

ANIMAL CONTROL BOARD

MEETING APRIL 23, 2008

CALL TO ORDER 6:40PM

ROLL CALL: All present: Kevin Walsh, Mary Alice Jaksha, Stephen Eliason, Diana Kay Bachmann, Sandy Weiss, David Klein.

Public Comments:

Comments were made both for and against the privatization of the Billings Animal Shelter. Public comment was approximately 50/50 for and against.

Animal Control Supervisor, David Klein stated that he was excusing himself from the decision of the Animal Control Board for their recommendation to City Council about the proposal submitted by Yellowstone County Animal Shelter, Inc.

When asked by the Animal Control Board, after public discussion, how the Save – a – Life program, which began February 7, 2008 at the Billings Animal Shelter, was working? David Klein, Animal Control Supervisor presented Board and members of the public with the following information:

Hello and thank you for coming. If you are here than you are obviously someone who cares deeply for the care of animals in our community and I commend you for that. My name is David Klein and I am currently the Animal Control Supervisor for the Billings Animal Shelter. I have been an employee of the Billings Animal Shelter for just under 28 years. I have participated or at least been employed during the killing of over 50,000 animals.

I would first off like to give you my thoughts about privatization. The Billings Animal Shelter under the City of Billings is restricted in many ways that a 501c-3 or other private organization would not be. Many grants and other funding are not available to government agencies. Many of the creative ideas in the current proposal being looked at and other programs are not available, feasible or fundable under the current mode of operation using tax-payer funds. I therefore, speaking for myself and everyone currently working at the Billings Animal Shelter, feel privatization would be beneficial.

Many people here are going to get in front of this microphone tonight and speak negatively of current management, staff, and policies and procedures at the Billings Animal Shelter. Many people here are going to get in front of this microphone and speak negatively of area animal organizations and their management, staff, and policies and procedures.. I would ask that you allow me a little time to give you some facts and a personal opinion.

I mentioned before that, during my employment, over 50,000 animals have lost their lives at the Billings Animal Shelter. In the early 1980's these numbers averaged about 5000 animals per year. In the 1990's the numbers were approximately 2000 animals per year. In 2007 the number of cats and dogs killed was 1075.

Recently we at the Billings Animal Shelter began a program we call Save a Life. This program allows us to offer animals that are being considered for death to 501c-3 animal organizations free of charge. The only requirement is that the organization taking control of one of these animals must see that the animal is spayed or neutered prior to being placed into a new home. During the first two month period of this program 56 dogs/cats were put to death at the Billings Animal Shelter, of these 15 were requested by their owners to be put to death. The other 41 were put to death because of health, behavior, aggression, or feral conditions. Multiplying the total for this two month period by six to come up with a yearly projected average, during the first year of this program, the animals put to death at the Billings Animal Shelter will be approximately 336. Although I will not swear to it, I am confident in saying not one healthy adoptable pet has been put to death since the start of this program. For this I thank the 501c – 3 organizations taking part in the Save – a – Life program.

I know that the Billings Animal Shelter is not solely responsible for the declining numbers in deaths of these animals. I do however also know that we have played a part. I would also like to give credit to everyone who has had their pet, or has assisted someone owning a pet, with having their animal spayed or neutered.

Now for my personal opinion. The greatest threat to the animals in our community is not the Billings Animal Shelter, it is all of us currently working in the animal field attacking each other and our inability to work together. Privatization could be a positive step in seeing that the kill numbers continue to decline. Yet privatization will not work, in my opinion, unless those people wishing to see it become a reality also learn to work together. I have spoken to my Supervisor, Fred McCracken, and he has agreed that he and I will be in our Office, or available, anytime that someone wishes to sit down and see how we can, working together, make privatization a reality and a success.

In conclusion whatever is decided or directed of me by my current employers will be done to the best of my ability.

Meeting adjourned 7:45pm