

# Montgomery County Board

## HWE Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date: Thursday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Time: 8:30 AM – County Board Room**

**Members Present:** Chairman Connie Beck, Chuck Graden, Earlene Robinson, Mike Webb, Richard Wendel, and Board Chairman Roy Hertel

**Others Present:** Sandy Leitheiser, Tom Franzen, Dawn Lutz, Bill Gonet, Betsy Wilson and Nancy Richardson

The committee met today to discuss the following:

1. **Update/Approval Elections:** County Clerk Sandy Leitheiser reported that to date, the office has received one write-in candidate, a candidate running for United States Senator (Rep). She is currently doing voter registration services with county High Schools to register their eligible students to vote. The early voting room is almost ready and just needs computers, which are to be installed this month.
2. **Update/Approval ICRMT Update -Agent Tom Franzen:** Franzen addressed the Committee:
  - Every Person that does work for the County should have liability insurance, and if they have employees, then they must have Workman's Compensation. Any Contractor who does business with the County will need to file the proper certificates before work can be performed. They also need to sign a waiver holding the County Harmless and Assistant States Attorney Betsy Wilson will draw up a simple contract for these vendors to sign to agree to hold the County harmless when they perform work here.
  - Need some way to administer this program. All certificates need to be held in one location on a spreadsheet that is assessable by all department of the County. When a certificate expires, Vendors will be contacted to send their new verifications. In doing this we will make sure the risk transfer is not coming to the County. What office will be responsible for retaining all the documents. Webb stated that a spreadsheet could be set up and put in a shared file so that departments can access the documents to hire vendors. Chairman Hertel stated that the Chairman's Office will put together the spreadsheet and track the certificates. A letter will be sent to the vendors requesting the certificates be filed. Vendors can't be paid until the certificates are on file. All County Offices will be encouraged to review the Vendor File before hiring contractors.
  - Vendors that are self-proprietors will need to file liability certificates but do not have to register Workman's Comp certificates unless they use other employees.
  - Someone from Tom Franzen's office will be present at all of our County Board meetings for informational purposes and will advise us if any of our decisions could expose us to liability issues.
3. **Update/Approval Recycling Program and Events:** Dawn Lutz
  - Sheared pin on the baler has been fixed and a pressure switch was replaced. The conveyer belt had a motor replaced. The baler was down for five straight days of processing. There were no gaylords to go pick up new material, so they had to empty gaylords of cardboard. They are trying to get customers during this bad weather. The crew didn't work on Monday due to the snow storm. The sewer was clogged and repaired along with the heater in the office. Doing on call basis with many customers.
4. **Update/Approval EPA Report:** Bill Gonet gave his report and shared his quarterly County Open Dump report. Committee discussed the County Pickup truck and it is a 2008 rear wheel drive that just

had a new battery and brakes installed. The committee will look at putting a new truck purchase in the budget next year.

5. **Update/Approval Animal Control Facility and Program:** Nancy Richardson
  - Animal Control Intake Summary reports were given to the committee to review.
  - Revenue & Expense reports were given to the committee to review.
6. **Update/Approval Animal Control Ordinance:** Richardson is getting some more information regarding kennel licenses for other counties. Animal Control revisions should be ready for the full board to review in February.
7. **Update/Approval Mason County Animal Control:** The committee had a conference call with Mason County Administrator Bill Blessman at 9:00 a.m. County Clerk Leitheiser introduced Mr. Blessman the former County Clerk of Mason County who now serves as their Administrator. Mr. Blessman started out by sharing some information about their program and stated that before 2007, they had one full time animal control warden and their euthanization rate was at 80 – 85%. Ten years ago a volunteer group, Pets Without Parents (PWP) was created who specialized in adoptions and helping the animals. They were not happy with the euthanization rate and began to criticize the County and its program. The conflicts continued for 2 years. The two groups sat down and aired differences and discussed what might make it work. The County stated that if you don't like the way the shelter is run then you run it. PWP was given the opportunity to run the shelter. There was a growing process and a lot of give and take to make this work, but in the end it has been successful and the PWP continues to run the Shelter. He further stated about how they cooperate with each other. The animals that County picks up must be taken to shelter. Adoptions are handled by PWP and they keep the money to help them run the shelter. The surcharge from the Rabies tag Pet Population Control Fund pays for spay neuter program. Fines are collected by the group and sent to the County. Mr. Blessman stated that the shelter is much better run so the County is saving money in that sense by having people their hearts in that kind of work. They have almost zero problems as a result of giving the shelter to the volunteers. Their Warden has been employed for 30+ years and just retired last month and he stated that a new Warden may improve the process even more. Chairman Hertel stated that we only euthanize animals if they are sick or injured and that is difference between us and the process they had before in their County. We have one full time and three part time employees. Volunteers are being used because we need them. One group didn't like how we ran the facility so they left and a new group formed and is now helping us. We still have a problem of animosity. We did get a bequest from an estate to help run the facility so it won't cost the County anything for some time. Chairman Hertel is looking at this as a long range view. Mr. Blessman stated that Mason County pays the maintenance on the building and gives the volunteer group \$30,000 per year which is paid on a monthly basis. The Volunteer group pays the utilities. Sharon Kuchar asked what their euthanization rate is with the volunteers running the facility. Blessman replied that it is still about 10-15%. The volunteers realized quickly that in the rural areas many of the older and unadoptable animals were not going to get adopted so they are put down when space is needed. Pets without Parents also help with the transporting and fostering the animals at the shelter. The volunteers keep the facility open 2-3 hours each afternoon and they have some Saturday hours. It is his understanding that PWP does have one full time employee. The County's Warden was based out of his house and responded to calls from home. Now that he is retired, the new Warden will be based out of the Courthouse and will also do code enforcement for the County. Chairman Hertel asked if the Volunteers go out on calls. Mr. Blessman responded that they will for owner relinquishes and they let people bring animals to them. Chairman Hertel asked about the bite cases and injured animals. Mr. Blessman responded that the bite cases and injured animals go the Vet that is hired by the County to be held and or euthanized. The

injured animals that are taken in by the volunteers are cared for by them. Sharon Kuchar asked how many animals are taken in each week. Mr. Blessman responded that they are full most of the time and can handle 20 dogs and about 8-10 cats which is the same as our County. They take in about 5-10 dogs per week. Nancy Richardson asked about their adoption fees. Mr. Blessman stated that it is in the \$50 range and they pay for spay or neuter and microchip. There are times when PWP offers a reduced rate. Connie Beck stated that she thought they were \$200 to \$250 for dogs. Richardson asked if the PPC fund helps pay for the Volunteer Organization's animals to get spay or neutered and Mr. Blessman replied that they do.

Further questions were given to Mr. Blessman as follows: Why does the County give Pets Without Parents \$30,000 per year? Mr. Blessman stated that it saves the County money and helps sustain the group. He also stated that they might be able to reduce the \$30,000 in the future. This arrangement has solved a lot of headaches for the County board. Mr. Blessman stated that there was a lot of bad PR prior to this arrangement and by far the motivation offsets the costs.

PWP are they a non-for profit Organization and Mr. Blessman replied in the affirmative.

Nancy Richardson asked if PWP keeps a certain number of pens open for Animal Control. Mr. Blessman stated that they have to take the animal control animals that the Warden and the volunteers communicate well together now and coordinate when new animals come in.

Richardson asked if the County would have given the shelter to the Volunteers to run if the County euthanization rate was already below 5%. Mr. Blessman responded that the County Board did it for animosity problems not for budget reasons. They did it because they had a group ready and willing to run the shelter. He doesn't know if there would have been the same push for this if the euthanization rate was lower and that their County Board doesn't want to take over the animal control shelter again.

Richardson asked if there are other 501 c 3 groups in Mason County and Mr. Blessman replied that he doesn't think so. Richardson asked if the Volunteer group fund raises a lot and Mr. Blessman responded that they do not have to so much now. Mr. Blessman added that the County has the right to examine the Volunteer's records at any time. Richardson asked if the County picks up the animal, who is responsible for the animal for the 7 days. Mr. Blessman replied that the Volunteer group is required to follow the Animal Control Act and they act as an agent for the County. The group would perform all the services for the County by law. Richardson asked if wormer and shots etc are given to the animals as well. Mr. Blessman responded that they are and that Parvo shots are given right away.

Assistant States Attorney Betsy Wilson asked if there is a separate agreement for the \$30,000 and how Mason County pays the volunteer group. Mr. Blessman replied that the agreement has been revised for the annual \$30,000 and they the County pays on a monthly basis. Wilson then asked who makes the decision to euthanize. Mr. Blessman replied that the Volunteer group does and discusses with the Animal Control Warden. They just picked up a very aggressive animal that warden and volunteer group discussed and they both decided that the animal should not be kept. Wilson asked if there are any disagreements with the warden about taking animals in. Mr. Blessman stated that if the volunteers can't handle an aggressive dog they discuss and the County takes the animal to the Vet to put down. Mr. Blessman also stated that rarely do they have this situation. Wilson asked who does their ordinance violations. Mr. Blessman stated that their new animal control warden will start these and the dogs running at large fines are paid to the County. Wilson asked if they have had any issues of any volunteers going on calls getting animals. Mr. Blessman responded they recently have not. The

Warden and the Volunteers have been getting along better as time goes on. PWP has been recognized at a humane group and there is no tug of war over animals.

Richardson asked if PWP go out and picks up strays or owner release animals. Mr. Blessman responded that they just pick up the owner release and that animal control takes care of the strays. About 40% of the animals at the shelter are not through animal control.

Committee Chairman Connie Beck stated that PWP adoption fee is \$200 to \$250 for dogs and cats are \$75.00. Richardson stated that we would never get adoptions at that rate.

Sharon Kuchar asked what made us decide that we would want to go this option of having a volunteer group run the facility. Chairman Hertel stated that when we first started with our own facility, PAWS was very helpful and Richardson tried to work with them. Problems arose when they wanted to say where an animal was to go. Committee Chairman Connie Beck and Assistant States Attorney Betsy Wilson were dealing with daily problems of who is running the facility. Chairman Hertel stated that we run the facility and we appreciated their help but this a roller coaster with getting along with the volunteer groups. Chairman Hertel also stated that he is thinking of the money factor and should we do something to best serve the animals, which is not a reflection that Richardson and staff are not taking care of the animals. Statements have been made on Facebook and there have been phone calls to board members.

Chairman Hertel further explained that we made the decision not to kill adoptable animals. This will become more costly because we can't always depend on volunteers. If a volunteer can't take an animal on transport like to Effingham, then Richardson or a staff member will take the animal to the rescue group with the County Vehicle and gas. This will take time away from staff working at the facility. Chairman Hertel stated that the volunteers are very passionate about helping the animals. No reflection on how the facility is run right now we just need to explore options to better serve the citizens and be more fiscally responsible. Kuchar stated that she sees PAWS CARE as a growing organization and hopes that they along with the new volunteer group and the County could work together. Chairman Hertel stated that they need to know the County runs the facility. A meeting was held last year with PAWS CARE over some issues and they brought their lawyer.

Mike Webb stated that he would like to see us look at this option with the committee going to Mason County to see how the facility is operated, and how the warden's position is operated. Mr. Jenkins could check to find out how the funding works. The committee could come back and look at this as an opportunity to go forward. We don't have to do just like Mason County, but as stewards of the county money, we need to look at this to run it efficiently and look at this as a business opportunity and to see if this is better for the citizens of Montgomery County. Mike Webb stated that he would like to see more research go forward for the next couple of months and that doesn't mean anything is wrong with the shelter, we are just looking to improve it and the services. The Committee discussed going to Mason County when the weather is warmer to visit the shelter. Committee members along with Richardson, Daniels and Betsy Wilson will also go. Webb stated that we could come back in 60 days with a report.

**Animal Control Generator:** Richardson passed out an estimate for a generator that would kick on when the power goes off. The Committee will refer to the building and grounds committee.

**8. Update/Approval Other Business:** None at this time.

Motion by Chuck Graden, second by Mike Webb to pay the Bills. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion by Mike Webb, second by Richard Wendel to adjourn the meeting. All in favor, motion carried.  
Meeting adjourned at 10:25 AM

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