

# REPORT TO LOS ALAMOS COUNTY COUNCIL

Animal Shelter Ad Hoc Advisory Committee  
June 25, 2019



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# Animal Shelter Ad Hoc Committee Membership

- Wendee Brunish, Chair
- Linda Zwick, Vice Chair
- Melissa Bartlett
- Wendy Marcus
- Mary Timmers
- Sally Wilkins
- Jennifer Young



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# Animal Shelter Ad-Hoc Committee Charter

- Serve as an advisory body to the County Council (“Council”) on the organizational structure of the Los Alamos County Animal Shelter (“Shelter”) and policies and procedures appropriate for the Shelter.
- Examine other issues that the Committee and County staff determine are material to the organization and operation of the Shelter.

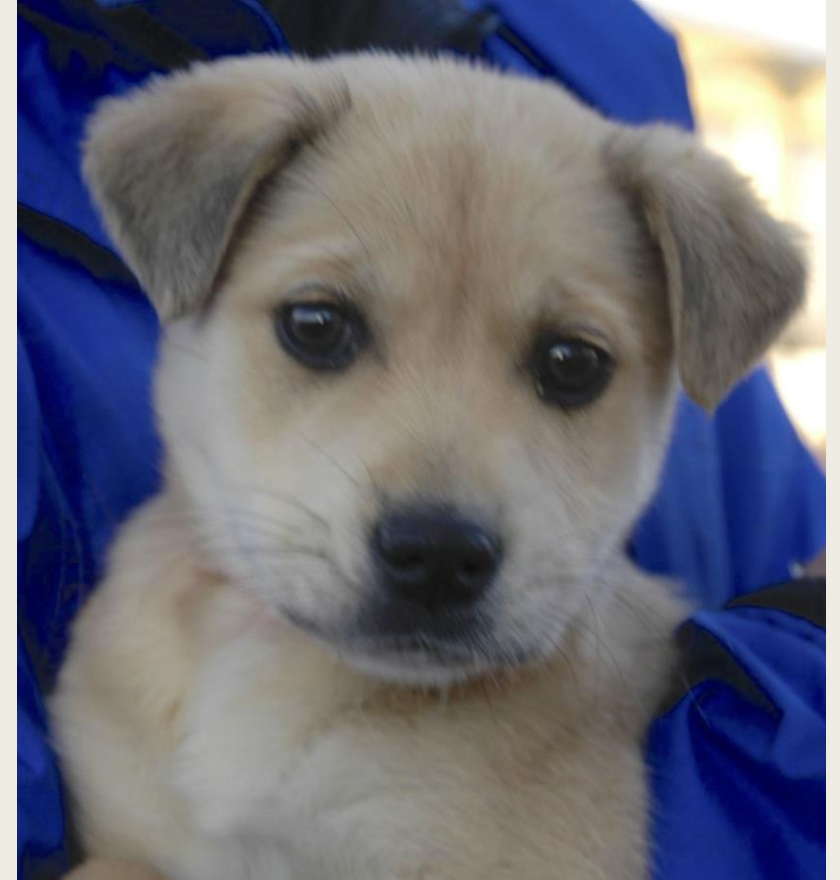




# ASAC Motivation

“Animals are more than ever a test of our character, of mankind's capacity for empathy and for decent, honorable conduct and faithful stewardship.”

— Matthew Scully



# What Makes a Great Shelter?

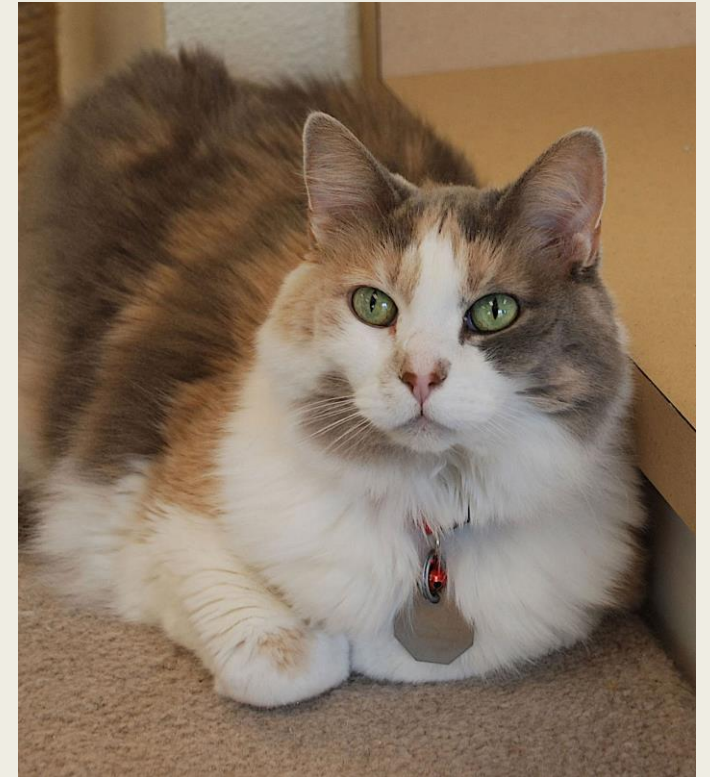
- Dedication to animal welfare and public service
- Clear vision of state-of-the-art animal care
- Ongoing strategic planning for the future
- Clear goals evaluated by objective metrics



# How Does a Great Shelter Partner with the Community?

By providing services like:

- Surrender prevention programs
- Responsible pet ownership education
- Access to spay/neuter services
- Pet ownership education for landlords



# What Activities Are Found in a Great Shelter?



- Daily walks, active toys, training, and play groups for dogs.
- Daily opportunities for cats to interact with toys, a variety of comfortable spaces, other cats, and people.
- Regular reviews to monitor and maintain all animals' physical and psychological health.
- Ongoing development of plans for behavior modification, fostering, and transfer as needed.



# What Does a Great Shelter Staff Look Like?

- Committed professionals with experience, knowledge, and ongoing training in animal sheltering best practices
- Dedicated, well-trained volunteers who interact effectively with the animals, staff, and potential adopters.
- A shelter director who manages staff, budgets, and facility issues to keep employee and volunteer satisfaction high.





# How Are Public Service and Public Safety Addressed at a Great Shelter?



- Proper assessment of each animal's health to ensure that no animal, volunteer, or member of the public is exposed to diseases.
- Proper assessment of each animal's behavior and temperament to ensure that no animals, volunteers, or members of the public are at risk of injury.
- Establish strict adoption guidelines to ensure that no aggressive dogs and cats are released into the community.

# Animal Control Departments and Animal Shelters Are Both Necessary . . .

. . . but they have separate tasks and different focuses that sometimes conflict with each other



# Primary Tasks of Animal Control

- Investigating complaints concerning animal nuisances and bites and loose animals in public areas
- Capturing strays
- Investigating cruelty cases
- Enforcing ordinances





# Primary Tasks of an Animal Shelter

- Humane treatment, including food and water
- A clean environment and medical care
- Social interaction with humans and animals
- Exercise and enrichment
- Reduced stress in the environment
- Shelter pet evaluations, behavior management and training, and adoption services



# Issues with an Animal Control Focused Shelter

- Conflicting priorities—animal welfare is not a top priority.
- Coverage requirements—animal control tasks must be responded to before shelter needs.
- Staff experience, skills, and training focus primarily on animal control issues and procedures.
- Competition between animal control and animal welfare functions and staffing limitations may make improvements difficult.



# Other Shelter Issues

- There has historically been a problem with high staff turnover in both shelter and animal control positions.
- At times, budget issues have caused the current shelter to seek and use supplementary assistance from the public and from non-profit animal welfare organizations.



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# The Future of an Animal Control Focused Shelter

- With this current animal control model, it may be difficult to attract animal welfare and adoption professionals.
- As local shelters continue to improve and adopt best practices, our shelter will not be keeping pace with them.



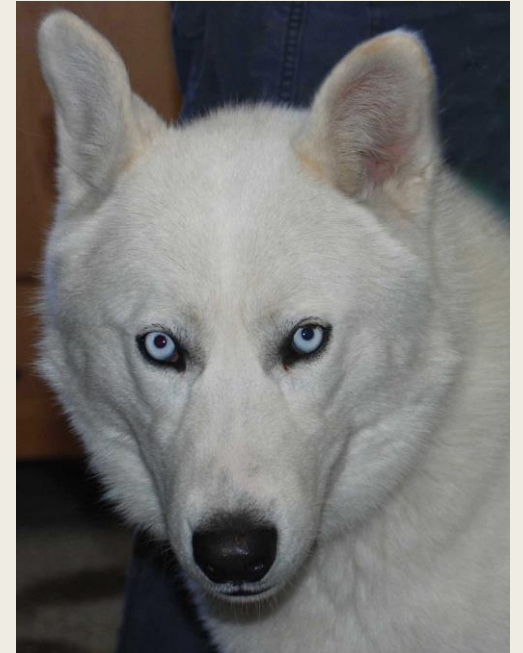
# Animal Shelter Options

- Stand-alone shelter
  - *Part of the Community Services Department and separate from the LAPD*
  - *Emphasis on animal welfare*
  - *Improved service for the community*
  - *No conflict between law enforcement and animal welfare/customer service priorities*
  - *Increased cost for staffing, training, and enrichment programs*



# Animal Shelter Options (continued)

- Current shelter—fully staffed (“enhanced shelter”)
  - *Competing priorities can lead to animal neglect.*
  - *Law enforcement emphasis can lead to poor adoption matching, and thus a large number of returns, and marginal animals being adopted out.*
  - *There is no guarantee that animal welfare best practices will be implemented and/or maintained.*
- Transfer-only shelter
  - *May improve current animal welfare conditions but decreases public convenience.*
  - *The facility is likely to be under-utilized.*
  - *There may be opposition from the public.*





# Animal Shelter Cost Summary



- Current shelter (baseline): \$372,540
- Current shelter (fully staffed or "enhanced"): \$481,268
- Stand-alone shelter (part of the Community Services Department and separate from the LAPD): \$380,540
- Transfer-only shelter: \$227,840

# Other ASAC Recommendations

- A permanent advisory committee should be established to review shelter policies and procedures.
- The Los Alamos County Animal Ordinance should be reviewed and rewritten to reflect current practices of animal welfare, surrender, seizure, quarantine, and adoption.
- Facility improvements, such as appropriate facility ventilation to prevent spread of disease and adequate outdoor play areas, should be funded and implemented as soon as possible.



# ASAC Summary

It is the opinion of ASAC that the stand-alone shelter option would best serve both the community and the animals. By providing high-quality animal care and customer service, it could become a cutting edge shelter that matches the high-quality standard of life we have in Los Alamos County.



The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

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— Mahatma Gandhi