing, even just parking it in their parking lot adjacent to the Reno clinic for efficiency and doing surgeries there.

9. Nevada Humane Society Community Spay & Neuter Project Update [Non-Action Item]

Jerleen Bryant, CEO, provided an update to the board on NHS' Community Spay & Neuter Project expansion, funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Chair Duerr prefaced CEO Bryant's presentation with a desire for CEO Bryant to break out what is due to an increased effort as a result of recent grant funding versus what they already would have been doing as a baseline. CEO Bryant shared that NHS received a spay/neuter grant in December 2024 which was pass-through federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act administered by the Washoe County Grants Office. The purpose of the grant is to expand NHS's existing public spay/neuter services, an essential effort in addressing pet population in the region.

In January, they launched a national search for an experienced veterinarian to lead the program and perform high-quality, high-volume surgeries. In February they were very fortunate to welcome Dr Jennifer Fitzpatrick to the team. During the same month they identified and initiated critical repairs to their mobile surgical van and animal transport vehicles, bringing them back into service. They had been sitting since COVID, not being used, so there was quite a bit of work that needed to be done to them to get them up to speed so that they could be utilized again. In March NHS purchased the medical equipment necessary to support the program's expansion. They also implemented upgrades to their scheduling and medical tracking systems to improve operational efficiency and data accuracy, which made it a lot easier for people to go online to schedule appointments and for NHS to track all of the different nuances of the program. In April NHS completed the hiring for the Community Medicine and Surgery Department, bringing on a full-time team, and that includes one veterinary technician

and two veterinary assistants in addition to Dr Fitzpatrick. Now the team has completed their onboarding and training, and additional full-time public spay/neuter surgeries began earlier this month as part of the expansion. The goal for the grant was to support 4,000 additional spay and neuter surgeries in 2025 and NHS is very confident that they're going to meet that goal and maybe even surpass it. NHS had been doing some surgeries already but has now fully opened the schedules for scheduling and the team is complete and trained and onboarded. Chair Duerr asked when they started performing surgeries. CEO Bryant explained that Dr. Fitzpatrick had been there since February and was already being rotated in and doing public surgeries, even while she was getting her team together and all of these other things done. Chair Duerr asked CEO Bryant to share some baseline numbers and then the new numbers at the next meeting.

Member Andriola asked whether the ARPA funding fell under all expenditures for December of 2026 or if they'd already spent all of it. CEO Bryant explained that it is a reimbursement grant, and they haven't actually received any of the funding yet. Member Andriola clarified that the grant is for \$600,000 and she wanted to know when it would be fully expended and what the sustainability plan was for when the money ran out. CEO Bryant shared that the entire cost of this program is not covered by the grant and NHS is covering the rest. The grant is a two-year grant, and NHS is looking at being reimbursed half of it in 2025 and half of it in 2026. The grant provided the seed money that helped them get everything in place for the program to reestablish and then NHS will be able to manage sustaining it from here on out.

Chair Duerr asked what the cost would be for the public. CEO shared that the program will be low-cost. The typical or average cost of spaying or neutering a dog in our community at a private veterinarian varies, but it is not uncommon for it to be close to \$1,000. Through the new program at NHS, it will be \$200 to \$250 for the typical person. However, if there is someone in our community that desperately needs to get their animal sterilized and they can't cover that cost, NHS is certainly willing to work with them on what that might look like.

10. Options Veterinary Care Access to Spay/Neuter Services Update [Non-Action Item]

Bonney Brown, Options Veterinary Care President, provided an update to the board on Options Veterinary Care's Access to Spay/Neuter Services, funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Options Veterinary Care is a nonprofit full-service clinic located just down the street from WCRAS. Their mission is to provide care to pets who would otherwise suffer without it when owners cannot afford care. They work with other local veterinary practices and do not compete with them. The goal is to help the clients that those other practices would love to help but are unable to because the client cannot afford the cost of the services. People often ask how they are able to provide affordable services, and it is an ongoing challenge because Options is a fairly new organization. They've been around since 2020, right at the beginning of the

pandemic. The reason why veterinary care is so expensive is that it is very expensive to provide it. Options is able to do it by utilizing incremental care strategies and working with partner organizations that cover some of the costs for some clients. Finally, they receive grants and also donations from individuals and local businesses. Last year Options provided veterinary care to over 9,800 dogs and cats in the community, with about 3,400 of those being spay/neuter surgeries. Options operates on a very modest budget, under \$2 million a year. President Brown shared that she was really pleased to be invited by Director Shull to speak before the Board because she really wanted to thank Washoe County for their foresight and for investing in spay/neuter in the community. The benefits of it are huge including reducing the number of animals that need sheltering and creating a healthier population of animals as well as helping the humans who are closely bonded to those animals. She also wanted to thank WCRAS and their team who are a wonderful partner to Options and many of the other organizations in the community.

The primary goal of the spay/neuter program is to provide free TNR surgeries for cats trapped within Washoe County, free spay/neuter surgeries for rescue groups, a 20% discount on other services for rescue groups, and affordable and free spay/neuter services for Washoe County pet owners. Since the funding was awarded on December 10th, they have performed 1,634 spay/neuter surgeries. 623 of those surgeries will be covered by the Washoe County ARPA funds. The others are funded through other programs or paid for by the pet owners themselves.

February was spay/neuter awareness month. Options partnered with the SPCA, WCRAS and also many rescue agencies including community cats who you're going to be hearing from in just a few minutes with a goal of 500 surgeries. 542 surgeries were performed, 383 of them at Options with the assistance of SPCA staff and Dr. Statin from WCRAS. Ads were run in the Reno Gazette Journal and also through social media and other online paid advertising to try and get the word out. In March they also held two special spay days in conjunction with Reno Sparks Indian Colony. Tanya Hernandez from Reno Sparks Indian Colony (RSIC) helped coordinate this activity and SPCA and WCRAS helped with transportation from both the Reno location and the Hungry Valley location in order to get animals in for those two special spay days.

In closing, President Brown shared photos of a couple of the pets who've had the benefit of receiving spay/neuter surgery at Options so far this year. One of the things that Options feels is especially important is that they are able to treat other conditions. So, if an animal comes in and they have complications or other problems prior to spay/neuter surgery, they're often able to address that at the same time. Many spay/neuter clinics do this but not all. She finished by thanking everyone associated with Washoe County for their foresight and investing in spay/neuter. They are particularly honored that Options was entrusted to help provide that service to the community because it's part of their mission and they are very grateful for the help fulfilling their mission for the community.

Chair Duerr shared that she is loving this focus on spay/neuter because, probably more than almost anything we do in any of our jobs, this is right at the front end of prevention. This has such a trickle-down effect on animals' lives, cost to community, and successful outcomes with families. She asked what the cost would be for this service through Options. President Brown shared that their surgery is closer to \$400 at the full price that we would charge, but that many people still cannot pay that and then under the grant they are working with people on an individual basis. They have a staff member that works with people to determine what they are able to afford and can even provide it for free when the person does not have the resources. She expects the average cost would be around \$250 for owned animals. They are doing all of the feral cats for free and all of the rescue pets for free.

Vice-Chair Brussard asked how large the staff is at Options. President Brown explained that while they do have eight or nine veterinarians, they are all part time. They are in the process of looking for a full-time veterinarian but are fortunate to have so many experienced part-time veterinarians.

11. Community Cats Program Presentation [Non-Action Item]

Tracy Dean, Community Cats Director, presented an update on the Community Cats program. Community Cats is a 25-year-old local non-profit grassroots organization with is dedicated to keeping Washoe County's no-kill status by utilizing a sustainable and targeted TNR program. Director Dean shared a quote from Dr. John Boone, a board member for SPCA of Northern Nevada, and for Alliance for Contraception in Dogs and Cats; "The best solution to [community cat] issues is going to be significant changes in how people care for their cats." As a grassroots organization they only have a handful of volunteers, however they are also able to pivot quickly as situations evolve as they often do in the animal world. Community Cats is committed to TNR as the sustainable and economic approach to preventing cat overpopulation, reducing unnecessary euthanasia, and alleviating pressure on under sourced shelters. A targeted TNR program requires all coalition partners to coordinate for success and the main rescue clinic foster and adoption partners include Feral At Heart, Kitty Kisses Rescue, Nevada Humane Society, Options Veterinary Care, SPCA of Northern Nevada, and WCRAS.

On average, 80% of cats coming into shelters are from free roaming cats which include owned cats, stray cats, and totally feral cats which have never been touched by humans. These cats are breeding in our neighborhoods, and it is in the best interest of all involved organizations to prevent the litters from being born in the first place. Since December 3rd Community Cats has focused on moving TNR forward as a sustainable and targeted program. This will require more support from the local community, and they are reaching the limits of what the volunteers for a grassroots nonprofit group can accomplish from week to week. Securing funding and resources to implement a big picture plan is necessary to keep moving forward.

Director Dean took over the program in 2022. That year they were able to help 363 cats. The following year they were able to help 552 cats. In 2024 they were able to help 849 cats. For January through November of 2024, they were able to help an average of 54 cats per month. In December they were able to help 130 cats. This is because on December 3, 2024, Community Cats entered into a partnership with WCRAS and could now bring their cats directly to WCRAS for their TNR clinic. From January to April of 2025 Community Cats has helped over 562 cats, including 41 cats that were young enough to be socialized and cats that were microchipped but had wandered into the colony cat traps. The microchipped cats were either reunited or adopted back out as a pet to a new owner. Over 274 female cats were spayed which equates to 274 litters that have already been prevented, and another 274 litters that would have been born very soon.

Community Cats is also working to incorporate data from other individuals and groups and hopes to create a more accurate snapshot of our community with assistance from their coalition partners. One of the goals is to have data in one spot so they can see a complete picture and know where best to focus their efforts to make a difference. Director Dean next shared a graph created by WCAS showing the number of cats collected by zip code over the last five years. Community Cats has been using this data to know which areas to focus on. The next project is to work on heat-mapping the specific areas to be able to focus even more. TNR is fundamental to maintaining no-kill shelters and is meant to be a targeting program to manage cat populations and reduce the required resources to shelter, foster, and adopt the endless supply of cats and kittens. TNR is meant to save lives and reduce suffering. In order to accomplish targeted and sustainable TNR, obstacles must be removed, and resources must be coordinated.

Trudy Brussard suggested that they only focus on heat-mapping the more populated areas. Director Dean agreed that some of the zip codes cover a huge area with a small population of cats and that is not where they would be directing their efforts. She did note that some grants are only for a specific zip code, however, and in those cases they would of course be focusing only on that zip code.

12. Washoe County Regional Animal Services Advisory Board Member and/or Staff Announcements, Requests for Information, and Selection of Topics for Future Agendas [Non-Action Item]

Member McMahon inquired into the status of WCRAS notifications regarding leaving dogs in hot cars now that the weather is heating up. Director Shull reported that WCRAS has reached out to SPCA of Northern Nevada and their team has created items for a marketing campaign that will soon be shown on social media and various other places to help educate and advise the community about the dangers of leaving your pet in the car and that leaving your pet at home is the best option. Member Rodriguez asked if there was a way to collaborate with NDOT to put messaging on their highway signs.

Director Shull responded that while the SPCA has reached out to Lamar for billboard marketing, she did not think that anyone had thought of reaching out to NDOT. She indicated that they would investigate whether partnerships were available for that. Chair Duerr shared that the previous Vice-Chair and she had talked about reaching out to the big box stores with large parking lots. She indicated that she would be trying again, particularly for those big box stores. She also notes that she had seen more dogs inside stores like Lowe's and Home Depot than ever before and wondered if more stores were becoming more pet-friendly which could be another solution, at least for certain types of stores.

Chair Duerr asked that the Transfer Protocol and the Professional Services Agreement be added to the next agenda, especially as this would allow for public feedback prior to finalizing them.

Chair Duerr next spoke to the newer members of the Board, informing them that in the past the Board has spent a significant amount of time word smithing regulations to potentially be adopted by Washoe County and/or be presented to the Nevada State Legislature and while that has not been done recently, it could be asked for again. Director Shull informed the Board that WCRAS had paused their work on code amendments to work on things like the Transfer Agreement and the work sessions with NHS. Despite that, WCRAS has remained involved with the legislative sessions and works with their stakeholders in between sessions to prepare for the next session. At this point there is a year and a half before the next session to strategize and work together but it would be nice if there were a more coordinated workforce before that. Chair Duerr acknowledged that the Board only meets four times per year so there may be a lot of homework to do before the meeting in order to maximize the time spent at the meeting and that future meetings may include an hour or more on these matters.

Vice-Chair Brussard shared that there was heightened awareness regarding massive wildfires. She recently learned that both Carson City and the Sommerset subdivision of Reno were going to be having a fire drill for evacuations and wondered how we could be part of that type of planning. Director Shull informed the Board that WCRAS has a web page dedicated to emergency management including tips and resources. In addition to the online resources, they also do go out and present to the groups that are responsible for the evacuations. WCRAS' outreach team has spoken with the CERT team and other groups about what we do to prepare for emergencies and what pet owners can do to prepare for emergencies, particularly focusing on livestock owners. Livestock is very difficult to evacuate and WCRAS only has two horse trailers to evacuate a whole community, so it really is incumbent upon the owner to have their own resources and trailers instead of relying on WCRAS. In addition to external efforts, WCRAS has also been working on internal processes. They recently hired an intern who spent a year at WCRAS helping to evaluate the emergency response plan and create an SOP. Assistant Director Wines-Jennings has been working on a formal manual for each large animal and small animal evacuation center with procedures and a flowchart. Chair Duerr

offered that this would be a perfect agenda item for the next meeting. Assistant Director Wines-Jennings shared that in addition to what Director Shull mentioned, Field Manager Robert Wooster has been attending all the emergency operations center's evacuation drills to make sure WCRAS is up to date on all their procedures. She added that WCRAS also gets asked to present at some of the community advisory boards.

Chairperson Naomi Duerr suggested the following for future agenda items:

- a. Update on the Professional Services Agreement and Transfer Protocol.
- b. Emergency Response update

13. Public Comment [Non-Action Item]

There was no public comment offered at this time.

14. Adjournment [Non-Action Item]

Chair Duerr declared the Animal Services Advisory Board meeting of May 16, 2025, adjourned at 12:03 p.m.