

CITIZEN'S BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE
SPOTSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

REVIEW DATE: July 1, 2019

REVIEWER(S): Karen Adams, Lee Hill Alternate Representative
Dawn Napper, Battlefield Representative

DEPARTMENT: Spotsylvania Animal Shelter

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT: Spotsylvania Animal Shelter (SAS) is a no kill shelter that is a division of the Spotsylvania County Sheriff's Department. It works with the Sheriff's Office (SO) and the Animal Control (AC) Division of the SO. They care for all domestic animals that are either surrendered at the shelter or picked up by AC and brought to the facility. They then assess the animal's physical health, determine if the animal is chipped, and attempt to reunite with the owner. If the animal is surrendered or no owner is found, it is sterilized, given appropriate vaccinations, and put up for adoption. If the animal is injured, appropriate veterinary services are procured. The Animal Shelter also houses dogs pending Dangerous Dog classification and any domestic animal that has bitten someone pending the animal's Rabies verification.

The City of Fredericksburg also contracts with Spotsylvania Animal Control/Spotsylvania Animal Shelter to provide animal control services within the city limits.

DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATION OR CHART

EXPLANATION OF WHO MEMBERS REPORT TO: The Animal Shelter (AS) has a manager, Toni Thomas and an onsite administrative deputy, Captain Willie Tydings, who oversees the day to day operations. Major Carter Wells is his direct supervisor.

MANDATES: The mandates by the Commonwealth of Virginia, Spotsylvania County, and the City of Fredericksburg are too numerous to mention. However, per their Mission Statement, animals are held in accordance with state requirements and are redeemed by the owner or put up for adoption. SAS has been a NO KILL shelter since September, 2013, but is not mandated to be such. The shelter also houses a low-cost spay/neuter clinic operated by Lionhearts Inc., a local humane organization. All dogs and cats adopted from the shelter are sterilized within 30 days from the date of adoption with the exception of animals that are too young.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES REQUIRED TO FULFILL MANDATES: Sworn AC officers – 10.5 budgeted positions. Non-sworn SAS employees – 9.63 budgeted positions.

NUMBER OF ACTUAL EMPLOYEES: Same

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF NON-MANDATED EMPLOYEES AND NON-MANDATED EXPENDITURES: To our knowledge, there are no non-mandated employees at the SAS. We did not determine any county funds being spent on non-mandated expenditures.

COMPARATIVE COUNTIES REVIEW: Stafford County also operates a shelter. They do not require sterilization before adoption.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS FISCAL YEAR'S BUDGET AND LAST YEAR'S BUDGET:

We found no irregularities between Fiscal Year 2018 and 2019 worth noting.

INEFFICIENCIES OR CONCERNS NOTED: Cats are kept mainly in a closed room with limited light and adequate ventilation for healthy cats. When sick cats enter the shelter, there is limited room to allow separation from the healthy cats. Since, many cat illnesses are airborne, this is a self-defeating proposition and isolation chambers for sick cats should be a priority.

Additionally, the cat room is located in between the two bays of dogs and the barking is nonstop. It bothers some of the cats but those used to dogs don't seem to mind as much.

After writing the initial draft report, we learned that the Shelter Manager opened a cat viewing room by relocating it to the employee lounge in the front of the facility to allow cats space to roam and windows to look out of.

The shelter could benefit from having more volunteers. Volunteers can help socialize the animals in addition to helping care for them.

Using social media has been a great boost for the shelter. We would encourage them to post even more pictures and stories of animals available for adoption, have more community events as there are many residents that are unaware that the county has its own shelter. Most people when you mention the shelter think of the SPCA and it would be to everyone's benefit to get the word out about the county's shelter.

EFFICIENCIES NOTED: The dogs have separate cages which appeared to be clean. They are exercised daily. The Shelter Manager is creative with encouraging donations for supplies from the community which in turn allows her to spend her funds on more pressing animal issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Signage on Route 1 larger and more prominent than what is there.
2. Plan now for more employees when the new shelter opens in late 2020.
3. Ventilation chambers for the sick cats.
4. Veterinarian services in closer proximity to the shelter or possibly do a cost benefit analysis of employing a part-time veterinarian.

Many of the issues we identified are supposed to be resolved when the new shelter opens next year. We recommend revisiting the AS once it opens and report back.