

MAYOR'S TASK FORCE
ON
ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL
CITY OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

FINAL REPORT

JULY 2001

PREFACE

On January 31, 2001, Jacksonville, Florida Mayor John Delaney announced the appointment of volunteers to the Animal Care and Control Task Force - Michael Munz (Chair), Elaine Brown, David Cook, Rick DuCharme, Stuart Evans, Mike Hightower, JoAnn Matthews, Victoria Pennington, Dr. Susan Shelton, Bob Snodgrass, Penny Thompson and Holland Ware. John Merritt, Dr. Doug Page and Sonya White served in an advisory capacity. The Task Force was charged with evaluating the City's Animal Care and Control services and recommending improvements.

Task Force members spent hundreds of hours researching programs, policies, procedures and best practices from a myriad of sources. Below is a sample of the areas and entities researched:

Broward County, FL	Indianapolis, IN	Richmond, VA
Dade County, FL	Boulder, CO	Omaha, NE
Daytona Beach, FL	Maricopa County, AZ	Nashville, TN
Lake Wales, FL	San Diego, CA	Seattle, WA
Marion County, FL	San Francisco, CA	State of New Hampshire
Orange County, FL	Atlanta, GA	State of Alabama
Pinellas County, FL	Las Vegas, NV	State of Minnesota
West Palm Beach, FL	Boston, MA	State of Utah

Best Friends Sanctuary	Humane Society of the United States
Maddie's Fund	American Humane Association
CLC Publishing/Save Our Strays	American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Alley Cat Allies	Jacksonville Humane Society
Spay USA	"Disposable Animals" by Craig Brestrup

The following report and recommendations represent the culmination of these efforts and the first step in moving Jacksonville towards becoming a first-tier city for pets and people.

OVERVIEW

The Task Force estimates that Jacksonville currently has more than 500,000 – 750,000 owned and stray dogs and cats. This number will continue to increase, as this category of animal population increases with the human population – at the rate of 1-2 animals per new household added annually. The rapid increase in pet and human populations has resulted in a corresponding increase in irresponsible pet ownership. Pets are permitted to run loose and breed indiscriminately. The growth of stray and feral animals could increase even more dramatically, as there is no way to realistically project this growth.

The City's Animal Care and Control Services ("AC&C") has failed to address this growth in the quantity, quality and type of services offered. AC&C has functionally operated under the "Catch and Kill" mentality, with little effort towards prevention, adoption and redemption. It is estimated that approximately 17,000 – 20,000 animals are impounded annually at AC&C, with over 90% of these animals dying, primarily due to the use of killing the primary means of population control, as well as a lack of medical treatment and exposure to the elements. Though some of the animals were euthanized because they were terminally ill, injured or vicious, the Task Force estimates that at least 60-65% of these animals could have been saved and adopted if there were adequate shelter space and conditions, and more aggressive medical, rehabilitation, fostering and adoption programs. When looking at Jacksonville as a whole, there are approximately 34 animals killed (annually between AC&C and the Jacksonville Humane Society) per 1000 in human population versus the national average of 16 animals killed per thousand in human population.

Although there is occasionally a positive story on AC&C, the public image of AC&C tends to be negative. Negative articles and commentary have run in all media. Citizens and animal welfare organizations have criticized AC&C for years, yet were unsuccessful with their efforts to effect change.

This situation is abhorrent and untenable. AC&C can no longer be focused on providing a convenient method for the disposal of unwanted cats and dogs. Killing is no longer acceptable as the primary method of pet population control and the root causes of this problem must be addressed. AC&C needs to move from being totally reactive to a proactive stance that addresses the problem at its source – people. Animals are the victims of people's attitudes – the view that animals are a disposable commodity and behaviors – acts of irresponsibility and abuse ranging from failure to sterilize, provide adequate healthcare, license, leash and keep indoors to outright neglect and cruelty. At the same time, pets are increasingly considered to be part of the family and pet-related commerce and activism is at an all-time high. In addition to the moral and ethical considerations, there is also the issue of money. If the City fails to take immediate, drastic action, this problem and the City's associated costs will increase exponentially.

Almost all aspects of Animal Care and Control ("AC&C") are in need of significant change or improvement. Not only is there a need for a new facility, new programs, new management and reorganization, but there is also a need for a dramatic cultural change to bring AC&C's mission in line with the vision and values of this community. In order for AC&C to fulfill its mission, significant additional financial resources must be invested in AC&C now, with the result of long-term cost savings and a better quality of life for pets and people in the future. The Task Force believes that addressing the following strategic issues is critical to achieving the new mission.

DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIC ISSUES

A. Rapid Pet Population Growth and Corresponding Public Demand for an End to Killing Animals as a Means of Population Control

Rapid population growth in Jacksonville is not only increasing the number of pets in the county, but it will also change the demand for animal welfare services. Many new citizens to the county come from areas that have a higher level of animal care services and long-time residents are demanding improvements as well. The Task Force projects that citizens will not only require a greater number of services, but will also demand a higher quality and variety of services. The desire for progressive spay/neuter, rehabilitation and adoption programs has become more prevalent, as they are the national trend in animal welfare.

B. Difficult to Recruit and Retain Competent Staff

AC&C staff must possess a unique, sometimes contradictory, set of skills, talents and personal characteristics. For example, field service staff must be a combination of community police officer, family counselor, neighborhood mediator, and animal caregiver and advocate. According to a Humane Society of the United States study, field animal control officers have ten times more public interaction than police officers. On the shelter side of services, the staff member must be part veterinarian's assistant, family counselor, public contact professional, and animal caregiver and advocate as well. The skills and characteristics required for these positions are difficult to find in any single individual. However, careful selection and extensive training will help an individual acquire and perfect the skills needed to do the job.

AC&C has been critically understaffed. The condition and location of the Current Facility, as well as the historical values, practices, procedures and wages, has made hiring and retaining ideal candidates nearly impossible. Good employees get frustrated by the government bureaucracy involved in getting anything done. Staff size needs to be substantially increased from the current number in the mid-40's to approximately 100 full-time employees and wages need to be consistent with market rates in the private sector. Employees that were hired and retained for any period of time have received grossly inadequate training, if any training at all. The Task Force recognizes that there are hard working, dedicated employees working at AC&C; however, many of the current employees at AC&C are not properly trained and some may be ill-suited to work in animal care or control capacities.

C. Public Demand for Excellent and Compassionate Customer Service

AC&C is under tremendous pressure to provide excellent and compassionate customer service. Whether it is helping a distraught family locate a beloved pet or helping an animal recover from disease or abuse, AC&C employees are constantly called upon to render advice and assistance. AC&C receives dozens of calls each week from citizens unhappy about the condition of the shelter or delays in response by field personnel. Citizens have been told that their lost pets were not at AC&C, when in fact their lost pets were at the Current Shelter. Animal-related complaints are the number one category of complaints received by the City's customer service unit.

D. Inadequate Facility

The Current Shelter is outdated, as it was designed and built when “catch and kill” was the animal control methodology norm. The Current Shelter is not conducive to disease control or showcasing animals for adoption. The cat rooms are filled with cages containing eight to ten cats per cage and they are crowded into sleeping in their own litter boxes. Dogs can be found huddled two to three to a cage. The Current Shelter does not provide protection from the weather and animals die due to exposure. In addition, the Current Shelter does not have medical facilities to perform spay/neuter surgeries or provide more than the most superficial forms of medical care. Although the Current Shelter is undergoing some needed renovations to make it basically livable for the time being, these renovations are not going to be sufficient to handle the volume of animals that routinely enter the shelter.

SPECIFIC TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FACILITY

A. Non-profit Organization

In the Spring of 1998, the City recognized its shortcomings in operating AC&C and requested invitations to bid for the daily management of AC&C. The City did not receive any perceived legitimate bids. The Task Force concurs with the City’s previous recognition that management and operation of AC&C be provided outside City government and strongly recommends that AC&C be run by a newly-formed nonprofit organization. The Task Force believes that taking AC&C outside of the government environment and putting it under the control of a nonprofit organization is the only way to truly effectuate a change in AC&C’s culture. Even with the current Administration’s support for a “new” AC&C, removal of AC&C to a non-profit organization will ensure that the focus and goals of the community in this area will continue without regard to the changes in the composition of and priorities of future administrations or members of the City Council. Although it has a different purpose, the Jacksonville Zoological Society is an example of how the Task Force believes that AC&C should be organized and operated. Placing AC&C under the control of a new nonprofit organization will allow the new AC&C to hire, train and retain employees who have the desire, education and skills to serve citizens and animals. Operating under a new nonprofit organization will also allow for the streamlining of operations and provide more flexibility in implementing the needed drastic overhaul of AC&C. For example, AC&C would not be constrained to use certain pre-approved providers, time-consuming bid processes or cumbersome bureaucratic paperwork and associated higher overhead costs. The Task Force believes that the operation of AC&C by a new nonprofit organization will ensure compassionate animal care, responsive animal control and excellent customer service.

The nonprofit organization would be run by a Board of Directors, which would include appointments by the Mayor and City Council. The AC&C Director would respond directly to the Board. Many of the current AC&C employees have expressed their recognition of AC&C’s numerous shortcomings and want to be part of the solution. The Task Force recommends that all current AC&C employees be given an opportunity for employment with the new nonprofit organization or they could elect to remain with the

City in another position. The nonprofit organization would enter into a service contract with the City to provide animal care and control services for a fee, with various fee increases built into the contract based on population or CPI increases. The contract would provide for termination rights with relatively short notice (probably 90-120 days). The City would maintain ownership of the New Facility with the nonprofit taking ownership of vehicles and personal property. As new vehicles or personal property are needed, the nonprofit would be required to purchase these items.

There are many examples of animal control departments that are operated efficiently by both governments and non-profits. For example, Fulton County with a population of approximately 750,000 has its animal control operations (both facility operations and enforcement) operated by the Atlanta Humane Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Inc., a nonprofit corporation (the "Atlanta SPCA"). The Atlanta SPCA was specifically formed to handle a similar situation faced by Fulton County in the early 80's. While many issues will need to be addressed, the Task Force believes that these issues can all be resolved and, to some extent, are no different than the issues and progression of changes that have occurred with the Jacksonville Zoo or other city governments which have successfully created or engaged nonprofits organizations to handle animal care and control operations. The issue of liability could be handled through insurance and bonds similar to how liability has been addressed by the Atlanta SPCA (Atlanta SPCA obtains property, automobile, general liability, umbrella, crime and inland marine insurance coverage at an approximate annual cost of \$123,000). Enforcement of the animal care and control laws would be carried out by trained, certified and deputized field officers of the nonprofit organization just as Fulton County has done with the Atlanta SPCA.

The nonprofit operation of AC&C would also allow for the creation of public/private partnerships and greatly enhance the ability to undertake fundraising and develop innovative programs. The Task Force recognizes that dollars are scarce and, in order to achieve the community's goals, the private sector will need to be approached to make the new AC&C work. Fundraising would be conducted so as to achieve both capital contributions, as well as endowments for the achievement of more long-term goals. It is doubtful that, on a long-term basis, citizens would be willing to contribute significant monies to simply fund city services without seeing long-term results. Likewise, it is difficult to envision significant success in the fundraising area, if in fact citizens are being asked to fund a City service for which they already pay taxes. Major donors have already indicated their willingness to support a new non-profit, as well as their refusal to provide funding for a City-run shelter.

B. New Facility

As previously noted, the Current Shelter was designed and built for the out-of-date methodology of "catch and kill." In order to achieve many of the goals recommended by the Task Force, a new facility (the "New Facility") is critical. The New Facility should be at least 50,000-60,000 square feet (the ultimate size to be determined based on consultant/architect's recommendations and analysis) and should be located on a minimum of five acres, preferably on approximately ten acres to provide adequate bonding space with a pet campus environment. The New Facility should be completely enclosed, providing a temperature and humidity-controlled climate, which will help in the

reduction and transmission of diseases among the animals, as well as make the facility more inviting for potential adopters. The New Facility should feature attractive adoption areas, an education and meeting center and medical capacities for providing quality health care to all animals entering the shelter, as well as a high volume of spay/neuter surgeries for all animals to be placed for adoption.

The New Facility does not necessarily have to be a “new building,” and, in fact, there are several examples throughout the country where warehouses, grocery stores and various other types of buildings have been renovated to house animal care and control or Humane Society organizations. The Task Force does not believe there will be any significant savings between building a new facility and renovating an existing structure; the only significant difference is that it might be faster to renovate an existing structure as opposed to constructing a New Facility.

While the actual costs for the New Facility will be dependent on a variety of factors, it has been estimated that the cost could range anywhere between \$135.00 to \$175.00 per square foot which, when added to various soft construction costs and land acquisition costs, could bring the total cost of a New Facility to somewhere between \$6-11.5 million. The Task Force would note that cities of comparable and smaller size throughout the United States have spent between \$8-12 million for new facilities over the past couple of years.

The Task Force believes that the New Facility should be the premier location for promoting adoptions, with satellite locations providing ancillary support as needed. The location of the New Facility needs to be in an area that is convenient to the public, accessible along major thoroughfares within Duval County, and in a safe and attractive location. In developing a site recommendation, the Task Force looked at the current population and activity centers, including the location of the majority of pet-related stores, within Duval County, as well as projected growth patterns over the next five to ten years. Preferably, the New Facility would be located within a short ten to fifteen minute drive of major weekend destinations for families (i.e. malls, entertainment areas). The Task Force has reviewed multiple site options that would be appropriate and believes that there are several locations in the Southside area and Phillips Highway corridor that would be suitable for the New Facility. In addition, the Task Force recognizes that it may be possible to build a New Facility in the Downtown area; however, there is concern that there may not be sufficient land, i.e., a five to ten acre site to house both the New Facility as well as expansion areas and creation of a pet campus environment. If the New Facility were to be built Downtown as part of a redevelopment effort, it must be centrally located in a safe, high visibility area that would attract potential qualified adopters. Regardless of where the New Facility is located, field officers will continue to be required to respond to the public and address strays, animal violations and complaints throughout the County.

C. Current Shelter Renovations

The Current Shelter is undergoing some needed renovations in order to be marginally workable during the construction period for the New Facility. Once the New Facility is constructed, the Current Shelter will no longer be used by the new non-profit for delivery of AC&C services. It will then be up to the City to determine the fate of the Current Shelter, however the Task Force suggests that it not be used for animal related purposes.

II. PROGRAMMING

A. Spay/Neuter

Irresponsible pet ownership, as evidenced by the practice of not altering animals and then allowing them to roam at large or abandoning them altogether, is the root cause of our community's animal overpopulation problem. The most cost-effective and humane strategy to reduce the number of stray animals, shelter impoundments and deaths is an aggressive spay/neuter program. The reasons for pet owners failing to spay or neuter their pets are many – a lack of education and awareness as to the health benefits of spay/neuter, a desire to breed non-pedigreed animals for profit, a misguided association of pets' reproductive capabilities with the owner's virility, a lack of awareness that indiscriminate breeding causes increased shelter killings, or the belief that the procedure is cost-prohibitive. Though there are selected situations where leaving animals intact are understandable – such as in the case of pedigreed show dogs - the Task Force recommends an aggressive approach to increasing sterilizations as follows:

1. Low Cost Spay/Neuter Program

The first step would be the development of a publicly funded low-cost spay/neuter voucher program in conjunction with the Jacksonville Veterinary Medical Society (JVMS). The JVMS has committed to work with AC&C and the Task Force in developing this program, and is to be commended for offering to participate and provide critically needed sterilization services. The voucher program would be targeted primarily at low-income pet owners and designed to be “user-friendly” in terms of forms, procedures and distribution. There is currently a Spay Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP) in effect through the Jacksonville Humane Society and AC&C, but it appears to have limited use and is not widely promoted. In addition to serving the needs of low-income pet owners, the low-cost voucher program would also be provided to rescue, feral cat and other animal welfare organizations that tend to sterilize of animals at their own expense. This type of program for low-income pet owners reduced New Hampshire's euthanasia rates by 70%, at a cost of just 15 cents per person per year. According to a *1990 Animal Population Control Study*, commissioned by the Minnesota Legislature, every \$1 spent on publicly funded neutering assistance programs saved \$18.72 in animal control expenses over a ten-year period.

2. Public Awareness/Change in Ordinances

Concurrently, there needs to be a citywide multi-media public awareness campaign to promote spay/neuter and address the objections given above. This campaign would target all types of pet owners who may be reluctant to sterilize their animals and promote the benefits of spay/neuter as part of a responsible pet health care program.

3. Feral Cat Management Program

Cats have become the number one companion animal, and the most killed animal in American shelters. The Task Force proposes increased emphasis on a feral cat management. Feral cats are the 'wild' offspring of domestic cats and are the result of pet owners' abandonment or failure to spay and neuter their animals, allowing them to breed uncontrolled. Feral cat 'colonies' can be found behind shopping areas or businesses, in alleys, parks, abandoned buildings, and rural areas. They are elusive and do not trust humans. Many people assume their animals will survive when they move away and leave them behind. Contrary to popular belief, domestic animals do not automatically return to their "natural" instincts and cannot fend for themselves. A pair of breeding cats, which can have two or more litters per year, can exponentially produce **420,000 offspring** over a seven-year period, and the overpopulation problem carries a hefty price tag – when you compute the cost of AC&C catching and killing cats at approximately \$120 each minimum.

San Diego experienced a 45% decrease in the number of feral cats euthanized due to the work of a feral cat coalition in that community. The Task Force proposes a similar coalition, thus providing a non-lethal solution to this exponentially increasing problem. Feral cat management, also called Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR), is **the only successful method** for solving this problem and funding for this should be established immediately. After identification of feral cat colony, volunteers trap the feral cats, have them sterilized, vaccinated and identified, and then return them to their colonies. Any cats and kittens with the potential for socialization are fostered and offered for adoption. Volunteers continue to feed and oversee the colonies, which become stable due to sterilization.

Goals would be set for increased spay/neuter surgeries performed in the first and subsequent years of the program. The Task Force further recommends that the results from the voucher program, public awareness campaign and feral cat management program be evaluated after one year and revised as needed to achieve the stated goals, and that additional alternatives, such as mobile spay/neuter services or low cost spay/neuter clinics, be undertaken if needed to achieve the goals.

B. Adoption

The location, design and staffing of the New Facility should greatly increase the number of adoptions. Matchmaking initiatives are needed to help potential adopters select the appropriate pet for their lifestyle. These include technology-based assessments, special request lists and individual counseling. There needs to be adequate trained adoption staff to ensure personalized attention for potential adopters. Partnerships with other animal agencies, rescuers and breeders should include cross-referrals with the goal of finding a home for all animals in Jacksonville and not competing for adoption statistics. In addition, adoption promotion must be dramatically increased through internet, newspaper, television, radio, and outdoor advertising, as well as special events.

1. Satellite Adoption Centers

The City has recently opened a satellite adoption center in Mandarin. For all practical purposes, the City has a second satellite adoption center at the PetsMart

location on Monument Road behind Regency Square. Over 600 AC&C animals were adopted at PetsMart in 2000, and as of June 20, 2001, 399 adoptions have taken place from the Mandarin center.

Although this is a start, the number of people visiting the Mandarin center has far exceeded the number of animals that have been adopted. This is due primarily to the fact that the City does not have the onsite medical facilities necessary to conduct spay/neuter procedures prior to the animals being made available for adoption. JHS has worked with AC&C to spay/neuter 25 animals on a weekly basis. However, in order to increase the potential adoption pool, AC&C needs to have the capabilities to conduct spay/neuter procedures on site at the Current Shelter. The New Facility will provide for this; however, on a short-term basis, the Task Force recommends that the City purchase a modular facility that can be kept as a sterilized veterinarian/medial center for the purposes of spay/neuter procedures prior to making the animals available for the Mandarin adoption center or PetsMart. The equipment could then be moved to the New Facility or donated/leased/sold to a local non-profit animal group.

The Task Force recommends that the Mandarin adoption center should be expanded to allow for the potential adoption of more and larger animals as well. There is a tremendous demand for all of these animals; however, the Mandarin center (while a success) is simply too small to meet the public's demand.

The actual staffing and costs of running the Mandarin satellite adoption center has currently put a strain on the understaffed AC&C. Assuming that the staffing is significantly increased as recommended by the Task Force, and depending upon the location of New Facility, the Task Force would recommend the possibility of establishing additional satellite adoption centers. Hopefully, the New Facility will be such a significant draw that satellite adoption centers may not be as necessary; however, the Task Force does believe that consideration should be given to the location of satellite adoption centers in other areas of the County with the appropriate demographics.

2. Mobile Adoptions

An alternative to fixed satellite adoption centers would be the development of mobile adoption programs. This would be an extension of the PetsMart program and provide even more adoption opportunities. The concept is similar to the traditional "bookmobile." A specially designed vehicle would transport animals to community events and other pre-arranged venues for adoption promotion. The "Petmobile" could also be used as a tool for public awareness, education and disaster response. In addition, it is hoped that the new AC&C organization will partner with other animal organizations and rescuers in developing new and innovative adoption programs. For example, Phoenix, Arizona has been successful with a mobile adoption program involving visits to religious houses of worship.

C. Retention and Support Services

In addition to reducing the birthrate of unwanted animals and finding adoptive homes, efforts need to be made to improve pet retention. The primary reasons for pets being abandoned or surrendered are unrealistic owner expectations and changes in owners' circumstances. Pre-adoption counseling and education should serve to ensure realistic owner expectations and match pets with potential adopters based on the pet's and adopter's unique needs and lifestyle. New pet owner orientation and obedience classes should be offered free or at a low cost. Ongoing resources such as an educational library and telephone and internet help lines are needed to identify pet (and owner) behavior problems and recommend solutions. Finally, information, referrals and support are needed to assist owners who face an unexpected change in circumstances. Examples of this assistance might include referrals for pet-friendly housing and pet food banks for owners in financial crises.

D. Pet Identification and Reunion

1. Uniform Pet Identification Standards

The Task Force recommends that AC&C and the JHS work with the JVMS to develop a standardized pet identification system throughout Duval County for ease in identification of lost pets. Numerous pets are unfortunately euthanized because they do not have any identification. While there are different methods (for example, tattooing, chip, tags), the Task Force believes that the JHS, JVMS and AC&C can identify and develop a countywide identification program that will make the task of returning a lost animal to its family easier and quicker.

2. Reuniting Pets and Families

The Task Force has heard stories about AC&C killing lost pets whose owners have been told that their pet was not at the Current Facility. Due to the large volume of animals handled by AC&C, the improper training of the staff, the poor customer service, and the fact that pets that have been lost for some time become injured, diseased and not easily identifiable, it is incumbent upon any pet owner who has lost a pet to regularly visit the Current Shelter, and all shelters for that matter, in order to look for their pet. The Task Force believes that an improved lost pet program needs to be established immediately so that there can be coordination among the various local animal welfare agencies to establish a working lost pet redemption program. There is currently a website hosted by the USDA and operated by a volunteer, www.jaxlostpets. Pictures are provided from AC&C, JHS and pet owners who've lost their pets, and then scanned and put on the website. The volunteer also provides individual counseling and assistance via phone. Though we commend this volunteer effort, something more extensive and integrated needs to be developed.

The Task Force envisions a program that would result in the daily cataloging and taking inventory (basically creating a central database) of each animal brought into AC&C and other shelters. This information would then be made available to all other local animal welfare agencies and the public via the internet. The public

needs to be educated as to the process, and for those individuals who cannot get to the shelter due to work, transportation problems or illness, a home, office or library computer can be used to check the database for their lost pet. With the New Facility, digital pictures of the animals can be taken as part of the reception process and AC&C can quickly post the pictures on the AC&C website or lost pet database.

E. Public Awareness, Education and Marketing

Realistically, it is a misnomer to say that we have an animal problem in Jacksonville. The animals are not the problem; they are the victims. People's attitudes and behaviors are the problem. To begin to change those attitudes and the resultant behaviors, the Task Force recommends a comprehensive integrated multimedia communications campaign. The ongoing campaign would encompass public awareness and education relative to responsible pet ownership, the human/animal bond and anti-cruelty, as well as marketing of specific programs, with an emphasis on spay/neuter, adoption, rescue services and special events.

E. Law Enforcement and Improved Laws

Enforcement and prosecution of the current animal laws has been disappointing. The Task Force recommends that current laws and ordinances be redrafted for tougher enforcement, both in terms of animal care (i.e., leash laws, stray pets, neglect) as well as enforcement and punishment in animal cruelty cases. For example, owners as well as spectators at staged animal fights should be prosecuted as felons. The new AC&C organization should have a dedicated, trained staff member to serve as a liaison to the JSO, State Attorney's office and court system and determine the degree to which the police, prosecutors and judges apply the laws in animal neglect and cruelty cases. Additionally, the Task Force recommends that the State Attorney's office designate one or two Assistant State Attorneys to be trained and assigned to handle animal cruelty cases so that these cases can be properly and consistently prosecuted. Additionally, local law enforcement members need to be trained with AC&C officers on how to handle certain animal situations, so that proper treatment and care is provided both to the citizens of the community and to the animals. The current animal welfare/control laws also need to be reviewed and updated to address ordinances that are counterproductive. For example, although somewhat obvious, feral cats and their caregivers should be exempt from leash laws. Those who work to end animal overpopulation by employing TNR and providing care to feral cat colonies should be neither persecuted nor prosecuted. Finally, local legislators, as well as city and regional planning bodies, need to address the issue of wildlife displacement and the need to collaborate with registered wildlife rehabilitators and animal welfare organizations as development continues throughout the County.

F. Coordination with Other Animal Agencies

Significant efforts need to be made in improving the working relationships between the AC&C, the Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS) and the numerous other rescue and animal welfare organizations and volunteers that play a vital role in the animal welfare issues in Duval County and surrounding counties. While there has been varying degrees of cooperation in the past among AC&C, JHS, the rescue groups and the various welfare agencies, cooperation needs to be better coordinated and nurtured.

Rescuers work voluntarily on the front lines of the animal overpopulation problem and are generally overworked, over capacity, under-appreciated and under-funded. The occasional highly publicized story of an animal collector, with hundreds of animals in dismal conditions, is alarming. This problem needs to be addressed through the legal system, as well as the mental health profession. However rescuers, as a group, are very committed and specialized (species, breed and type-specific such as feral cats) and need to be recognized for the community resources they are. Many of these animal welfare agencies (domestic and wildlife) and rescuers have funded their efforts through their own financial resources and private contributions. While the Task Force recognizes that there will always be a need for these animal welfare organizations, these groups have in the past unfairly shouldered an inordinate burden due to AC&C's failures. Accordingly, the Task Force recommends that there be established an Animal Welfare Fund which the JHS and other animal welfare organizations can apply for annual grants to assist in their valuable ongoing efforts. The funding of the grants for the Animal Welfare Fund would be approved by City Council. Though these organizations have been responsible for saving numerous animals each year, a more integrated program with all of the animal welfare and rescue agencies will result in saving the lives of thousands of animals.

Examples of potential partnerships would include working with rescuers to identify animals to be transferred to and adopted out through rescue groups, holding group "adopt-a-thons," coordinating joint fundraising and public awareness events, and developing a common tracking and identification program. Of specific concern is the need for more fostering programs, so that the newborn and sick animals can be kept alive until healthy and available to be placed for adoption. Currently, newborn kittens and puppies stand little chance of surviving when placed with AC&C due to disease and their large numbers. Hundreds of these animals can be saved through aggressive foster programs utilizing the volunteers within the community. To ensure that adequate emphasis is placed on these initiatives, the Task Force recommends that AC&C have dedicated staffing for rescue group and foster program coordination.

The Task Force recommends that the rescuers provide contact information to AC&C. Many in fact are already well known or affiliated with Jacksonville Coalition of Animal Rescuers (JCAR) and the Task Force believes that this effort will require little more than updating current rosters. The information will greatly assist the AC&C rescuer coordinator's efforts in placing animals. Once the update is completed, AC&C's website would be revamped and provide links to the rescuers on file with AC&C. The Task Force also recommends that the licensing program be revised so that licenses issued to registered rescuers for a rescued animal would be one-time freely transferable to adopters for a specified period of time (probably 6 months).

III. FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

As stated previously, the New Facility is expected to cost \$6-\$11.5 million. Annual funding required to support the recommended goals and programs is estimated at \$4.2-\$6.5 million with the distribution of expenses as follows: 62% Personnel and Programming, 31% Operations and Maintenance, and 7% Education, Awareness and Fundraising. Assuming that AC&C is operated by a newly-formed nonprofit organization, the Task Force recommends that the City fund the New Facility expense at a minimum of \$9 million, with a potential balance of \$2.5 million raised from the philanthropic and business communities to go towards long term capital improvements and establish an endowment for operations and education. The Task Force further recommends that the City provide annual operational funding beginning at \$4 million in the first year and adjusted annually based on a formula reflecting increases in population and the consumer price index. The balance of the operational/program funding (\$.2 - \$2.5 million) would be again generated from the business and philanthropic communities.

IV. SUMMARY

BENEFITS

With appropriate funding, facilities, privatization and programs, AC&C will be able to address public concerns, provide excellent and compassionate animal care and control services, and be cost effective. Adopting the Task Force's recommendations will result in a "new" AC&C that will:

- Hire and retain competent staff to provide excellent customer service and compassionate animal care.
- Increase funding available for public programs designed to promote responsible pet ownership and enhance the human/animal bond.
- Create a sense of pride in the community with a new progressive community facility and programs.

And most importantly:

- Reduce Jacksonville's stray animal population and impound rate
- Increase Jacksonville's pet adoption rate
- Increase the number of lost pets returned home (redemption rate)
- Reduce Jacksonville's pet euthanasia rate

CONCLUSIONS

- AC&C is currently not meeting the City's growing demand for animal care and control, in terms of both the quantity and quality of services provided.

- Without a significant “paradigm shift”, AC&C will continue to fail and remain hopelessly behind in providing even the basic level of services.
- Funding of AC&C operations has been historically deficient and needs to be increased substantially.
- Alternative sources of funding will be required to provide quality animal care and control services necessary to move Jacksonville towards becoming a more enlightened, pet-friendly community.
- Euthanasia is no longer acceptable as the primary method of pet population control.
- Historically accepted “catch and kill” methodologies of the past must be discarded for the innovative and progressive strategies of today, with the goal of ensuring that every pet born has a safe, healthy and loving home.

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

- AC&C needs to be removed from the municipal environment and run by a nonprofit organization as soon as possible.
- Construction of the New Facility needs to commence immediately.
- Staffing at AC&C needs to be more than doubled and employees need to be selectively hired and properly trained.
- Low cost, high-volume spay/neuter programs need to be immediately established and promoted.
- Adoptions can be increased immediately by establishing a temporary surgical sterilization site at the Current Shelter, as well as developing and promoting new adoption programs and partnerships.
- Mandarin satellite adoption center needs to be expanded to accommodate large animals and public demand.
- Public awareness and education of pet-related issues and solutions should begin immediately.
- The Task Force’s full report and recommendations should be given high priority for swift review, approval and implementation so that the full benefits of the recommendations can be realized immediately. **Every day delayed means approximately 40-80 more animals killed at AC&C.**