



MEETING OF THE ANIMAL ADVISORY BOARD

1/9/2025 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The Animal Advisory Board met on January 9, 2025, at 10:00 AM in the Tom Baker Meeting Room, City/County Office Building, 221 North Fifth Street, Bismarck, North Dakota. Commissioner Risch, Michael Frye, Terry Lincoln and Robyn Benedict were present.

AGENDA

1. Public Comment

Commissioner Risch opened this item by discussing some of the events that occurred in the past around the Animal Impound Volunteer Program.

2. Meeting Minutes Approval

Michael Frye motioned to approve the minutes and Robyn Benedict seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye.

3. Introduction of New Board Members

Commissioner Risch briefly introduced each of the members of the Animal Advisory Board.

4. Officer Election

Robyn Benedict nominated Terry Lincoln to serve as the Animal Advisory Board President for 2025 and Michael Frye seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye.

5. Animal Advisory Board Ordinance

Commissioner Risch led this discussion by reading Chapter 3-04-01, Bismarck Animal Advisory Board: Purpose, of the City Code of Ordinances. After reading Chapter 3-04-01, Commissioner Risch reiterated that the role of the animal advisory board is to work with and advise the Bismarck Police Department on issues that are addressed specifically in this section of the ordinance.

6. Animals at Large Ordinance

Commissioner Risch gave background information describing the Animal at Large Ordinance and the recent changes that were made to the ordinance in August 2024. Risch stated that he was not pleased with the changes that were made and that he would prefer that tickets were issued instead of infractions. Deputy Chief, Jason Stugelmeyer explained the difference between infractions and citations.

Michael Frye motioned that City staff work with the Legal Department to charge the Animal At Large Ordinance to citations instead of infractions. That the first citation would be \$25, second would be \$100 and the third would be an infraction. Terry Lincoln seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye.

7. Animal Impound Volunteer Manual

Commissioner Risch started this discussion by describing some of the more recent events that have involved the animal impound volunteer program and some details about the events that transcribed around the revisions to the volunteer manual. Commissioner Risch opened this item up for public comment.

Michael Frye asked questions about the policy concerning volunteers having access to the impound without staff being around and stated in Minneapolis, his former employer, volunteers were not permitted at the impound without staff being present. Robyn Benedict expressed her concern of volunteers having access without supervision.

Mike Manstrom (volunteer) stated that he is concerned about the safety of the volunteers at the impound following the recent mauling events at the impound and advocates for staff being present when volunteers are at the impound.

Whitney Tennison (past volunteer) shared her volunteer program onboarding experience and that she believes there is inadequate training for volunteers and that she didn't appreciate the tone of Sgt. Bleth memo written to volunteers.

Michelle Peterson (volunteer) expressed that she didn't appreciate the memo from Sgt. Bleth, that she believes the volunteer program is important and advocates to continue the program.

Melanie Hanson (volunteer) requests that volunteers meet with Police Department staff as no meetings have been scheduled recently so questions from volunteers could be answered.

Rachel Kountz (volunteer) stated that she has not volunteered since the memo went out and believes there are communication issues between the Impound volunteers and PD staff.

Missy Hilstendager (former warden) stated that she served as a game warden for 17.5 years and that her opinion is that the volunteer program is unnecessary and should be discontinued. She continued that the volunteer program is a liability due to some of the dangerous animals that are at the impound and this is evident due to the recent mauling and the number of claims that have occurred over the last couple of years. Missy recommends that two additional part time staff be hired to cover some of the time that wardens are not available at the impound. Boardmember Frye asked about training for volunteers and Missy responded that wardens do not have time to train volunteers.

Whitney Tennison expressed that volunteers should be held accountable and that she has a large packet of information with recommendations for the volunteer program.

Deputy Chief Stugelmeyer described some details about the volunteer program, how volunteers are processed/reviewed, the timeline and events around Sgt. Bleth's memo,

the revisions to the volunteer handbook and the onboarding process.

Janessa Reinert spoke in favor of the volunteer program and believes it provides benefits to the community and the Bismarck Police Department.

Board member Terry Lincoln stated that he believes it is important to work with the Deputy Chief to find solutions.

Commissioner Risch stated that he does not believe volunteers should be at the impound without staff present.

Board member Terry Lincoln motioned that no volunteers will be allowed at the impound without Police Department staff present. Board member Robyn Benedict seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all members voted aye.

8. Other Business

Board member Terry Lincoln inquired that he would like it if the City would begin looking at allowing chickens in city limits. Commissioner Risch stated that this ordinance would fall under Community Development and that he would address this with the Mayor as he holds the portfolio for the Community Development Department.

ADJOURN