

**Lincoln County Animal Services  
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

**December 3, 2024**

**Attendees:**

Dr. Ashley Oliphant, Chairman to the Board

Stefanie Westmoreland

Lena Jones

Dawn Tutterow

Dr. Catherine Talley

Michael Allred, Sr.

Jana Aviles, Animal Services Director

Lindsey Houser, Clerk to the Board

Whitney McQueen, Animal Care Supervisor

Matthew Freudenberg, Field Services Supervisor

**Members of the Public:**

Tonya Barker

**Opening:**

After the board received their meeting materials, Chairman Oliphant opened the meeting at 6:07 PM.

**Adoption of the Agenda:**

A motion was made by Michael Allred, Sr. to adopt the meeting agenda, with a second by Stefanie Westmoreland.

### **Adoption of Minutes:**

A motion was made by Dawn Tutterow to adopt the minutes from the previous Animal Services Advisory Board meeting dated September 3, 2024. A second was made by Stefanie Westmoreland.

### **Board Introductions, Staff Introductions:**

No board or staff introductions were necessary, as there were no first-time staff or board members present.

### **Next Meeting Dates:**

- Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 6:00 pm
- Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 6:00 pm
- Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 6:00 pm
- Tuesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, at 6:00 pm

### **Animal Services Report:**

Jana Aviles gave the following report to the Board.

- Staffing
  - Currently looking to fill the position of Intake Coordinator
  - Intake Coordinator and Community Engagement Coordinator positions have merged – to rename as Community Support Coordinator(s) soon
  - Darra (Surgery Assistant) will be back on December 18<sup>th</sup>!
- Annual No Kill Statistics (through 11/24/24)
  - 1,722 total intakes
    - 1,063 cat intakes
    - 659 dog intakes
  - 1,136 total adoptions
    - 823 cat adoptions
      - Cat Café – 211 adoptions
      - Lincolnton PetSmart – 377 adoptions
      - Other events – 41 adoptions
      - Shelter Walkins – 190 adoptions
    - 313 dog adoptions
      - 5 Barks – 35 adoptions
      - Lincolnton PetSmart – 98 adoptions
      - Other events – 47 adoptions
      - Shelter Walkins – 130 adoptions

- 257 total rescue transfers
  - 105 cat transfers
  - 152 dog transfers
- 123 total animals returned to owners
  - 15 cat RTO's
  - 108 dog RTO's
- 31 total animals returned to owners in the field
  - 1 cat field RTO
  - 30 dog field RTO's
- 73 total euthanasia's
  - 38 cat euthanasia's
  - 35 dog euthanasia's
- 37 total deaths
  - 26 cat deaths
  - 11 dog deaths
- 3 total missing
  - 1 cat missing
  - 2 dogs missing
  
- Annual Live Release Rate (through 11/24/24)
  - Live Outcomes/Total Outcomes
  - Cats: 93.6 %
  - Dogs: 90.6 %
  - Combined: 92.6 %
- Annual Save Rate (through 11/24/24)
  - $(\text{Total intakes} - \text{Non live outcomes}) / \text{Total intakes}$
  - Cats: 93.8 %
  - Dogs: 92.7 %
  - Combined: 93.4 %
- Other Statistics:
  - In House Surgeries: 235 Surgeries (though 11/26/24) since Dr. Cat was hired on 9/16/24
  - Volunteer Hours: 3,177 Volunteer Hours, 68 volunteers
  - 5 Barks 4/1/24 – 11/24/24: 103 trips, 63 dogs, 40 adoptions (15 of which had a Length of Stay greater than 60 days)
  - Calls for Service: 3,432
  - Public Rabies Vaccines: 564
  - Low Cost Spay and Neuter:
- Upcoming Events:
  - Bissell Empty the Shelters: December 1<sup>st</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>
  - December Christmas Parade: December 7<sup>th</sup>
  - Pack the Pallet at Lincolnton Walmart: December 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am

- Food Distribution: December 10<sup>th</sup>, December 17<sup>th</sup> and December 19<sup>th</sup>,
- 5 Barks Stay Home for the Holidays Edition: December 23<sup>rd</sup> – December 27<sup>th</sup>
- Apple Drop: December 31<sup>st</sup> at 5:00 pm
- Upcoming Staff Training:
  - Carolina's Unite
  - HSUS Expo
  - Dogs Playing for Life – Seeking lunch sponsors
  - Presentation by Trish McMillan – Seeking lunch sponsors

In response to Director Aviles' report, Chairman Oliphant asked for detail on statistics for October of 2024, which dropped below 90%. Director Aviles advised that there were several animals euthanized due to behavior concerns, and those that were in critical condition upon intake. Aviles advised that Lincoln County Animal Services had no intentions of moving away from the no-kill title or mission. Chairman Oliphant advised that she is a staunch supporter of the no-kill movement, and that she witnessed this mission being followed in October, as staff did all they could to save as many lives as possible during the difficult month.

In response to Director Aviles' report, Dawn Tutterow asked for clarification on the situation surrounding missing animals reported in November of 2024's statistics. Director Aviles advised that one puppy was reported missing from their kennel in November. It is assumed that its mother ate it. Director Aviles said that in addition to November's puppy, one kitten was reported as missing, assuming that it was also eaten by its mother, and that a dog named Penelope went missing while on a 5 Barks Stay. Penelope was later found and returned to Lincoln County Animal Services, then adopted out. Gunnar, a current Lincoln County Animal Services resident, went missing for a few hours while on a 5 Barks Stay on 11/30/24, before he was found and returned to Lincoln County Animal Services. These have been the only two incidents that have occurred with the 5 Barks Stay program, and both dogs were recovered.

## **Discuss Exotic Animal Care with Dr. Tara Harrison via Zoom Call**

Chairman Oliphant began Zoom call with Dr. Tara Harrison (qualifications and biography below).

### **Biography-**

Dr. Tara Harrison graduated from Michigan State University's College of Veterinary Medicine with her DVM degree. Afterward, she earned a Masters of Preventive Veterinary Medicine degree at the University of California-Davis, where she worked with Dr. Linda Munson as a post-doctoral fellow in the contraceptive advisory group. She did veterinary internships at Toledo Zoo and Wildlife Safari. She then spent ten years working as a veterinarian and curator at Potter Park Zoo and an additional year as the Director of Animal Health at Potter Park Zoo. Dr. Harrison was also an Assistant Professor at Michigan State University during that time. She then went back to UC Davis and was an Assistant Professor in UC Davis' Department of Medicine and Epidemiology and a veterinarian at the Sacramento Zoo. She is currently an Assistant Professor at North Carolina State University's College of Veterinary Medicine Exotic Animal Medicine Service. She is board certified in the American College of Zoological Medicine and the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine.

Affiliations- AVMA, AAZV, WDA, ACZM, ACVPM, ECZM

### **Certifications-**

Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

Masters of Preventive Veterinary Medicine

Diplomate of the American College of Zoological Medicine

Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine

### **Area(s) of Expertise-**

**GLOBAL HEALTH, INFECTIOUS DISEASES, VETERINARY CANCER CARE**

Neoplasia and its treatments in exotic and zoological animals

Dr. Harrison began the discussion by advising that there were few vaccines mandated for exotic animals, likely due to limited testing, however she did recommend a potential vaccine protocol for Lincoln County exotic animals, which was handed out to the board at the beginning of the meeting. Dr. Harrison advised that these vaccines are those that she would use in exotic animals she owned or cared for and has used them in the past.

Chairman Oliphant asked Dr. Harrison how readily these vaccines were available, if they were to be required for exotics residing in Lincoln County. Dr. Harrison advised that human vaccines are the hardest to get, and that at times, she has had to work with a pediatrician's office to get them. Dr. Harrison advised that vaccines and tests she would recommend for Old World Primates are the most difficult to obtain.

Chairman Oliphant advised that the Animal Services Advisory Board had struggled with determining how to address exotic animal ownership in the ordinance, due to the safety risk to Lincoln County residents. Chairman Oliphant asked Dr. Harrison that if she were tasked with writing ordinance policy related to non-native venomous snakes in an effort to maintain public safety, what would her guiding principles be? Dr. Harrison advised that antivenoms have short shelf lives, are highly expensive, and some bites require multiple doses. Dr. Harrison advised that most hospitals in NC only have anti-venom on hand for native species like copperheads, and in the case of any bite from a venomous snake, the amount of anti-venom required depends on the location of the bite to the victim. Per Dr. Harrison, the American Zoological Association requires accredited members to have anti-venom on hand for all venomous snakes at their facility. Dr. Harrison advised that if antivenoms were not readily available, she would suggest that these species be prohibited by an ordinance.

Stefanie Westmoreland asked for an approximate cost related to the purchase of anti-venom. Dr. Harrison advised that some anti-venom cost upwards of tens of thousands of dollars. At the conclusion of Dr. Harrison's presentation, Chairman Oliphant ended the Zoom call with Dr. Harrison, thanking her for her time and expertise.

Following the end of the call, Director Aviles asked the board for their opinions on the ownership of venomous snakes in Lincoln County. Chairman Oliphant echoed her agreement with Dr. Harrison, that they should not be allowed if anti-venom is not readily available. Dawn Tutterow asked if there were any type of business license that are required of exotic animal owners who trade or sell venomous snakes. Director Aviles replied that there are not, with the exception of the United States Department of Agriculture. Supervisor Freudenberg advised that the Department of Agriculture was concerned with the transportation of exotic animals, whereas the United States Department of Agriculture was concerned with the exhibition of exotic animals, and NC Wildlife is concerned with ownership of native species. Michael Allred, Sr. stated that he is concerned not only about the availability of anti-venom, but also of the time frame it would require to be transported, if certain types were available out of state but were needed in other facilities. Allred, Sr. also expressed concern over the great danger venomous snakes pose to public safety officer, and also to children and other county residents if the snakes were to escape from their enclosures. Director Aviles advised that there were North Carolina general statutes pertaining to requirements in place for the housing of venomous reptiles. Michael Allred, Sr. asked which statutes these were, and Director Aviles advised that she would get this information to the board.

Supervisor Freudenberg advised that there is a former resident of Lincoln County, who owned venomous snakes, that refused treatment for a bite he suffered from a venomous snake he owned. The resident, who wishes to move back into Lincoln County, refused the treatment because of the high cost. At the time this venomous snake owner lived in Lincoln County, he was open to Lincoln County Animal Services employees about his buying and trading venomous snakes regularly, weekly, and sometimes daily- to the point that an exact list and count of those that he was housing could change hour by hour.

Stefanie Westmoreland asked if the ordinance could require venomous reptile owners to carry liability insurance and keep the necessary anti-venoms on hand as well. Chairman Oliphant advised that when this was discussed by the Animal Services Advisory Board in the past, the board discovered that most insurance companies would deny coverage to the owners. Chelsea Cooper expressed concern over how the county would keep check that these anti-venoms required of owners to keep on hand were appropriately stocked and in date. Cooper also expressed concern over the risk to the public in case of a natural disaster or other emergent situation that may require public safety officers to enter a residence. Michael Allred, Sr. advised that residences that pose a threat to officers can be marked in the CAD. Director Aviles advised that an issue that the county currently faces is the number of exotic animals that reside in Lincoln County that are not registered and are subsequently unknown to emergency personnel and other county officials. Chairman Oliphant proposed that the ordinance could state that non-native venomous snakes are not allowed in Lincoln County because our hospitals do not carry their anti-venom. Director Aviles added that if the ordinance addressed exotic venomous reptiles, NC Wildlife would regulate the native species of venomous snakes residing in Lincoln County.

Lena Jones added that we needed to keep in mind that natural disasters are unpredictable, for example, the devastating damage and loss that occurred in Western NC in late September of 2024. Chairman Oliphant referenced that all the public safety issues covered regarding this issue (law enforcement/EMS/animal control officers needing to be protected, natural disasters, inadequate enclosures, etc.), coupled with the consultation of a zoological expert, should lead the board to proceed to ban non-native venomous snake ownership with the proposed ordinance.

Chairman Oliphant made a motion that the board add language to the proposed ordinance to ban non-native venomous snake ownership in Lincoln County. The entirety of the board was in favor, with none opposed. The motion carried.

## **Updated Lincoln County Animal Ordinance Proposal- Director Aviles, Supervisor Freudenberg**

Supervisor Freudenberg referenced the proposed ordinance that had been handed out to members of the board, noting that anything in red had been removed from current ordinance, and anything in blue had been added to proposed ordinance. Supervisor Freudenberg stated that while working at Animal Services in the past year, he noticed that the current ordinance limits officers in the field, specifically, not allowing Animal Services Officers the ability to terminate ownership, place containment orders, or seize animals when necessary. The proposed ordinance places steppingstones, allowing these actions when deemed necessary by an animal services officer, to promote welfare of animals, and maintain safety of both the people and animals of Lincoln County.

He noted the addition of several definitions, including *abandonment, domestic, livestock, feral cat*, and that the definition for *exotic* was updated. Chairman Oliphant asked Supervisor Freudenberg what the references were for these definitions. Supervisor Freudenberg stated that he had worked at two municipal animal control agencies in the past, and that over a dozen other ordinances had been referenced while working on the proposed ordinance. Stefanie Westmoreland advised that in years past, the definition of *feral cat* had been something the Animal Services Advisory Board at that time had struggled with.

Supervisor Freudenberg advised that several sections had been added- *Jurisdictions; interlocal agreements, Inspections; interference; concealment, Abandoned Animals, Protective measures for containment of animals, Grounds for denial or revocation of permit, Harboring stray animals, Seizure, forfeiture, and disposition of animals, and General seizure/forfeiture procedure.*

Chairman Oliphant asked if Supervisor Freudenberg thought any of these changes/additions would be inflammatory. He replied that he did not believe it would be, and that this would allow Lincoln County Animal Services to better address recurrent issues in Lincoln County. Neighbor disputes regarding tethering would be addressed by specifying that dogs cannot be tethered within five feet of a property line. Nuisance complaints would require that a complainant be on record, and that timestamped photos and videos would be required to cite if an animal services officer did not witness a violation.

Stefanie Westmoreland expressed concern over barking being addressed as a nuisance in the ordinance, and how that may affect working livestock guardian dogs. Supervisor Freudenberg advised that this has been a gray area, addressing nuisance behaviors and how barking dogs fall into this. Lincoln County Animal Services does not enforce barking as a nuisance, although officers will do a courtesy welfare check to make sure dog(s) are not barking in distress. Dawn Tutterow suggested adding in wording that would allow officer discretion to address barking.

Supervisor Freudenberg advised that while working on the ordinance revisions, he located an animal ordinance for the City of Lincolnton that was previously unknown to anyone at Lincoln County Animal Services.

Supervisor Freudenberg advised that the biggest change to the current ordinance was to 92.12, in regard to exotic animals. He stated that changes that were proposed were for public safety and protection. Several members of the board echoed their agreement that changes should be made in light of the inherent danger that certain exotic animals pose to the public. Supervisor Freudenberg noted the reduction of the exotic animal licensing fee (previously \$200, reduced to \$150), and the addition of a reinstatement of exotic license fee. Some of the changes to the ordinance would require an inspection prior to granting a permit, an exotic animal notification sign emergency disaster plan form, an emergency contact form, proof of where/how the exotic animals were acquired, proof of sale/transfer of ownership, death of animal, the ability to deny or revoke a permit, the ability to revoke/reinstate a license, the ability to seize an exotic if necessary, and to euthanize an exotic onsite if necessary. Stefanie Westmoreland asked if the current ordinance limited the number of exotic animals owned, which it does not. He advised that the current ordinance only required the county be notified of changes at the time of annual renewal/registration in January, appropriate care of exotic animals, and enclosures that seem appropriate to contain animals.

Supervisor Freudenberg advised that the option to appeal citations would be added, which would likely be decided by the Director.

In light of previous exotic discussion and the motion to ban venomous snakes, the proposed portion of the ordinance would be amended to reflect the board's decision to ban non-native venomous reptiles.

Michael Allred, Sr. asked if the amendment was ready to be sent to legal for review at this time. Chairman Oliphant said that it would be sent to legal after changes discussed in this meeting had been made and advised that moving forward with the proposed ordinance may be a slower process, possibly going into spring of 2025. Michael Allred, Sr. asked if the Board of Commissioners had been made aware of proposed changes to the ordinance, to which Director Aviles advised that they were, and it had been announced at the previous Board of Commissioners meeting.

## **Public Comments**

Tonya Barker advised that her New World Monkey did not respond well to her tetanus and rabies vaccine and is concerned for her monkey's health if this would be required of her to obtain for her monkey. Barker is also concerned that her monkey could be stolen if someone were to see a visible posting on her property that an exotic animal lives there. Barker expressed her frustration regarding fees required of exotic animal owners residing in Lincoln County.

## **Motion to Adjourn:**

A motion was made by Dawn Tutterow to adjourn the meeting, with a second by Michael Allred, Sr.

The meeting ended at 7:43 PM.