



**Animal Care & Control
Advisory Board
December 13, 2010**

MEETING NOTES

Attendees: Ken Goldman, Kim Culbertson, Dan Niziolek, and Jeanette Wiedemeier Bower

Dan Niziolek called the meeting to order at 2:02pm on December 13th. He welcomed the group, and then introduced Jeanette Wiedemeier Bower to the group as MACC's new Program Development Coordinator. Jeanette started in early November 2010, and will serve as the liaison to the group. In addition to this role, she will be our point person on the pet licensing initiative, and will develop a volunteer program, coordinate grants and donations for MACC, and focus on community outreach and education, among other things.

I. Advisory Board Updates

Staff proposed that the 2011 Meeting Calendar be as follows: Quarterly meetings held the first Monday of the month from 2 to 4pm.

March 7
June 6
September 5
December 5

Staff will follow up with the absent members and solidify the calendar in a few weeks.

MACC Board Terms

Dan notified the group that the board terms for the MACC Advisory Board will expire on June 30, 2011. Jeanette reported that the city will publicize the vacancies in early February, and she will email the applications to board members mid-January. If current members are interested, they can reapply. There are no term limits for the Advisory Board. Dan mentioned that we have not been fully staffed to this point, and therefore have not fully utilized the strengths of each of our board members. But, with the addition of Jeanette's position, we hope to be working more closely with each of our board members in 2011.

II. 2010 Year End Summary

Dan then gave a 2010 year end summary of MACC activities. (*See attached November Report*) We continue to focus on aggressive animal behavior, including bites and incidents. We have had 275 reported dog or cat bites in 2010 thus far, which is slightly below previous years. In terms of serious bites, we have had 82, which represents a few more than in 2009 (N=74), but this figure is down 25 percent from 2008 data. MACC declared 200 dogs as potentially dangerous, and 35 as dangerous dogs. A total of 15 dogs were ordered destroyed.

We continue to receive many reports of animal bites from hospitals and the police department. We also received a tremendous amount of bite reports from the public in August into September after the media attention stemming from the mail carrier's bite in late summer.

Collaboration with Police Department – MACC began working with police department officer Sergeant Angela Dodge in 2010. She has helped us focus on restricting violent offenders from owning dogs. Offenders must have a prohibited animal permit in order to have a dog. We believe that we are making the streets safer because we are removing the dogs from these homes, often before a bite incident is reported. In total, we removed animals from twelve offenders this year.

Pet Licensing – In terms of pet licensing, our numbers of licensed pets are going up, as is our revenue attributed to licensing. We rolled out our online licensing option in 2010, which brought in a major bump up in revenue. Currently, 11,000+ animals were licensed this year, and we hope to increase our numbers to 18,000 licenses next year.

Donations – During the first three quarters of 2010, citizens have donated almost \$6,000 to MACC. Staff will come back to the Advisory Board in 2011 to ask for suggestions on ways to spend these dollars.

Customers / Animals Served – Through November of this year, 6,000 customers have been served at our counter; between 14,000 and 15,000 field service calls were answered by our officers; and 3,500 animals have come into the shelter (strays, impounds from criminal activity, DOA, etc.). The data represent a steady number compared to 2009.

III. City of Minneapolis Ordinance Change

Dan talked briefly about the recent change to city ordinances related to animal control. In November, the city council passed a change that allows for pet licenses to expire a year from whenever purchased. This is a tremendous improvement in policy, as it encourages owners to license their pets at any time during the year. Because the previous policy required all pet licenses to expire on January 31 of any given year, pet owners were discouraged from licensing during the last half of the year. As of February 1, 2011, all licenses expire a year from purchase date.

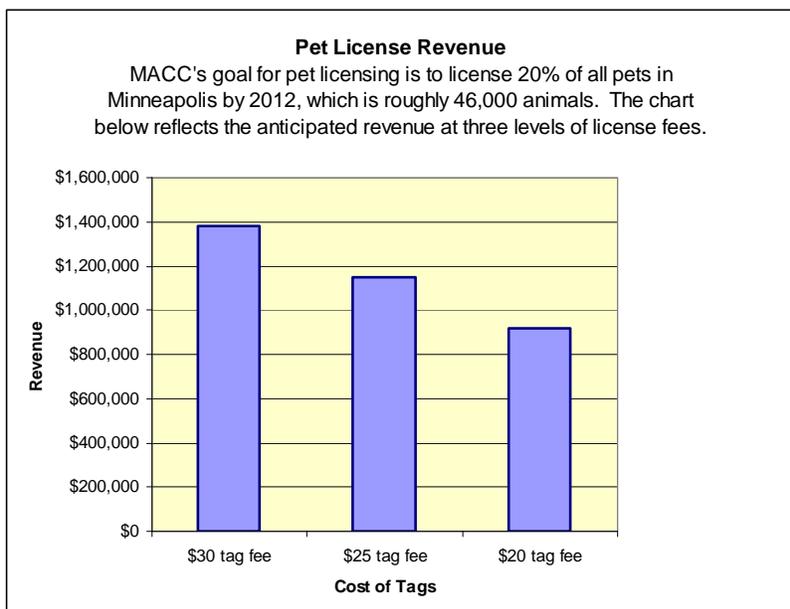
In addition, a second suggested policy change was sent back to committee at the same November meeting. The proposed change would have increased the fine for failure to license a pet from \$100 to \$200. However, during the discussion, Council Member Goodman mentioned that she had received much feedback from citizens and suggested that the city lower the license fee instead of increase the fee for noncompliance. As a result, the discussion will be taken up at the council's January committee meeting.

MACC requested input from the Advisory Board members regarding their opinions on the level of the current license fees. Dan described the revenue achieved from pet licenses from 2006 to current, and discussed the reasons why city municipalities charge a license fee:

- To encourage responsible pet ownership;
- To manage the city's population of dogs and cats;
- To protect the safety of the public and the city's animals;
- To generate revenue to support our animal care and control program; and
- To return stray pets back to their families.

In terms of historical perspectives, in 2006 pet license rates were \$15 for altered and \$30 for unaltered animals. However, the following year the rates increased to the current \$30 and \$50, respectively. Because of this increase, MACC saw a tremendous decrease in the number of licenses purchased.

MACC staff put together a simple policy analysis based on three options – keeping the license fee at \$30; decreasing the rate to \$25; and decreasing the rate to \$20. (*See Chart below*) Overall, a \$30 tag fee generates \$1.4 million in revenue. A \$25 tag fee generates \$1.2 million, and a \$20 tag fee generates \$900,000. The question that follows is, “Will the lower fees actually encourage Minneapolis pet owners to license their pets?” And, “will the increased number of licenses make up for the loss in revenue due to lowering the license fees?”



Although the group was small, the discussion that followed revealed that MACC Advisory Board Members do not think their friends, colleagues, and most Minneapolis citizens fail to license because of the fee (i.e., money is not the main factor). The reason they do not purchase pet licenses may be because:

- a. They don't know about the requirement to license; (education)
- b. They don't want to pay for the license, and are hoping not to get caught;
- c. It is not easy enough or convenient to license their animals; and
- d. What's in it for me? What am I getting for my license? (value)

Additional Ideas

- A. Sliding-scale license fees. Dan mentioned that the additional documentation necessary to prove a person's income would make it cost-prohibitive for MACC to fully staff the initiative.
- B. GroupOn Offer. If enough people sign up, MACC could offer a deeply discounted license rate for a limited time offer. We may likely get media attention for the initiative.
- C. Implementing a Three Tiered System. The current level of license fees is \$30, and when we license 15,000 animals, for example, the fee decreases to \$25. If we license 22,000 animals, the fee drops again to \$20. MACC staff have not done the analysis on the exact threshold, but the idea is an interesting one.
- D. Map Out Paid vs. Unpaid Citations. MACC staff might consider analyzing where the nonpayment of licenses (based on the citations that are served) most come from in terms of the geographic neighborhoods most likely not to license their pets. This would help staff determine where to focus our educational efforts, among other things.
- E. Market Research. What is the perceived value of a pet license in Minneapolis? MACC might consider asking an organization like the Carlson Center at the University of Minnesota or Target to do a pro-bono analysis of the real worth (value) of a pet license.

IV. Advisory Board Priorities

During 2010, MACC Advisory Board Members identified two priorities for their work.

- 1. Responsible Pet Ownership** –The MACC Advisory Board identified responsible pet ownership as a focus area and has expressed an interest in developing educational tools to this end. Jeanette led a short brainstorming exercise regarding what members thought MACC staff should address in terms of responsible pet ownership. Ideas included:

- * Basic husbandry – feed your animals, keep them warm in the winter and cool in the summer, provide veterinary care, license your pet, provide shelter for outdoor animals, walk your dog, etc.
- * How to evaluate dog food? (How to score different brands; MACC should provide universal tools)
- * What does it cost to care for a pet? Shots, food, license, leash/collar, dog house, scratch posts, toys, dishes, average vet costs, etc.
- * Does my animal need basic socialization and/or training?
- * Why should pet owners spay or neuter pets?
- * What types of dogs bite? For example, the tethered dog is the one that bites most often.
- * Holiday No No's – Chocolate is not appropriate for dogs or cats. Milk chocolate is not terribly toxic for animals; however, the unsweetened chocolate is toxic. Table scraps from holiday meals that are high in fat are bad and cause gastrointestinal diseases. At Easter, be careful with Easter Lilies. Other common foods that are toxic include raisins and onions (cats primarily).
- * When looking to add an animal to your family, what pet best matches your lifestyle? If you enjoy running for exercise, list the breeds that need a lot of exercise. However, if you consider yourself a couch potato, what breeds would fit your lifestyle. If you have an apartment and limited space, list the breeds that would work well in this family. If you have small children, etc. There are a number of wizard tools online that help give prospective pet owners an understanding of the different breeds.

Further discussion included analyzing our citations and identifying trends (i.e., if there are numerous citations for failure to provide appropriate shelter for dogs in the winter, we should develop an article on the importance of dog houses and what constitutes a good dog house). In addition, members and staff alike agreed that the MACC website did not have to create original pieces; instead, we could link to other websites' articles and therefore be a useful tool for pet owners.

At the end of the discussion, the group talked about the desire to get MACC officers back into the schools. Ken mentioned that schools are getting more restrictive on whether dogs can go into the building (i.e., related to allergies to dogs, etc.). However, there is an organization called READ that brings therapy dogs into classrooms and children read to the animals. (Contact Nancy Brooks, Northstar) Jeanette mentioned that MACC would not necessarily need to bring a dog into a school to get the message across.

As an aside, the group briefly discussed ways to make the MACC website more user-friendly by including short stories on MACC officers and staff. For example, the Minnesota Orchestra's website includes information on the musicians' favorite foods, favorite instruments, etc. as a way for children to get to know them better. If we were to extend this to MACC, we could include our officers' favorite type of animal or breed, etc. The Minneapolis Police Department's K-9 officers give out baseball-type trading cards with their dogs' pictures on them.

2. Pet Licensing

The second priority identified by the MACC Advisory Board is pet licensing. Dan mentioned that earlier in this year board members identified animal-related businesses that they would personally approach to determine their level of interest in licensing pets at their businesses. To date, we only know of two businesses that were approached by advisory members and whose owners have expressed an interest in doing this – Bone Adventure and Urbanimal. As we get more animal businesses and veterinary clinics licensing pets, MACC will highlight these partners on our website.

Open House for Vet Clinics – As we roll out the idea of licensing dogs and cats at veterinary clinics across Minneapolis, we will be hosting an open house during the first quarter of 2011. This event will welcome veterinary staff to the building, provide a tour of our state-of-the-art facility, and offer a brief program on the benefits of licensing pets. Kim mentioned that Thursday evenings (7 to 9 pm) are a typical time for veterinarians to attend continuing education classes. She offered to forward a list of Minneapolis veterinary clinics to MACC so staff can create an invitation list.

Announcement – At the end of the meeting, Kim mentioned that **National Spay Day** was February 22, 2011. She is going to talk to the MN SNAP board for approval, but she would love to come to MACC to do FREE spay / neuter surgeries for our population of cats and dogs (if appropriate).

Mark your Calendars – our next meeting is **Monday, March 7th from 2-4pm** at MACC.

We adjourned the meeting at 3:54pm.