



DeKalb Animal Services Task Force  
**Executive Report and  
Recommendations**

February 24, 2012



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Animals are more than ever a test of our character, of mankind's capacity for empathy and for decent, honorable conduct and faithful stewardship. We are called to treat them with kindness, not because they have rights or power or some claim to equality, but in a sense because they don't; because they all stand unequal and powerless before us.

— Matthew Scully, *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*

## Introduction

On May 31, 2006, a DeKalb County animal control officer picked up two dogs running at large near the home of Albert Ford. The dogs, named Coco and Golden, belonged to Ford. The officer put the two dogs into the back of his animal control truck – a vehicle ostensibly designed to transport animals, but without air conditioning. Instead of bringing the animals directly into the DeKalb shelter, the officer left the dogs in the truck for two hours while he attended a meeting. Golden died from the heat. Coco barely survived. The DeKalb officer, Thomas Blankumse, was later convicted of animal cruelty.

The death of Ford's dog Golden in 2006 intensified a recurrent wave of negative media attention to an already beleaguered DeKalb County department. In 2005, 10,751 animals were impounded at the DeKalb County shelter, and 8,250 were killed there, more than 75%. DeKalb's shelter euthanasia rate was higher than rates in Fulton, Cobb, and Gwinnett, despite having a lower impound rate. Moreover, compared to other metro Atlanta counties, DeKalb's cost per animal impounded was among the highest. DeKalb taxpayers spent more to kill animals than other counties spent to save them.

In addition to Golden's tragedy, media coverage featured stories of DeKalb's shelter facility and practices failing to meet State regulations; failure to adequately treat injured or unhealthy animals; frequent management changes amid allegations of mismanagement; and repeated commitments by DeKalb leadership to not only improve Animal Services but to achieve a model sheltering program and build a new shelter.

In the wake of these events, the current shelter leadership took the helm and improvements were made. New, air-conditioned vehicles were purchased. DeKalb County became the only jurisdiction in Georgia to have POST-certified officers exclusively dedicated to animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions. The DeKalb shelter underwent cosmetic improvements, including an outdoor fenced area where prospective adopters could meet their new best friends. Funding was allocated to contract for onsite veterinary services. A temporary solution was employed to cool the animal care areas of the shelter. For the first time, the division was allowed a staff position to focus on pet adoptions.

While current leadership continues to strive for improvement, the division languishes from the County's lack of an articulated vision, allocation of resources and sustainable plan. Expensive, temporary measures for the facility remain in place year after year in the absence of any concerted effort toward permanent solutions. Animal care and enforcement



functions are considerably understaffed. A single employee is solely responsible for getting animals out of the shelter alive.

*DeKalb County citizens and their pets deserve better.* DeKalb County must work to successfully prevent animal cruelty, reduce the number of homeless animals entering the shelter, increase pet adoptions and seek to eliminate euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals, protect the public health from animal borne disease, and keep the public safe from dangerous animals.

## **Executive Summary**

Citing a very high euthanasia rate for the animals that come under the care of DeKalb County and a desire to make a substantial change in those outcomes, Chief Executive Officer Burrell Ellis, Commission Presiding Officer Larry Johnson and the Board of Commissioners jointly established and appointed members to the DeKalb Animal Services Task Force. The Task Force was charged with making recommendations to reduce the high euthanasia rate of healthy or treatable animals and improve the quality of life for animals in DeKalb County.

### **The Task Force**

The Task Force began work in March 2011. Task Force members have toured the facility, interviewed staff, observed operations, interviewed staff of related agencies (police, courts, prosecutors, administration, rescue groups, other similar groups within the region), and collected and analyzed data from those sources. In order to achieve greater depth of research and efficiencies of time and resources, the Task Force subdivided into sub-committees on policy, lifesaving, and partnerships. The chairs of those committees plus the Task Force chair, Director of DeKalb Animal Services, and two other members formed an Executive Committee. The full Task Force conducted six public meetings, accepted comments in those meetings as well as through communications directed through on-line surveys and email. Importantly, the Task Force researched examples from across the nation of successful county animal services operations from which to draw best practices of highly successful operations. The Director of Animal Services and staff were fully cooperative and committed to the Task Force process.

### **DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement**

Pets are very important in the lives of many DeKalb County citizens. According to estimates provided by the American Veterinary Medical Association, 192,623 households in DeKalb County provide homes for 372,239 dogs and cats, the primary focus of DeKalb Animal Services. Merchandise like pet food, toys, pet accessories as well as services associated with these pets, including veterinary care, training, grooming, and boarding, are a growing industry in DeKalb and nationwide. Less than 10% of DeKalb's pets are registered as required by law, which suggests an opportunity for increased and improved contact with pet owners as well as an opportunity for significantly increased revenue. Given the existing and anticipated growth of the pet industry, another opportunity exists in partnership with the DeKalb County School System to build upon existing educational programs within the system and provide laboratory and internship experiences for students.

On average, DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement (DASE) brings in around 8,500 animals annually. As reported from 2008-2010, only 30% left the shelter alive.



Animals were saved by the efforts of rescue groups (12%), an earnest and enthusiastic but under-resourced adoption effort (10%) and owner retrievals (8%). Sadly, over 5,000 animals (60%) are euthanized annually. In recent years, about 3% died of injuries or illness inside the shelter and another 7% were unaccounted for, highlighting problems associated with record-keeping, including insufficient equipment and software, staffing and communication.

The animal services function in DeKalb is dominated by the facility itself. The DASE Center is located on an old landfill behind the county's jail and coroner facilities and adjacent to an incinerator used to dispose of the thousands of animals euthanized in the shelter. While modest efforts at improvement have been undertaken during the tenure of and prior to the Task Force, the facility is dirty, malodorous, wet and dark. Pests (insect and mammalian) are a constant problem. Standing water promotes the growth of bacteria and mold and provides a medium for the spread of feline and canine-specific deadly diseases like parvo, leading to further unnecessary suffering and death of animals housed there. Design issues exacerbate significant problems like ventilation and air conditioning leading to a long-standing practice of providing temporary air conditioning through an external generator costing over \$130,000 annually. This practice is emblematic of the difficulty DASE experiences in attempting to resolve any problem. In addition to these and other problems, the current facility does not adequately support the current mission and certainly would not support the mission of the acknowledged national best practices in terms of operations and size. The location, conditions, appearance and odor undermine the public's interest in adoption, employee morale and volunteer recruitment.

Operationally, the function is understaffed in three areas: animal care in the kennel, field operations, and all adoption or other lifesaving services. Recognizing the relationship between animal neglect and abuse with domestic abuse and other criminal behavior, the newly established animal cruelty unit is a highlight and distinguishes DeKalb from any other county in the State of Georgia. Its success suggests that the provision of properly directed new resources and focus are forerunners of overall transformation. However, the animal care, adoption, and field operations are significantly under-resourced and provide the foundation for a spiral of decline exemplified by the current conditions and outcomes.

### **Best Practices**

A number of animal services agencies across the nation have transformed themselves, and through that transformation, have dramatically changed their outcomes, originally not unlike the outcomes and conditions currently existing in DeKalb. Travis County (Austin), Texas; Washoe County (Reno), Nevada; Tompkins County (Ithaca), New York; and Albemarle County (Charlottesville), Virginia offer irrefutable evidence that the goals outlined by the DeKalb governing authority are achievable – and in a relatively short period of time. (See pages 6-7 and Appendix 1 for an overview of these model programs.) While none of the policies, practices and operations of these and other successful agencies are exactly the same, their success can be attributed to general adherence to these qualities:

1. A housing facility and shelter care program that addresses both medical and behavioral conditions in animals and provides treatment in a clean, well-ventilated setting designed to meet the needs of both the animals and people working with



- them. Very importantly, these facilities are in an attractive setting that encourages adoptions and volunteerism.
2. Programmatic focuses on home finding through pro-active redemption, adoption, foster care, rescue group involvement and owner retention.
  3. Robust prevention measures including the availability of high volume, low cost spay and neuter services and feral cat trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs.
  4. Most important of all is leadership, starting with the top elected and administrative officials whose direction is executed by a professional animal welfare executive experienced in and committed to lifesaving practices.

### Recommendations

The Task Force evaluated current conditions, operations, practices and policies of DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement against national best practices and presents the following recommendations.

1. The most important recommendation is for the DeKalb County Commission to change and codify the mission and focus of DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement: *To protect and preserve the lives of all animals in the care of DeKalb County while securing adoptive placement or rescue for all savable animals, to maintain a safe and humane community for animals and people alike, to vigorously enforce the County's animal laws, and to prevent animal neglect and cruelty.*
2. Concurrently, the Administration should make wholesale improvements to the existing facility and provide for significant ongoing maintenance while the current facility remains open, and begin plans for a new facility in a market-sensitive location, designed by knowledgeable architects experienced in successful shelter design, constructed with appropriate materials for durability and for the health of the animals that will temporarily live there and the people who will care for them. To facilitate overall understanding and quicker decision-making, the Administration should work closely with the DeKalb Commission in a joint effort, modeled after its joint establishment of this Task Force, to achieve these results. (See pages 10-12 and Appendix 2 for details.)
3. The Administration should adopt and implement the standards of best practices regarding shelter facilities, staffing and programs. (See pages 12-21 and Appendix 3 for details of these recommendations.)
4. Anticipating the retirement of the current Director of DASE this year, whether the County chooses to outsource or retain the animal services function, the Chief Executive Officer and his administration should recruit a successful leader experienced in lifesaving and shelter management. In the case of a decision to outsource, recruit the leader and his/her organization. In the case of a decision to retain the function inside county operations, recruit a successful, experienced leader to manage the function. (See page 22 and Appendix 4 for details.)
5. Given the overall size and scale of DeKalb County operations, the Task Force has outlined a proposal for outsourcing the animal services function, if that approach is preferred by both the Administration and County Commission. The Task Force believes successful outcomes can be achieved through well-lead and adequately resourced in-house or outsourced operations. However, the Task Force anticipates long term cost savings associated with an outsourced operation. Short term cost savings should be reinvested in the animal services function to expedite improved



outcomes and lay the groundwork for preventive programs and services. (See pages 23-28.)

6. In addition to the adopting of a new mission for DASE, the DeKalb Commission should adopt changes to the County Code to strengthen efforts to combat animal cruelty and support the new lifesaving mission of DASE. (See pages 29-32.)
7. Finally, as outlined in the original charge to the Task Force, the Chief Executive Officer and DeKalb County Commission should establish and appoint the ongoing oversight committee for DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement. (See pages 32-33.)

### **Considerations on Outsourcing**

As directed by the Administration and members of the Commission, the Task Force has researched and analyzed the potential for outsourcing animal services. For decades, many jurisdictions have outsourced their animal services functions to local IRS 501(c)(3) not-for-profit animal welfare organizations. In the last two decades, however, that trend is reversing and many of those functions have returned to county-run operations, most often as a result of insufficient funding or failed leadership. Whether publicly or privately managed, what all effective animal services agencies have in common are capable leadership, adequate funding and community support. Outsourced operations can be more cost effective, can demonstrate greater results in lifesaving and adoptive placement, and can effect greater reductions in the birth rate of unwanted pets. The efficiency, effectiveness and success of outsourced management springs from the innovation, professionalism and commitment within the not-for-profit realm of animal welfare, but it is not impossible to achieve those results within county-run operations with capable leadership from top elected and appointed leadership.

### **Conclusion**

DeKalb County is among the wealthiest, highest educated counties in America. It is home to a number of the premiere colleges, universities, institutions and corporations in the nation. Simultaneously, DeKalb County's reputation as a progressive, innovative, safe and caring community is challenged by the conditions and outcomes that exist in its animal services function. While these conditions and outcomes are bad, we have within our leadership the ability and capacity and a detailed roadmap to make dramatic and transformational change to build an animal service function worthy of DeKalb County, its leadership and its citizens.

### **Overview of the Task Force**

The DeKalb Animal Services Task Force was established by the DeKalb County governing authority to identify short and long-term strategies to improve the quality of life of animals in DeKalb County and reduce the number of healthy or treatable animals euthanized in the care of DeKalb County.

The Task Force was comprised of three subcommittees – Policy, Partnerships, and Lifesaving – and an Executive Committee charged with oversight. The Policy Subcommittee reviewed and evaluated relevant sections of the DeKalb County Code of Ordinances, as well as the mission and broad policies of DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement, and made recommendations to the Executive Committee for Code amendments and policy



changes to support public safety and health as well as preserve life and enhance quality of life for companion animals.

The Partnerships Subcommittee was charged with identifying and evaluating existing and potential external and internal county partnerships. This subcommittee made recommendations to facilitate effectiveness and efficiency among those partnerships toward maximizing partnership potential.

The Lifesaving Subcommittee identified and evaluated current operational policies, practices and programs in DeKalb Animal Services administrative, shelter and field functions related to animal care to determine an optimal approach geared toward providing quality humane care to sheltered animals and increasing the live release rate for animals impounded at the shelter. The Lifesaving Subcommittee also researched national best practices to be implemented at DASE.

Over an eight-month period, Task Force members conducted the following:

- 6 public meetings
- Presentations to the CEO, Board of Commissioners, and Director of Public Safety
- Over 25 formal and informal interviews of current and former staff
- Online public survey, including survey of public officials
- Review of DeKalb County Code or Ordinances, Mission Statement, and Standard Operating Procedures
- Identified internal and external partners and points of interaction
- Researched best practices of successful operations nationally
- Observed operations on-site and in field
- Compiled statistical data from surrounding counties where available

## Best Practices

In researching best practices nationally, the Task Force identified four communities that have been successful in saving the lives of 90% or more of the animals entering their public shelters:

- Washoe County (Reno), NV
- Travis County (Austin), TX
- Tompkins County (Ithaca), NY
- Albemarle County (Charlottesville), VA

Organizational structures for the delivery of animal services vary across communities. Travis County, which achieved a 90% save rate in 2011, is operated by the governing authority with strong partnerships in the community. Tompkins County outsources all animal control functions. Albemarle County outsources all animal sheltering, but operates all field and enforcement functions through its police department. Washoe County Regional Animal Services shares a new 60,000 sq. ft. facility with the Nevada Humane Society and transfers nearly half of all animals impounded to the Nevada Humane Society for adoptive placement. Additionally, the Nevada Humane Society contracts with Washoe County to





accept all owner-surrendered animals directly from the public. Overviews of each community are presented in Appendix 1.

These communities have implemented a comprehensive array of programs that contribute to their lifesaving success, and the Task Force has incorporated these model program elements in the recommendations. Most importantly, the governing authorities in each of these communities have formally proclaimed their intention to make their animal shelters no-kill. What all these communities have in common is the vision and leadership to save lives and adequate funding to accomplish that goal.

**Public Funding in Model Communities<sup>1</sup>**

Community	Human Population	Animal Control Budget	Animals Handled Annually	Euthanasia Rate	Budget per Capita
Tompkins County, NY	101,564	\$1,250,000	2,177	6%	\$12.31
Washoe County, NV	421,407	\$4,800,000	14,802	6%	\$11.39
Albemarle County, VA	99,150	\$900,000	3,727	8%	\$9.08
Travis County, TX	1,024,266	\$6,531,436	22,475	26%	\$6.38
DeKalb County, GA	691,893	\$2,935,081	8,396	54%	\$4.24

**The Mission of Animal Services**

DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement (DASE) is a division of DeKalb County Public Safety. DASE is responsible for the enforcement of ordinances related to the treatment of animals in DeKalb County and for the administration and operation of the County’s animal shelter.

**Current Mission**

DASE’s current focus is stated in the division’s Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOP) (2011), as the following “Mission Statement”:

It will be the policy of the DeKalb County Animal Services & Enforcement Unit to control the threat of Rabies in humans; to promote and enforce the humane treatment of animals; to protect the public and its property by enforcing the County’s animal related laws; and to educate and encourage responsible pet ownership and educate the public on its rights and responsibilities regarding animals.

The division’s website states, “DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement was chartered to protect the public from diseases transmitted by animals, from damage caused by animals, and to protect animals from abuse or neglect.” The more comprehensive Mission Statement as stated in the SOPs appears not to be made available to the general public.

<sup>1</sup> Chart reflects operations for 2010. Travis County reports a euthanasia rate of 10% for 2011. The budget for DeKalb County represents actual expenditures for 2010. Budgets are for public funds only and do not include operating expenses for the non-profits in Washoe County (\$3.5 million) or Albemarle County (\$2.4 million).



## Recommendations

In the model communities, the governing authorities and shelter leadership have unequivocally expressed the intent to save the lives of animals entering their sheltering systems. In Travis County, for example, the Austin City Council adopted a resolution to make its animal shelter no-kill, which established a goal to save at least 90% of the animals entering the shelter. The City of Austin's website clearly proclaims, "The goal of the Austin Animal Center is to place all adoptable animals in forever homes through adoptions, foster care or rescue partner groups."

The Task Force recommends a new Mission Statement, to be approved by the Board of Commissioners, which will reflect a new vision for DASE:

To protect and preserve the lives of all animals in the care of DeKalb County while securing adoptive placement or rescue for all savable animals, to maintain a safe and humane community for animals and people alike, to vigorously enforce the County's animal laws, and to prevent animal neglect and cruelty.

## The Facility

The DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement Center is located at 845 Camp Road, Decatur, GA 30032 and is part of the DeKalb County complex off Memorial Drive behind the DeKalb County Jail. The building was constructed in 1989 and has 22,000 sq. ft. of building space with 2,500 sq. ft. of temporary facilities. Approximately 14,000 sq. ft. is devoted to holding animals, with a total of 167 built-in dog runs.

While modest efforts at improvements have been undertaken during the tenure of and prior to the Task Force, the facility is dirty, malodorous, wet and dark. The DASE Center is physically located at the bottom of a hill on an old landfill behind the County's jail and coroner facilities and adjacent to an incinerator used to dispose of the thousands of animals euthanized in the shelter. During periods of heavy rain, a number of areas on the property experience standing water, particularly areas in the parking area and along the side of the building. Standing water that collects in the grassy area along the side of the building often seeps into the building, flooding the office space used by the enforcement officers. Furthermore, flooding in the parking lot makes some parking spaces close to the building inaccessible. During the Task Force tenure, an issue with standing water at the rear of the facility in the animal intake area was addressed.

Until very recently, because of inadequate signage and an isolated location, finding the DASE Center was very difficult. The building is nondescript and had no signage clearly visible from the street. The permanent sign located on the front of the building near the main entrance stands less than two feet above ground and is easily obstructed from view. The lettering is small, and some lettering has been missing from the sign for over a year. A temporary sign was posted near the parking lot entrance, but it was very small and easily missed. Incredibly, the directional sign for County's incinerator facility, which is adjacent to the DASE Center, advertises "Adoption Site: Kittens and Cats, Puppies and Dogs" beneath the word, "INCINERATOR."



As a result of the Task Force's efforts and the persistence of DASE leadership, a new sign bordering Camp and Kensington Roads was erected within the last two months. The missing letter "D" in "DEKALB" on the brick sign immediately in front of the building is the subject of a current requisition.

Entry of the facility is from the front into the main lobby. The entire facility is uninviting and marked by dimly lit space. The lobby area is replete with large signs quoting DeKalb County Code of Ordinance rules pertaining to the treatment of animals and Plexiglas that extends from the counter to ceiling, which separates customers from the administrative staff. The configuration of the lobby and counter severely impede customer service. The air exchange system pumps air from the kennel area into the lobby and administrative areas, which smell of animal waste. Overall, the building has a consistent rodent problem and staff members acknowledge that they see mice and roaches regularly. DASE leadership reports that after years of infestation, a new exterminating company recently has been contracted to address pest control.

### **Kennel Areas**

While the administrative areas can be described as an embarrassment at the very least, the kennel areas, especially the areas housing dogs, are an abomination. The odor, particularly during the summer, is overwhelming. Amidst the sound of barking dogs unmitigated by any sound absorption, the kennel area is deafening from the sound of fans and the ventilation equipment. Older vents that are located along the outer walls, formerly to create ventilation in the kennel area, are rusted beyond repair from the use of corrosive cleaning material and humidity, making them no longer operable. These same vents now allow rodents and insects to enter the facility. During the summer, the kennel area is filled with fruit flies to the extent that some of the dog run walls appear black with the thick layer of insects. Throughout the kennel area, puddles of standing water exist from the result of condensation, daily cleanings and leaky water spigots. The dog runs and cages are rusted out from the combined use of corrosive cleaning materials and condensation, and the drains for washing away animal waste are clogged.

### **Animal Food Storage Area and Temporary Facilities**

Food for animals is kept in a makeshift intermodal-shipping container located behind the northeast corner of the DASE Center. The floor of this container was wood and had been compromised by rats creating holes to access the food. The compromised food presented potential disease from fecal matter and poisoned rodents. During the tenure of the Task Force, the wood flooring was replaced.

The veterinary services are housed in a mobile housing trailer behind the Center facility. A second trailer accommodates a donated washer/dryer and grooming area. The trailers have an ongoing electrical wiring issue that prevents running any electrical equipment simultaneously. For example, it is not possible to operate the washer and the air conditioner at the same time.

### **Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) System**

While the entire facility has the ability to be heated, the kennel area of the facility currently has no permanent air conditioning capabilities. As a consequence, for about six months out of the year, the County rents portable air conditioning units, ductwork and two diesel



generators to ensure that the kennel temperature is within guidelines set by the Georgia Department of Agriculture. This equipment is rented each year from an outside agency at a budgeted cost of \$130,000. This cost also includes the price of diesel fuel due to the lack of an appropriate power source to operate the air conditioning units and blowers. Outside of the time when the equipment is rented, the building lacks the proper ventilation system to exchange air in the facility. This partially accounts for extreme odor in the kennel area.

## Facility Proposal: Options and Estimates for a Shelter

The Task Force recommends that the CEO and Board of Commissioners jointly advance funding in the 2012 budget year to begin the lease/purchase and construction of a new facility to house DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement and to implement new practices related to the division's new mission. The current DASE facility has reached obsolescence and cannot sustain its current mission. This is due to deferred maintenance, size of the structure, location of the current facility and the need for a new HVAC system to properly cool and exchange the air. The significant deficiencies and challenges of this facility are outlined above.

### Proposed Facility

To realize the new mission of DASE, this new facility will feature an improved kennel area to house animals in the care of DASE, expanded space for educational opportunities, an outdoor exercise area, and adoption mall for people and agencies to interact with potential adoptees.

The facility proposed has 31,000 square feet of indoor space. In addition, adjacent to this facility is an outdoor area for walking trail venues that simulate a typical home and neighborhood, and are designed as a place to exercise animals living in the facility and to use as a place for interactions with potential owners. General assumptions for each facility option include an appropriate HVAC/air exchange to meet the needs of a shelter, adequate drainage systems to manage and remove animal waste, and construction of cages. The total footprint of the facility is a minimum of 4 acres. This space requirement comes from the May 2008 Conceptual Additions & Renovations to Existing Facility Report.

### Review of Potential Financing

Given the current fiscal constraints on the County, the Task Force examined several options for funding a new facility. The Task Force contacted Charles Whatley, formerly of the Atlanta Development Authority, on possible ways to finance this facility. (See Appendix 2 for detailed cost estimates.) The three approaches are:

- Lease of an existing building;
- Use the proceeds from bonds let by the DeKalb County Public Safety & Judicial Facilities Authority to renovate an existing structure or build a new facility; or
- Enter into a sole source agreement through the DeKalb County Development Authority that would then enter into an agreement to seek a lease/purchase agreement from a private developer to construct and/or operate a new/rehabilitated facility on behalf of DeKalb County.



### **Lease Only Option**

This scenario has the cost of a new facility analyzed as a straight lease arrangement with a term of 20 years. Information obtained from DeKalb's Facilities Department estimated that leasing a facility in the current market would likely cost \$15 to \$22 per square foot. Other assumptions include improvements to the HVAC/air exchange system to meet the needs of a shelter, expansion of drainage systems, and construction of cages and adoption mall. In this scenario, the cost of these improvements initially would be borne by the lessor and repaid by the County throughout the life of the lease. Estimated cost of improvements is about \$200 per square foot.

Given the lease ranges currently found in the DeKalb County market and the needed improvements, it is estimated that this option would cost between \$826,000 and \$1.05 million annually. Servicing of this debt would come from the Public Safety millage.

### **Purchase and Improvement of an Existing Building**

This scenario assumes that the County would purchase a building in a light industrial area and modify it to meet the needs of DASE. It is unlikely to find a building of the exact size required, however, so a larger facility may be purchased. Taking this into consideration, along with the differences in market locations, it is estimated that the cost for purchase of a building for this use is between \$3-\$5 million.

General assumptions include improvements to the HVAC/air exchange system to meet the needs of a shelter, expansion of drainage systems, and construction of cages, administrative areas and an adoption mall. In this scenario, the cost of these improvements and the building would be paid through a bond offering with the term of 30 years at an interest rate of 5%. Estimated cost of improvements is about \$200 per square foot.

This debt is proposed to be structured through the bonding capacity of the Public Safety & Judicial Officials Authority. Given the purchase price range currently found in the DeKalb County market, it is estimated that the debt service for this option would fall between \$782,000 and \$911,000 annually with the variable being the cost of the purchase of the building. Servicing of this debt would come from the Public Safety millage.

### **County Construction of a New Facility**

In this scenario, the county would design and construct a new facility to meet the needs of DASE. This debt is proposed to be structured through the bonding capacity of the Public Safety & Judicial Officials Authority.

DeKalb would construct a new 31,000 sq. ft. facility on land currently owned by the County, or would purchase new land to construct the facility. If the latter is chosen, the cost of land is estimated at \$2 million. Bonding would be for 30 years at an estimated 5% interest rate.

Under this scenario, if land is purchased, it will be done with proceeds from the bond offering. Debt service for this scenario (building only versus purchase of land and construction of building) would run between \$733,000 and \$863,000 annually with the variable being the price of land. Servicing of this debt would be paid through the Public Safety millage.



### **Lease/Purchase of a New Facility**

In this scenario, the County would have a new facility built by a developer on land currently owned by the County, or the developer would purchase new land to construct the facility. If the later is chosen, the land cost is estimated at \$2 million.

The structure of financing in this scenario is executed through an agreement with the DeKalb Development Authority to allow for a long-term lease. The Development Authority would then secure a developer of the new facility. All costs initially would be borne by the developer. Terms would include a 30-year lease arrangement. At the completion of construction, the County would pay a developer fee of 12%. At the end of the 30-year term, the County would own the facility outright.

The cost of new construction is estimated at \$250 per square foot. In this scenario, all costs of improvements, and land, if purchased, would be paid through the terms of the lease agreement.

Lease payments would range between \$575,000 (building only) and \$677,000 (building plus land). The one-time developer fee would be paid by the County in the first year of the lease and would range between an estimated \$1.9 (building only) and \$2.3 million (building plus land). Payment of this lease would be paid through the Public Safety millage.

### **Operations Overview and Standard Operating Procedures**

DASE currently consists of 33 employees including Director Kathy Mooneyham and Assistant Director Sgt. Tim Medlin. The division has three sections – administrative, field and kennel operations. DASE maintains a Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOP), which was partially revised in November 2011. The SOP Manual sets out the following overview of services provided by the division:

1. Enforcement of the DeKalb County Animal Control Ordinance.
2. Enforcement of State and Federal laws pertaining to wildlife, animal protection and animal welfare.
3. Rabies control to include investigations of ALL animal bites (domestic animals and wildlife) that have broken the skin on a human and brought blood to the outer surface of the skin. Also to conduct investigations when wildlife have bitten or fought with domestic animals/pets. (Wildlife includes but is not limited to raccoons, skunks, foxes, bats, bobcats, and undomesticated ferrets). This service is provided 24 hours a day.
4. Pick up and transport sick and injured stray and abandoned animals to veterinary clinics for treatment.
5. Impound stray animals to include domestic animals, livestock, wildlife, reptiles, exotic animals, etc.
6. Quarantine of biting animals for rabies observation.
7. Investigation of cruelty and neglect complaints pertaining to animals.
8. Humane euthanasia for sick and injured animals.
9. Humane euthanasia for wild animals defined as "carnivores", to include foxes, skunks, raccoons, bobcats, coyotes, and wolves.



10. Disposal of animal carcasses of euthanized animals.
11. Rehabilitation of sick and injured wildlife.<sup>2</sup>
12. Provide humane traps to catch nuisance animals, wild cats and dogs, and wildlife.
13. Identification of pet owners and return of lost pets by tracing rabies tags, microchips, or other forms of identification found on the animals.
14. Provide all interested parties with humane education and pet care information.
15. Provide educational programs to any school, civic group, humane/animal welfare group, etc., upon request to include scheduled tours of the animal Center facility.
16. Provide training seminars for utility companies, public works, etc., pertaining to rabies recognition, dealing with vicious and/or biting animals, safety tips for dealing with aggressive animals, etc.
17. Answer all animal related questions generated by the public.
18. Provide animals abandoned to this agency for adoption on a first-come first-serve basis.
19. Provide assistance for the spaying/neutering of all animals adopted from this agency through issuance of discounted spay/neuter certificates and follow up to insure that the animals are sterilized.<sup>3</sup>
20. Refer residents to agencies that deal with animal removal, complaints, etc., that do not fall under the jurisdiction of this agency.
21. Assist other local agencies, state agencies, etc., with enforcement of all county ordinances, and state and federal laws regarding animal welfare, wildlife, etc.

### **Recommendation**

During the course of the Task Force's work, it was realized that the SOP Manual is extremely outdated, and in many instances, not followed. The Task Force recommends a complete revision of the SOP Manual both to reflect the new mission of the division and to incorporate best practices, particularly with respect to humane animal care. It is further recommended that the County engage an animal care professional with extensive experience in shelter management to revise humane care protocols and procedures.

### **Administrative Functions**

Currently, DASE has 6 employees in its administrative section, including the administrative assistant to the Director. A seventh administrative employee is presently assigned to another division within the Police Department. The administrative staff and kennel officers have the same supervisor. Administrative staff responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Answer all calls to DASE during normal business hours
- Dispatch field officers during normal business hours
- Coordinate rabies inoculation tags with local veterinary practices
- Collect and maintain petty cash
- Register animals

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<sup>2</sup> This function is currently handled by Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE).

<sup>3</sup> DASE currently spays or neuters all adopted animals prior to adoption. This service is primarily performed by a veterinarian onsite who is contracted for this service. Consequently, the issuance of discounted spay/neuter certificates is no longer necessary.



- Record daily activities of the office
- Respond to open records requests
- Enter field operations citations data
- Enter field operations calls and dispositions data
- Enter billing information into the County's Oracle system

### **Data Management**

DASE is crippled in its day-to-day operations by the lack of coherent data management. Administrative, field and kennel officers all use the Multiple Options (Multi Ops) system, a database originally designed for animal shelter management. Technical support for the Multi Ops system is functionally non-existent. The system has limited reporting or analytic capabilities. Data entry is cumbersome, and in many cases, employees are unable to retrieve data entered. Veterinary information generally is not entered into the system. In addition to the Multi Ops system, staff utilize the Police Department's Computer Aided Dispatch system (CAD), a separate Microsoft Access database to track animal intake and disposition statistics theoretically already entered into Multi Ops, and another independent database to track citations. DASE leadership reports that since April 2011, it has attempted to acquire a new system, but to date no contract for a new system is in place.

### **Recommendation**

DASE desperately needs a data management system designed for animal sheltering and animal control. The work of the Task Force was significantly impeded by DASE's inability to access accurate data. Additionally, DASE has limited ability to attract any grant funding available to other animal welfare and animal control organizations because all funders require accurate data. While a system that can interface with the Police Department and other County systems might be ideal, the Task Force recommends that DASE first acquire a system that meets its immediate needs for data management. Systems such as Chameleon, which is used by Fulton County, are relatively inexpensive when the cost of duplicative and wasted administrative time is taken into consideration. Moreover, the Task Force recommends that all DASE personnel be trained in the use of the new system.

### **Pet Registration and Fee Collection**

DASE currently distributes 80,000 "rabies tags" to local veterinarians for the purpose of pet registration. Tags are dispensed by veterinarians to DeKalb pet owners when their pets are vaccinated against rabies. At the same time, pet owners are given a card instructing them to register their pet with DeKalb County by mailing in the registration fee. DASE currently does not track rabies vaccination information from veterinarians. Registrations are received in the mail and are processed manually by DASE administrative staff. Online pet registration is not available. On average, DASE collects \$100,000 annually in pet registration fees. Fees collected are deposited into the County's general fund. Currently fees are set at \$5 per year for an altered (spayed or neutered) pet and \$15 for an unaltered pet.

In contrast to DeKalb County, revenue from pet registrations in Fulton County ranges from \$500,000 to \$800,000 annually and comprises a significant source of funding for the Fulton County Animal Services contractor. Fulton County charges slightly higher annual registration fees - \$10 for an altered pet and \$25 for an unaltered pet - and online registration is available. Fulton County also requires, by county ordinance, that veterinarians in Fulton County furnish Fulton County Animal Services with a copy of the





rabies vaccination certificate for every pet vaccinated. Thus, Fulton County is able to track vaccinated pets and collect registration fees. The animal services contractor in Fulton County uses a sub-contractor, PetData, to track and collect registration fees.

### **Recommendation**

The Task Force recommends that the Board of Commissioners approve an increase in pet registration fees as follows:

Proposed Licensing Fees	1 Year	3 Year
Unaltered Pet	\$25.00	\$60.00
Spayed/Neutered Pet	\$10.00	\$25.00

The Task Force further recommends that the DeKalb Code of Ordinances be amended to require that licensed veterinarians in DeKalb County provide copies of all rabies certificates for pets owned by DeKalb County residents to DASE. To expedite collection of fees and eliminate the existing burden on administrative staff, the Task Force recommends outsourcing fee collection to PetData or similar provider while efficiencies of an in-house system for pet registration and fee collection are explored and developed. Pet registration can be promoted as a value-added service – such as a free ride home if your pet becomes lost – and will encourage responsible pet ownership. Finally, the Task Force recommends that revenues from pet registration be retained by DASE to be used for the provision of lifesaving services such as medical care for shelter animals or spay/neuter services for pets of low-income residents. Thus, pet registration can be utilized as a mechanism to garner community support.

### **Field Services**

DASE has 8 field officers and 2 field supervisors. Another field officer is assigned to distributing animal traps when requested by the public and assisting with bite cases. Additionally, one POST-certified police officer and two DASE field officers are assigned to the division's animal cruelty investigations staff. DeKalb County is the only jurisdiction in the State of Georgia to have a sworn police officer dedicated to enforcing and investigating animal cruelty activities. Working in close collaboration with the DeKalb District Attorney and Solicitor Offices, DASE's cruelty team has been invaluable to the prosecution of crimes involving animals in DeKalb County.

Beginning in the first quarter of 2011 because of a shortage in personnel, DASE reduced its full field coverage to 10 hours per day, from 8am-6pm, Monday – Saturday. Officers each work 10-hour shifts four days per week. Thus, a maximum of 5 officers are responsible for the entire County during any given shift. A single officer is in the field from 6pm-12am. On Sundays and after midnight, one DASE field officer is on call for emergencies.

Key responsibilities of field officers include:

- Patrol the County for stray, injured and/or sick animals
- Transport stray, injured and/or sick animals to the DASE Center
- Set traps for various animal species
- Enforce all laws regarding the treatment of animals



- Issue and follow up on citations, warnings, and notices to comply
- Provide educational materials to residents on dangerous animals, bite prevention, spay/neuter services and adoption agencies, and responsible pet ownership
- Obtain evidentiary information to appear in court to testify as expert witnesses

Unlike the DeKalb Police Department, DASE is responsible for servicing the entirety of DeKalb County, or an area of 267 square miles, including the portion of Atlanta within DeKalb County and all other incorporated areas of the County. The cities of Decatur, Doraville, and Chamblee have their own field personnel, but all animals picked up by the cities' field officers are brought to the DASE Center for disposition.

DASE reports that field officers responded to 23,327 calls for service in 2010 and transported and impounded approximately 6,200 animals at the DASE Center. In addition to responding to calls for service, field officers are responsible for capturing, transporting and impounding animals running at large, animals surrendered by owners in the field, animals abandoned by owners or in eviction cases, and bite cases. Field officers are often called upon to assist police whenever an animal is present at a crime scene, but unlike police, animal control officers are not supplied with any protective gear or other safety equipment necessitated by potentially violent encounters. From 2008-2010, DASE averaged 90 calls for service each day resulting in the transport and impound of 15-20 animals each day on average. Officers must also be available on a regular basis for court appearances.

One recurrent concern in the public meetings conducted by the Task Force was the lengthy response time of DASE to calls for service. At current staffing levels, DASE field officers simply cannot handle the service demand. The Task Force also received reports from current and former DASE employees that animals brought by field officers to the kennel intake area were occasionally left without food or water if a kennel officer was not available to assist with intake. Newborn puppies and kittens were left to starve, and severely injured animals were left to suffer sometimes overnight. While these incidents are unacceptable under any circumstances, the shortage of adequate personnel, both in the field and kennel, increase the likelihood of these occurrences.

### **Recommendation**

Ideally, the pets and people of DeKalb County should be afforded adequate field coverage, from 8am until midnight everyday, with at least 6 officers available in the field during these hours. This would essentially double the number of field officers currently on staff. At a minimum, the County should consider the addition of 4 field officers to provide an acceptable level of field enforcement. The unacceptable issues with animal intake from the field could be alleviated with adequate support from kennel personnel; however, kennel staffing is even more depleted than field levels. Nonetheless, leadership should enforce strict intake procedures, accountability measures, and a zero-tolerance policy for any known occurrences of inhumane care. Intake procedures should be reviewed with all personnel to insure all animals are treated humanely when brought to the DASE Center.

With adequate staffing, field officers can be vital to increasing the reclaim of lost pets from the DASE Center. In 2010, DASE reports that between 549 and 709 animals entering the shelter were reclaimed by their owners, less than 10% at best. (The unavailability of a firm



number further illustrates the need for a reliable data management system.) In contrast, Washoe County reports that more than 40% of the animals impounded by its field officers were ultimately reclaimed by their owners. Washoe County policy directs its field officers to make every reasonable effort to return animals to their owner instead of impounding the animal. In addition to checking the pet for identification (tags or microchips), officers will check lost reports and speak with area residents in an attempt to determine where the animal lives. Last year nearly one thousand pets were returned to their owners in Washoe County in the field instead of being impounded. Also a testament to a robust and effective pet registration program, Washoe County provides a true benefit to pet licensing and promotes registration as “Your Dog’s Ticket Home.”

## Shelter/Animal Care

The National Animal Control Association (NACA) has developed a formula for determining kennel staffing needs which takes into consideration the number of animals impounded and the required holding period. With an approximate intake of 8,500 animals annually and a required holding period of 5 business days, the NACA formula indicates DASE should have at least 13 dedicated kennel personnel to meet minimum standards of animal care during the required holding period. If animals are held beyond the required holding period for adoption or transfer to rescue, personnel requirements are increased. Currently, DASE has 8 dedicated kennel personnel and a kennel supervisor. The administrative staff also report to the kennel supervisor.

Under the best of circumstances, the eight kennel officers would be stretched to meet the minimum standards of humane care for the 250-400 animals they are responsible for each day. The conditions of the DASE shelter facility make the task simply impossible. Staff report that intake procedures, particularly disease control protocols, are only intermittently followed. Supplies, including necessary medical and even cleaning supplies, are often scarce because of complicated County purchasing procedures that can’t accommodate the needs of a live animal population. While the SOP Manual dictates otherwise, dogs are frequently kept in their kennels while the kennels are hosed down, keeping the animals dripping wet. The grates that form the flooring service for the dog runs are rarely lifted and cleaned underneath. This in combination with the constant standing water throughout the main dog area and the lack of drainage beneath the grates makes disease control impossible and odor control non-existent.

Staff morale is understandably low. In fairness to the staff and in light of the working conditions, to enumerate all of the Task Force findings with respect to animal care would serve no real function but to shock the reader. The DeKalb County shelter facility is a chamber of horrors. It is overwhelmingly difficult for the staff. It is even worse for the animals. At the end of the day, at least every other animal cared for by the kennel staff will at some point soon be killed by the kennel staff.

### **Recommendation**

First and foremost, at least 5 additional kennel officers are needed to meet the minimum standard of humane care, as recommended by NACA, for animals held pursuant to the minimum holding period mandated by County ordinance. Adoptive placement or



transferring of animals to rescue groups for adoptive placement through those groups cannot occur until after the holding period. The NACA guidelines do not contemplate holding animals for longer than the mandatory period, which means that additional personnel are needed even if no programs to promote adoption or transfer to rescue are in place or to be implemented.

The Task Force also recommends that the SOP Manual be revised, particularly with respect to intake procedures, vaccination protocols upon intake, and cleaning and sanitation procedures. As recommended above, the County should engage an experienced animal welfare professional or veterinarian with comprehensive shelter medicine experience to assist with the SOP Manual revision. All Standard Operating Procedures should be consistent with *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters* published by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (2010) (*ASV Guidelines*). Currently, they are not. For example, according to the *ASV Guidelines*, “Because risk of disease exposure is often high in shelters, animals must be vaccinated at or prior to intake with core vaccines.” In contrast, the SOP Manual states that only puppies and kittens are to be vaccinated upon intake. Consequently, all of the animals in the shelter are put at risk of disease upon entry, even if adequate sanitation procedures were possible in the existing facility.

Revision of the SOP Manual presupposes that staffing levels will be adequate for the daily animal population, and as indicated above, they are not. A lack of staff accountability is understandable, but unacceptable nonetheless. As recommended for field personnel, leadership should implement accountability measures and enforce a zero-tolerance policy for any known occurrences of inhumane care.

Finally, the Task Force recommends that euthanasia procedures be immediately reviewed and revised by a veterinarian with shelter medicine experience. DASE currently has comprehensive protocols to insure that no animal is euthanized by mistake. As reported by current and former staff, however, the actual procedure for euthanasia, particularly for feral cats, raises grave questions concerning the division’s humane treatment of animals. According to staff, cats are restrained with the use of a “rabies pole” or “catch pole” – a long metal pole with a metal cable noose that tightens around the animals neck – then immobilized by an officer stepping on the animal’s back or legs while the euthanasia drug is administered. A former employee reported animals’ bones sometimes being broken in this procedure during which the animal is fully conscious. According to DASE personnel, DeKalb is not the only county in Georgia utilizing this method. The Georgia Department of Agriculture, which regulates animal shelters, has not promulgated any rule or guideline concerning methods of restraint for euthanasia. Nonetheless, the method used at DeKalb is wholly inconsistent with the *ASV Guidelines* or any humane best practice, notwithstanding its reported use elsewhere in the state. According to the *ASV Guidelines*, humane restraint using specific equipment and the administration of tranquilizing injections are *required* prior to handling of feral cats. The *ASV Guidelines* likewise recommend the least amount of physical restraint necessary and the use of pre-euthanasia tranquilizing drugs for any animals that are aggressive, severely distressed or frightened.



## Recommendations for Lifesaving Initiatives

While some communities across the nation are achieving lifesaving rates in excess of 90%, sadly most of the animals that enter the DeKalb shelter will die there. DeKalb County impounds approximately 8,500 animals annually at the DASE Center. Only 30% leave the shelter alive. Animals survive through the efforts of rescue groups (12%), an earnest and enthusiastic but under-resourced adoption effort (10%) and owner retrievals (8%). Over 5,000 (60%) of the animals are euthanized annually. In recent years, about 3% die of injuries or illness inside the shelter and another 7% are unaccounted for, highlighting problems associated with record-keeping, including insufficient equipment and software, staffing and communication.

More than in any other aspect of DASE operations, the division's efforts directed at lifesaving are dramatically understaffed. A single employee is responsible for nearly all activity that could enable animals to leave the shelter alive. The Animal Adoption/Rescue Coordinator job description is as follows:

Responsible for planning, developing, and implementing various programs and marketing initiatives to promote the DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement (DASE) adoption, foster, and volunteer programs; revamp and maintain Internet website to reflect daily availability of animals; assist adopters on pet selection, pet care, and owner responsibilities. Develops, coordinates, implements, and presents various educational programs to schools, residents, businesses, and county employees; acts as a liaison between DASE and rescue groups; develops working relationships with other counties and the community. Provide administrative support to division staff.

In fact, without an increase in staffing, the bulk of the Task Force recommendations to reduce the number of animals euthanized at the DASE Center would rest on the shoulders of this one employee. The Task Force recommends the immediate creation of at least two additional staff positions to focus on the implementation of lifesaving initiatives.

### Hours of Operation

To facilitate adoptions and community involvement, the DASE shelter should be open to the public for adoptions during hours when working citizens can come to the shelter – at least one weeknight and both Saturday and Sunday. This would add approximately 15 additional hours each week to the shelter's current hours of operation.

### Foster/Volunteer Program

By adding additional Animal Adoption/Rescue Coordinators, DASE should be able to implement a foster care program and increase volunteer involvement. Currently, DASE has no appreciable foster care program, primarily because foster homes require oversight and periodic inspection under Department of Agriculture regulations. A robust foster care program could conceivably increase the shelter's capacity by at least 20%. For example, Austin Animal Services has between 100-300 animals in foster care at any given time. The Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA (CASPCA) attributes much of its success to its foster care program. About 40% of the CASPCA total animal population (1,500 animals in 2010) enters



that shelter's foster home program annually. DASE also could consider outsourcing the management of a foster care program.

According to staff, on average, there are less than five volunteers at a time working in the DASE Center, usually on Saturdays. Before volunteering, each person receives basic training to ensure safety. Most volunteers work with animals selected for the Center's small adoption area and photograph animals for adoption websites. In contrast, the Tompkins County SPCA utilizes volunteers to help care for shelter pets, answer phones at the adoption desk, assist with maintenance and carpentry projects, monitor and greet guests at the shelter, counsel potential adopters, and help with special events. Like the foster program, an effective volunteer program requires staff time to manage volunteers – time that is simply unavailable at the current staffing levels.

### **Public Awareness Campaign**

Potentially accomplished with a volunteer public relations task force, DASE should implement a comprehensive public relations effort to include seasonal campaigns focused on key DASE programs, particularly pet adoptions.

### **Offsite Adoption Program**

DASE could potentially double its current rate of adoptions by taking animals to the community through weekend and even weekday/lunchtime adoption events. The DASE Center is simply no longer conducive to promoting adoptions. In fact, the area of the shelter designated as the dog adoption room is perhaps the most odoriferous room in the building. Over recent years, pet adoptions from DASE have actually decreased, from 907 adoptions in 2008 to 733 adoptions in 2010. While offsite adoptions could offer some additional exposure for available animals, current staffing levels limit offsite adoption events to quarterly occurrences at best. An offsite adoption program also could be outsourced to accommodate weekly events every Saturday and Sunday.

### **Animal Behavior Rehabilitation Program**

An animal behaviorist position would enable DASE to create programs to assist shelter animals with behavioral issues and provide counseling to citizens to prevent pet relinquishment and reduce shelter intake. In 2010, pet owners relinquished nearly 800 animals to DASE, approximately 10% of the shelter's intake. While DASE is currently unable to track the reasons for owner surrenders, the National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy states:

People are not in the know. When it comes to problem solving, some pet owners do not have adequate knowledge to determine solutions. They are unaware what may be contributing to the problems they face. Many are experiencing the results of unrealistic expectations. The bottom line? Animals, who otherwise might remain happily in their home are relinquished to shelters across the country.

DeKalb County might also consider charging a small fee for owner surrenders. In Albemarle County, owners must pay a \$50 intake fee for pets not altered or not up to date on shots and a \$30 intake fee for pets that are fully vetted. The intake fee could be waived when in the best interest of the animal.



### **Public Spay/Neuter Program**

Potentially funded by pet registration fees, DASE could subsidize free spay/neuter and vaccination services for pets of low-income residents. All medical procedures would be outsourced. Program administration likewise could be outsourced if necessary. Subsidized spay/neuter has yielded significant cost savings over time in other communities. A study in New Hampshire over a six-year period showed a savings of \$3.2 million from reduced shelter intake with an investment of \$1 million for subsidized spay/neuter.

### **Adoption Fees**

Currently, DASE charges a somewhat confusing array of adoption fees. Dogs can be adopted for \$87 for males and \$92 for females. Cat adoption fees are \$62 for males and \$82 for females. All animals adopted from the DASE Center are spayed or neutered and vaccinated. The adoption fees were calculated using the amounts DASE once reimbursed local veterinarians for spay/neuter certificates that were issued when the animals were adopted unaltered. As all animals are now spayed or neutered onsite by the contract veterinarian, the basis for fee calculation is somewhat irrelevant. The Task Force recommends that adoption fees be simplified at \$95 for dogs and \$75 for cats. Additionally, the Task Force recommends that all animals be microchipped before placement in adoptive homes. Currently, all fees paid to DASE are deposited to the County's general fund. Because DASE bears the expense of generating these revenues, the Task Force recommends that DASE retain these fees to help offset costs associated with lifesaving initiatives. Total adoption fees collected currently average \$70,000 annually.

## **External Partnerships**

### **Rescue Groups**

Thanks to the efforts of its sole Animal Adoption/Rescue Coordinator, DASE has seen a 325% increase in the number of animals transferred to no-kill rescue groups, from 506 animals in 2008 to 1,648 animals in 2010. Social networking plays an increasingly vital role in attracting rescue groups to the DeKalb facility. Friends of DeKalb Animals, a group formed exclusively to transport animals from DASE to no-kill groups located primarily in the northeastern United States, has helped DASE significantly increase the number of animals transferred to rescue groups for adoptive placement.

### **Community Cat/TNR Program**

In mid-2011, DASE partnered with LifeLine Animal Project's Spay & Neuter Clinic, located in Avondale Estates, and the national organization Best Friends Animal Society in a pilot program called Feral Freedom. Funded by Best Friends, the program provides free sterilization and vaccination for outdoor or "community cats" trapped by field officers or by citizens who have rented humane traps from DASE. The program utilizes a method known as Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), a proven, non-lethal method for controlling outdoor cat populations and reducing their numbers over time through sterilization and colony maintenance. Rather than impounding community cats in the DASE Center where the cats will ultimately be euthanized, field officers deliver the cats directly to LifeLine's clinic for sterilization and vaccination. A Best Friends employee then returns the cats to their outdoor environments. Funding was also provided for cats in colonies maintained by volunteer caretakers throughout the County. From August-December 2011, 650 cats were spayed or



neutered through Feral Freedom. The results were dramatic, dropping the euthanasia rate for cats at DASE from over 70% to 26%. The estimated savings to DASE on costs to impound and euthanize cats is \$100,000 annually. The Task Force recommends continuation of this program.

### **Partnership Opportunities with the DeKalb County Schools System**

Members of the Task Force and County staff twice met with representatives of the DeKalb County Schools System and a student representative to open discussions around the potential for building a partnership between DeKalb County Government and the Schools System. Based on the foundation that growth of the pet industry is strong and expected to continue growing, the Task Force expressed a desire to understand current curriculum and consideration for further expansion perhaps involving volunteering, apprenticeships, internships and potentially facility sharing. The current curriculum related to animal sciences is very good and would provide the foundation for further expansion of classroom, laboratory and in-service or career track internships. It is clear that the Schools System would welcome more definitive discussions with DeKalb County government related to facilities and student opportunities.

### **Relationship with County Departments**

County employees from Purchasing, Human Resources, Facilities Management, and the Police Department participated on the Task Force and helped identify points of contact with DASE. During the course of the Task Force effort, relationships improved and minor problems at DASE once exacerbated by inter-departmental procedures were solved. For example, the Director of DASE was able to acquire a “P-Card” to address certain supply shortages. To members of the Task Force not employed by the County, however, it appeared that DASE needed an advocate in most every County department in order to successfully navigate County systems. Other issues, such as the acquisition of a working shelter data management system, proved insurmountable.

### **Recommendation**

Operations at DASE are often hindered by County procedures that limit DASE’s ability to effectively respond to the fluid demands of caring for live animals and enforcing County ordinances. Improvements desired by DASE leadership often become mired in County-mandated processes. For example, DASE leadership has worked since April 2011 to secure a new data management system, but County procedures have delayed any contract with a service provider. Likewise, DASE’s attempt over the last two years to outsource pet registration was lost in County processes. Recent improvements that have been needed for years, such as new signage at the DASE Center, were completed in part because of the Task Force’s investigation and intervention. The Task Force strongly recommends that the Chief Executive Officer appoint an executive-level committee for DASE to establish streamlined procedures for Human Resources, Purchasing and other departments as needed.

### **Leadership**

In each of the model programs cited for best practices, the key to success was an articulated vision and capable, compassionate leadership. With the creation of the Task Force, the DeKalb governing authority has initiated a vision for animal services that can rank DeKalb





County among the leading communities in animal protection. As in other communities, codification of a new mission sets the course. Anticipating the retirement of the current Director of DASE this year, whether the County chooses to outsource or retain the animal services function, the Chief Executive Officer and his administration should recruit a successful leader experienced in lifesaving and shelter management. Appendix 4 sets out a proposed job description for the Director of DASE. In the case of a decision to outsource, the job description serves as criteria for the selection of the service provider.

## Outsourcing Considerations

### Overview of Outsourcing

During the tenure of the Task Force, the governing authority requested an analysis of the potential for outsourcing the County's animal services function. Many counties and cities have long outsourced their animal control operations to a local, usually IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit, animal welfare organization. During the 1990s, however, due to insufficient funding from local governments, increasing numbers of contracting organizations had difficulty raising charitable dollars to fund activities that were the government's statutory responsibility. As a result, and often with short notice, local governments were faced with establishing government-run animal control operations when contractors opted out of long-standing agreements, usually citing contracts with the government that did not adequately fund the provision of services required by the contracts. As stated in *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments*, published by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), "Cities and counties that contract out animal care and control services must recognize that animal control remains a statutory obligation of government, and they must adequately fund and carefully monitor contracting entities."

Whether publicly or privately managed, what all effective animal care and control departments have in common are capable leadership, adequate funding and community support. Outsourced operations can be more cost effective, can demonstrate greater results in lifesaving and adoptive placement, and can effect greater reductions in the birth rate of unwanted pets. The efficiency, effectiveness and success of outsourced management springs from the innovation, professionalism and commitment within the not-for-profit realm of animal welfare. Outsourcing, however, does not come without potential peril.

### Considerations for DeKalb County

The Georgia Constitution delegates the provision of animal control services to the counties. In seeking to outsource this government function, the potential for peril lies in the county government's failure to provide a steadfast commitment to annual funding and support of the operations, shelter facility, equipment and vehicles. County government cannot abdicate responsibility through outsourcing. Other potential pitfalls include lack of comprehensiveness and specificity in the contractual agreement between the county and service provider; general or across-the-board immediate or near term reductions in funding before the new mission of lifesaving has time to realize efficiencies; selection of a vendor without the appropriate level of experience or commitment to the service; or, selection of a vendor with the sole purpose to reduce cost. As the fulfillment of a constitutionally mandated county responsibility, the primary goal in outsourcing should be to achieve better results first, then cost savings second.



The DeKalb Animal Services Task Force has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement (DASE). The Task Force has identified numerous areas for improvement and made recommendations to increase efficiencies as well as increase the quality of care for animals held at DASE and dramatically increase the rate of lifesaving. During the course of the Task Force evaluation, however, it became evident that any progress at DASE is complicated by county procedures that impact DASE's ability to effectively respond to the demands of caring for live animals and enforcing county animal control ordinances. Thus, despite a trend among many jurisdictions to move away from outsourcing for the reasons referenced above, the circumstances that limit the efficiency and effectiveness of DASE might best be remedied by outsourcing management, operations and enforcement functions.

### **Case Study – Fulton County**

In neighboring Fulton County, animal control functions have been outsourced for decades, with mixed results. Fulton County's historical experiences with outsourcing illustrate the national trend, the advantages of outsourcing, as well as the pitfalls outlined above. Like many jurisdictions, Fulton County had a long-term relationship with the area's largest humane organization, the Atlanta Humane Society (AHS), for the provision of animal control services. After decades of providing animal control enforcement and operating the Fulton shelter, which is a separate facility from the AHS shelter, AHS came under fire for a record of lifesaving that can only be described as dismal. In 2001, AHS impounded 13,102 animals at the Fulton shelter. AHS reported that 84% of those animals, 11,069, were killed at the Fulton shelter. Only 737 animals from the Fulton operation were transferred to and given a chance for adoption at the AHS shelter, which likewise reported a 38% euthanasia rate. AHS thus had an effective annual euthanasia rate of nearly 87% during its final years of operating the Fulton shelter.<sup>4</sup>

Amidst considerable public outcry for reform at the Fulton shelter, AHS followed the trend of many humane societies with long-standing animal control contracts, cited inadequate funding from Fulton County for the animal control contract, and informed Fulton County that after many decades of service, Fulton needed to find a new provider or fend for itself. In 2003, the Fulton contract was awarded to Southern Hope Humane Society. The results were dramatic. Twelve months of Southern Hope's performance, from Sept. 2006 – Aug. 2007, are recorded in Addendum One of the most recent RFP for animal services issued by Fulton County.<sup>5</sup> As reported, Southern Hope decreased the annual euthanasia rate from 87% under AHS to 45%. Additionally, Southern Hope instituted a free spay/neuter program and provided 1,132 free sterilization procedures for pets of low-income Fulton residents during the same time period.

In response to the 2007 RFP, Southern Hope requested an increase in the contract funding. Although the Fulton County selection committee recommended awarding the contract to

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that DeKalb's shelter was only marginally better that year, killing 9,145, or 83%, of the 10,956 animals impounded, and adopting out only 540 animals – less than 5%.

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://www.fultoncountyga.gov/county/bidss/uploads/ADDENDUM%20ONE.pdf>. The full Fulton County RFP, dated Nov. 16, 2007, and Addendum Two are available online respectively at <http://www.fultoncountyga.gov/county/bidss/uploads/ANIMAL%20CONTROL%20SERVICES.pdf> and <http://www.fultoncountyga.gov/county/bidss/uploads/ADDENDUM%20TWO.pdf>.



Southern Hope, the Fulton Board of Commissioners awarded the new contract to the Barking Hound Village Foundation (BHVF) to commence in 2008. BHVF had submitted the lowest bid, which was approximately the same as the annual amount paid to Southern Hope for the previous years. BHVF was a new organization with no previous animal control or sheltering experience that was formed for the purpose of bidding on the Fulton contract.

The performance of BHVF in fulfilling a constitutionally mandated function for Fulton County is uncertain. From the outset, BHVF has suffered from negative media coverage. Within the first year of the contract, the BHVF shelter director resigned over allegations of mismanagement and mishandling of shelter animals, particularly pit bull-type dogs.<sup>6</sup> More recently, BHVF was featured last year in a four-part investigative report that suggested BHVF misused county funds.<sup>7</sup> Fulton County reports that it will audit its current contractor. In response to recent inquiries made on behalf of the DeKalb Animal Services Task Force, the Fulton shelter submitted shelter statistics which indicated that Fulton under BHVF management was experiencing only a modest increase in its euthanasia rate over the rates achieved by the previous contractor, Southern Hope: 48.1% of the shelter's total outcomes were reported as euthanized as compared to Southern Hope's reported euthanasia rate of 45.6%. Alarming, however, Fulton reported outcomes (i.e., adopted, transferred to rescue, reclaimed, euthanized, or other) for only 6,857 animals while also reporting that it impounded 10,124 animals. Thus, 3,267 animals, representing 32.3% of the total animals reportedly handled by BHVF in 2010, are unaccounted for or missing. The following chart compares the Fulton statistics reported under Southern Hope in the RFP to the 2010 statistics reported by both Fulton and DeKalb.

### Shelter Statistics – Fulton and DeKalb Counties

	Calls for Service	Intake	Adopted	Transferred	Other	Reclaimed	Euthanized
Fulton Sept 06-Aug 07 (SHHS)	26,112	8,644	1,627	1,881	391	792	3,934
DeKalb 2010	23,327	8,396	733	1,648	315	709	3,999
Fulton 2010 (BHVF)	N/A	10,124	1,493	1,213	63	791	3,297
	Total Outcomes	Euthanasia %	Unaccounted For (Intake Minus Outcomes)				
Fulton Sept 06-Aug 07 (SHHS)	8,625	45.6%	19	0.2%			
DeKalb 2010	7,404	54.0%	992	11.8%			
Fulton 2010 (BHVF)	6,857	48.1%	3,267	32.3%			

<sup>6</sup> See:

[http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/northfulton/stories/2008/11/16/fulton\\_animal\\_shelter.html](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/northfulton/stories/2008/11/16/fulton_animal_shelter.html).

<sup>7</sup> See:

<http://www.myfoxtatlanta.com/dpp/news/iteam/iteam-fulton-county-animal-shelter-money-20110620-es>

<http://www.myfoxtatlanta.com/dpp/news/iteam/iteam-fulton-co-animal-shelter-part-2-20110621-es>

<http://www.myfoxtatlanta.com/dpp/news/iteam/I-Team%3A-Barking-Hound-Village-Foundation-20110624-am-sd>

<http://www.myfoxtatlanta.com/dpp/news/iteam/i-team-fulton-animal-shelter-audit-part-3-20110822-es>



## Funding Model

As indicated in the chart above, the number of animals handled and calls for service during the time period reported by Fulton in the RFP Addendum One is comparable to the current service level reported by DeKalb. Likewise, all revenues to Southern Hope during the reporting period are documented in the RFP Addendum One. As the 2010 statistics from Fulton fail to account for 3,297 animals – one-third of the animals purportedly impounded – the documented statistics and revenue reports from Southern Hope provide the more reliable basis for any discussion of outsourcing in DeKalb County.

In addition to the contract proceeds, Southern Hope received all revenue directly for pet licensing/registration fees; reclaim, impound and quarantine (kennel) fees; adoption fees; and donations to Southern Hope designated for Fulton Animal Services operations. (In DeKalb County, these fees are paid into the general fund.) Further, Fulton County provides the shelter facility and all vehicles to the contractor. Above and beyond the contract amount, Fulton County also pays for all building and vehicle maintenance, computers and IT expenses, telephone and Internet fees, and all utilities. According to actual expenditures by DASE in 2009 and 2010, these costs in DeKalb average \$306,768 annually. Using the actual costs in DeKalb along with the revenues reported in the Fulton RFP Addendum One, the total funding for outsourced animal services in Fulton County is approximated as follows:<sup>8</sup>

### Animal Services Funding – Fulton RFP Model

Contract	\$ 2,289,850
Kennel Fees	46,102
Licensing/Registration Fees	818,540
Adoption Fees	123,420
Donations	59,915
Maintenance	45,510
Telephone	2,105
Internet	1,180
Gas	35,741
Electricity	40,934
Computers	4,254
Vehicle Maintenance	142,544
Vehicle Replacement	12,000
Vehicle Insurance	23,622
<b>Total Operating Fund</b>	<b>\$ 3,645,717</b>

<sup>8</sup> Members of the Task Force received a draft document from DeKalb County staff which omitted any mention in the outsourcing discussion of other revenues accruing to the Fulton contractor or expenses paid by Fulton County above and beyond the service contract. Consequently, the total funding for Fulton County operations was understated in the draft by nearly \$1.5 million. Similarly, the draft focused on the inaccurate 2010 statistics supplied by the current Fulton contractor without addressing the animals unaccounted for or missing from the Fulton statistics, thus erroneously concluding that Fulton was handling many more animals than DeKalb at a significantly lower cost. Because the success of outsourced services hinges on adequate funding, regardless of the source of the funds, should DeKalb decide to pursue outsourcing, the Task Force recommends that total funding, rather than the Fulton contract amount alone, must be considered in an outsourcing decision.



### **Pet Registration and Other Fees**

In Fulton County, pet registration fees are approximately double the DeKalb fee structure. The Task Force has recommended an increase in DeKalb fees to match those in Fulton County. While an increase in pet registration fees may seem unappealing at first, the recommended fee increase is reasonable: \$10 for spayed/neutered pets and \$25 for unaltered animals annually, with discounts available to seniors and other residents in need.

Currently, all pet registration fees, adoption fees, and animal reclaim (kennel) fees average \$200,000 in annual revenue to DeKalb County. These fees are paid into the County's general fund and thus are not retained by DASE for its operating expenses. According to the Fulton RFP Addendum One, these fees in Fulton totaled \$988,062 for the year reported. The dramatic difference in annual fees collected indicates that the contractor was able to achieve significantly greater compliance with pet registration requirements, despite the higher fee structure. Moreover, the contractor's rate of adoptions was more than double the current rate in DeKalb, thus increasing revenue from adoption fees.

In considering outsourcing for DeKalb, the history in Fulton supports the supposition that a private contractor can achieve greater revenues from pet registration and other fees, provided that the fee structure is both reasonable and adequate. Assuming pet registration fees can be increased as recommended, an increase in revenue to \$500,000 annually can be projected for purposes of calculating total funding for outsourced operations in DeKalb. If DeKalb decides to outsource animal services, the Task Force recommends that, as in Fulton, these fees would be paid directly to the contractor rather than to the County's general fund, both to incentivize performance and efficiencies on the part of the contractor as well as reduce the County's financial outlay for the contract.

### **Funding Requirements**

As illustrated above, the Fulton RFP model calls for approximate total annual funding in the amount of \$3.6 million. The number of animals and calls for service in this model are comparable to the current demands in DeKalb. The Task Force has recommended several programs that need to be initiated or improved to increase adoption and lifesaving rates at DASE, promote responsible pet ownership, and decrease the number of animals entering the DASE shelter. The total amount estimated for these programs above the DASE 2011 proposed budget is \$800,000.<sup>9</sup> The contractor's reports contained in the Fulton RFP indicate that most all of these additional programs – offsite adoptions, spay/neuter funding for low-income residents, foster care, extended hours of operations, extensive volunteer program, greater adoption and animal care staffing, etc. – were provided to Fulton County under the contract.

### **DeKalb In-House Costs for Recommended Level of Service**

Accordingly, to determine DeKalb County's in-house cost to deliver the same level of service achieved in Fulton County as reported in the RFP, expenses are calculated using the total DASE 2011 proposed budget plus the expenses that would be incurred to implement the

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<sup>9</sup> One Task Force recommendation, the purchase and implementation of adequate data management software, was proposed in the 2011 budget, but was never acquired.



Task Force program recommendations, less the registration/kennel fees deposited to the County's general fund:

2011 DASE Budget	\$ 3,140,918
Task Force Recommendations	800,000
Total	\$ 3,940,918
Less Kennel/Registration Fees	(200,000)
Net Recommended Funding	\$ 3,740,918

### **Cost to Outsource Recommended Level of Service**

Using the Fulton RFP model to determine the County's cost to outsource, the Task Force recommends the following parameters: As in Fulton, DeKalb County would retain costs for maintenance, vehicles, utilities, and IT expenses in addition to the contract amount. As indicated above, these costs average approximately \$300,000 annually for current DASE operations. All registration/kennel fees would be paid directly to the contractor and are estimated at \$500,000 annually, as stated in the discussion of fees above. DeKalb County's cost to outsource all animal services at the recommended level of service is estimated as follows:

Contract Amount	\$ 2,800,000
Utilities, Maintenance, Vehicles	300,000
Total Outsource Cost	\$ 3,100,000
Kennel/ Registration Fees	500,000
Total Funding	\$ 3,600,000

### **Outsource Savings**

While DeKalb County's total cost to outsource the animal services function, \$3.1 million, is approximately equivalent to the proposed 2011 budget for DASE, the level of service afforded DeKalb County residents is significantly greater and also is consistent with the recommendations of the Task Force. Below is the total annual savings to DeKalb County:

Net Funding-County Mgmt	\$ 3,740,918
Total Outsource Cost	3,100,000
Annual Savings	\$ 640,918

### **Conclusions on Outsourcing**

With the creation and support of the Animal Services Task Force, the DeKalb County governing authority has demonstrated commitment to making DeKalb County a model for progressive animal services for the pets and people of DeKalb. The Task Force has articulated the acute need for a new shelter facility, and outsourcing will not alleviate the need for a new shelter. A new facility alone, however, will not afford the level of service recommended by the Task Force without significant improvements in operations. At no additional cost to the County and with significant savings on future operations, the above model for outsourcing shelter operations holds the potential to deliver the level of service recommended by the Task Force and deserved by the citizens of DeKalb County.



## Recommended Amendments to DeKalb Code of Ordinances

Representatives from the DeKalb County District Attorney and Solicitor Offices were members of the Task Force Policy Subcommittee. Together with DASE leadership and field enforcement and other Task Force members with legal backgrounds, the Policy Subcommittee identified proposed amendments to animal-related provisions of the DeKalb County Code of Ordinances. The Policy Subcommittee will continue work with the Department of Law to draft final amendments to be presented to the Board of Commissioners. The recommended amendments are summarized as follows:

First, the Task Force recommends codification of the new Mission Statement for DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement:

To protect and preserve the lives of all animals in the care of DeKalb County while securing adoptive placement or rescue for all savable animals, to maintain a safe and humane community for animals and people alike, to vigorously enforce the County's animal laws, and to prevent animal neglect and cruelty.

In Chapter 5, Section 5-1 Definitions, the Task Force recommends the following definition for “neglect” as used in the definition of “cruelty”:

*Neglect* means endangering an animal’s health by failing to provide or arrange to provide the animal with food or drink, if the animal is dependent upon the person for the provision of food. The act of restraining an animal for more than a brief period in a manner that endangers the animal’s life or health by the use of a rope, chain, or tether. The act of restraining an animal in a manner that seriously endangers the animal’s life or health by:

- 1) Failing to provide reasonable care for; or seek veterinary care for; an injury or illness to a dog or cat that seriously endangers the life or health of the dog or cat; or
- 2) Leaving a dog or cat outside and exposed to excessive heat, or unsanitary conditions, without providing the animal with a means of shade from the heat or
- 3) Excessive cold if the animal is not provided with straw or another means of protection from the cold regardless of whether the animal is restrained or kept in a kennel.

The Task Force also recommends that the definition of cruelty be amended to change the prohibition on leaving an animal in a closed vehicle when the outside air temperature is eighty (80) degrees to prohibit leaving an animal in a closed vehicle when the outside temperature is seventy (70) degrees.



The definition for “pen” should be amended to read:

*Dangerous Animal Pen* means a pad locked, fenced area within a perimeter fenced area that has secure sides that are buried two (2) feet into the ground or sunken in concrete and a secure top.

The Task Force recommends adding the follow definitions for “community cat” and “stray”:

*Community Cat* means any free-roaming cat that may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known or unknown; a community cat may or may not be feral. Community cats shall be distinguished from other cats by being sterilized and ear tipped; qualified community cats are exempt from licensing, stray and at-large provisions of this ordinance and may be exempt from other provisions directed toward owned animals.

*Stray* means any animal that is found to be at-large, whether lost by its owner or otherwise, or that is on the common areas of apartments, condominiums, trailer parks or other multi-residential premises, and that does not have an identification tag and for which there is no identifiable owner; however, if the animal service center establishes a program for the maintenance of feral cats or community cats this provision shall not apply to qualified animals in those programs.

Section 5-2 General responsibilities of owners, subsection (d) should be amended to allow complainants to provide the enforcing officer, rather than the police chief, with the address of the owner of barking dog.

Section 5-10 pertaining to dangerous or potentially dangerous animals should be amended to allow the court to determine, after a hearing, whether an animal should be euthanized.

Section 5-12 pertaining to certificates of registration should be amended to clarify requirements for animals classified as dangerous animals.

In Section 5-17, the Task Force recommends adding a provision requiring veterinarians to furnish a copy of all rabies certificates to DASE.

Section 5-23 pertaining to pet adoptions should have the following added as subsection (b):

Animal Services shall make reasonable efforts towards the adoption of healthy impounded animals, or make reasonable efforts to transfer the animal to a certified rescue group after the expiration of the hold period, provided that the animal is not deemed a dangerous or vicious animal.

Section 5-25 pertaining to the mandatory sterilization of dangerous animals and potentially dangerous animals should be limited to dangerous animals.





Section 5-27 limits pet ownership for persons convicted of enumerated violations, including animal cruelty. The Task Force recommends that the prohibition of pet ownership for these individuals be extended from three years to five years.

In Section 5-28 pertaining to violations and enhanced penalties, the Task Force recommends the addition of the following:

It shall be incumbent upon the DeKalb County Recorders Court System to maintain records of convictions for previous offenses.

The Task Force recommends the inclusion of a new section in Chapter Five that would require a Health Certificate for any dog or cat sold or exchanged in DeKalb County. The new section would track the following ordinance enacted in Jacksonville, FL:

Sec. 462.1102. - Health Certificates Required.

(a) The owner of any cat or dog that is sold or exchanged for valuable consideration between private parties is required to provide to the new owner a current, valid OCVI Health Certificate with each animal at the time the animal is offered and a copy of the Health Certificate must be provided at the time of exchange.

(b) All dogs and cats offered for sale or exchange for valuable consideration must have valid, current OCVI Health Certificates at the time they are offered for sale. These certificates must be presented to any animal control officer upon demand for review.

(c) All unsterilized dogs and cats that are given away or exchanged at an arms-length transaction must also have current, valid OCVI Health Certificates at the time offered and the certificate must be transferred with the animal. These certificates must be presented to any animal control officer upon demand for review.

(d) Violations of this section are subject to a fine of not less than the amount designated in Chapter 462, Part 18. Each animal not in compliance with this section shall be considered a separate infraction and violation of this section.

(e) Animal shelters and rescue groups offering animals for adoption are exempt from the provisions of this section. To qualify for the exemption, a rescue group must be a not for profit organized (or operating as an agent of an organization) under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code with the express mission/business function of adopting sterilized homeless and unwanted animals. A copy of the I.R.S. letter of designation shall be provided to ACPS upon request.



In Chapter 13 – Health Regulations, Section 13-129, the Task Force recommends inclusion of a new subsection to provide for enforcement of the quarantine provisions for biting dogs and cats.

For Chapter 27- Zoning, Section 27-31 Definitions, the Task Force recommends deletion of the words “pit bulls” from the provision currently excluding the dogs from the definition of household pets.

In Section 27-735(e), the Task Force recommends changing the number of household pets to ten (10) and removing the language regarding acreage.

## **Animal Services Advisory and Oversight Board**

As contemplated in the establishment of the Animal Services Task Force, upon completion of the work of the Task Force, the CEO and Board of Commissioners should create a permanent advisory board to insure continued improvement in the treatment of animals in DeKalb. In general, the focus of this board is to provide a potent communication channel between DASE and the community and to implement and enforce the will of the community’s values and current best practices in the operation of DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement.

### **Goals of DeKalb Animal Services Advisory and Oversight Board**

- Advocate, monitor and assist in the implementation of long-term efforts identified by the Animal Services Task Force which improve practices, service delivery, and facilities;
- Identify, help implement and advocate additional strategies that improve the lives of animals in DeKalb County;
- Improve communications between animal advocacy groups, animal professionals and government in the county and region to create a comprehensive safety net of services, promote lifesaving measures as well as animal population management activities and identify cost efficiency opportunities.

### **Specific Functions**

- Oversee implementation of approved Work Plan for DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement (DASE);
- Secure grant funding in cooperation with DASE, animal advocacy groups and government agencies;
- Along with DASE, facilitate regular quarterly meetings of community representatives, animal advocacy groups and organizations. The purpose of these meetings is to enhance relationships and coordination among groups, generally market services available to DeKalb animal owners and coordinate educational outreach opportunities.

### **Selection of Board Members**

The Task Force recommends a total of thirteen (13) members of this board. Recognizing the mission and purpose of animal services, membership will be selected in the following manner:



#### **DeKalb Board of Commissioners Appointees (4 Members)**

- One (1) must be an animal shelter operator
- One (1) must represent an animal welfare organization
- Two (2) must be active community leaders with a demonstrated concern for animals

#### **DeKalb CEO Appointees (4 Members)**

- One (1) must represent an animal welfare organization
- Three (3) must be active community leaders with a demonstrated concern for animals

#### **DeKalb Municipal Appointees (3 Members)**

- One (1) member each from the three largest municipalities as defined by human population. Each member will be selected by the respective mayor.

#### **Ex-Officio Members (2 Members)**

- One (1) must be the DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement Director or equivalent
- One (1) must be the DeKalb Director of Public Safety or equivalent

#### **Terms of Service**

Members may serve two, three-year terms with a year's lapse in service, if to be reappointed beyond a total of six years. Initially, to establish a rotation schedule, two each of the Commission and CEO appointees, and one of the municipal appointees will be appointed to serve one-year terms; one each of the Commission and CEO appointees will be made for two-year term appointments; one of the municipal appointments will be for a two-year term; the remainder will be for a three-year term. In order to be eligible for continuation each year within a term and reappointment at the conclusion of the first three-year term (or from among the first appointees who will serve a shorter initial term), member will have demonstrated a minimum of 75% attendance during the term of their service.

#### **Leadership**

From among the eight CEO and Commission appointees and three municipal appointees, the board will elect a chair and vice-chair for maximum two-year terms.



## Appendix 1: Model Programs Overview

### Washoe County, NV

Washoe County Regional Animal Services is a governmental agency that provides animal control and animal sheltering to unincorporated Washoe County and the cities of Reno and Sparks. Washoe County, NV has a total population of 421,407. Washoe County Regional Animal Services has a \$4.8 million dollar budget that is funded by revenues from the restricted voter-approved property tax override, which is completely separate from the county's general fund.

Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCARS) moved into the newly constructed Regional Animal Services Center in 2006 and since then has gained national attention for having one of the lowest animal euthanasia rates in the country. Their success is mainly the result of a partnership with the Nevada Humane Society, which shares the animal shelter facility with WCARS, takes in most of their animals and takes in all owner surrenders. Their success is also because they partner with Community Cats who handles all feral cats/TNR; with other local animal rescue organizations; and because they have implemented policies that return more animals to their owners.

In 2010, the Washoe County Regional Animal Services impounded a total of 10,702 animals (6,436 dogs, 4,151 cats), none of which were owner surrenders. Of that total, 94% were saved (0 were adopted, 5,798 were transferred to other organizations, 4,009 were returned to owner) and 6% (682) were euthanized. In addition, the Nevada Humane Society accepted over 4,100 owner surrendered dogs and cats from Washoe County residents. WCRAS has responded to approximately 125,000 calls for service in the field in the past four years (avg. 31,000 calls a year).

WCRAS policy directs animal control officers to make every reasonable effort to return animals to their owner instead of impounding the animal. In addition to checking the pet for identification (tags or microchips), officers will check lost reports and speak with area residents in an attempt to determine where the animal lives. Last year nearly one thousand pets were returned to their owners in the field instead of being impounded. A dog license is promoted as "Your Dog's Ticket Home," providing a true benefit for licensing.

### Travis County, TX

Austin Animal Services is a governmental agency that provides animal control and sheltering to Travis County, TX including the City of Austin. Travis County, TX has a population of 1,024,266. Austin Animal Services runs the largest animal shelter in Central Texas, providing shelter to approximately 20,000 animals each year and animal control services to all of Austin and Travis County. Austin Animal Services has 95 full-time employees and an annual budget of \$6,531,436. Austin Animal Services responds to approximately 13,000 calls for service in the field. Owned animals are accepted by appointment only and only as a last resort.

Austin Animal Services opened its brand new state of the art animal shelter on November 12, 2011. The 2006 voter-approved \$12 million facility has 41,400 square feet and shifts



current animal services operations five miles east of the old Town Lake Animal Center that opened in 1952. The City is negotiating a license agreement with the non-profit animal rescue group Austin Pets Alive to temporarily operate City animal adoptions from the old Town Lake facility. The new location includes expanded and modernized veterinary facilities, improved adoption and customer service areas, larger and more flexible spaces for housing animals, and a large multi-purpose space to provide training and outreach programs, all in a well-designed and environmentally-conscious facility.

In 2010, Austin Animal Services had outcomes for 22,475 animals and of those they adopted 6,224, transferred 5,335, returned to owner 3,372, "other" 1,583 and euthanized 5,961 (26.5%). In the first three quarters of 2011, Austin Animal Services had outcomes for 18,638 and of those they adopted 7,468, transferred 4,656, returned to owner 3,235, "other" 1,310 and euthanized 1,969 (10.5%). Free and extremely reduced rate adoption fee promotions (for instance, \$4 adoption fee in honor of July 4) are used. Austin Animal Services also has between 100-300 animals in foster care at any given time and transfers many animals to rescue, the majority to Austin Pets Alive Rescue (about 3000 a year). Animal Services sponsors EmanciPet's mobile spay/neuter clinic in low-income neighborhoods three days each week. On these days, spay or neuter surgery and rabies vaccination are available for free.

### **Tompkins County, NY**

The SPCA of Tompkins County is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity that is contracted to provide animal control and sheltering services for unincorporated Tompkins County, NY and some of the municipalities within the county. Tompkins County is located in upstate New York and has total population of 101,564, which includes over 22,000 students at Cornell University and over 6,700 students at Ithaca College.

In 1999, the SPCA of Tompkins County Board of Directors resolved to become a "no-kill" shelter (defined as euthanizing less than 10% of animals), a vision fully realized by the end of 2001. In the spring of 2004, the SPCA opened the Dorothy and Roy Park Pet Adoption Center, a sheltering facility that is registered as the nation's first "green" animal shelter for its environmentally minded, sustainable design. The adoption center has 13 private dog rooms, each housing one dog, and several cat rooms, each housing multiple cats. The SPCA also continues to operate their old facility as an "intake" facility, where stray animals are held until their waiting period is over and where incoming animals are processed. The SPCA also has a small adoption center annex in a mall that houses cats for adoption. The cat annex accounts for 3% of cat adoptions.

In 2010, the SPCA of Tompkins County impounded a total of 2,177 animals (661 dogs, 1,516 cats). Of those, 94% were transferred to rescue or adopted and 6% were euthanized. The SPCA of Tompkins County handles approximately 1,500 calls for service in the field per year and operates on a \$1,250,000 budget. There are 15 full-time employees and 20 part-time employees. The SPCA is open six days a week (closed on Wednesdays). Adoption fees are \$200-300+ for puppies, \$100-300 for dogs, \$55 for kittens and \$25 for cats. The SPCA provides approximately 1,400 low cost spay/neuters to the public per year. The SPCA has an active volunteer and foster home program. The number of pets in foster care varies at any given time from as little as 20 during winter months to as high as 200



during kitten season. The SPCA uses volunteers to help care for shelter pets, to answer phones at the adoption desk, to assist with maintenance and carpentry projects, to monitor and greet guests at the shelter, to counsel potential adopters and to help with special events. The SPCA holds numerous fundraisers and regularly promotes the fundraisers and the pets for adoption at the SPCA on local TV and radio stations.

### **Albemarle County, VA**

The Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization contracted to provide animal sheltering services for Albemarle County, VA including the City of Charlottesville. The city and county provide/pay for their own animal control officers (4 positions estimated at total cost of \$200,000 annually) and use the CASPCA for all animals impounded including bite quarantine, stray animals, cruelty seizures, etc. The city and county pay the CASPCA for animal sheltering services based on a per human capita scale. In 2012 the dollar per capita will stabilize at \$5 per capita or about \$700,000 a year. The CASPCA has an annual budget of \$2.4 million dollars and has 40 FTE employees.

In 2005, Charlottesville-Albemarle decided to become a no-kill community, which means that less than 10% of all animals impounded in the Charlottesville-Albemarle area were to be euthanized. Charlottesville-Albemarle has a human population of 99,150. In 2010, CASPCA impounded 3,727 animals. Of that number, 2,793 were adopted, 51 were transferred, 546 were returned to owner and 310 (8.3%) were euthanized. The SPCA's foster home program is the main program that contributes to their success -- about 40% of the total animal population (1,500 animals in 2010) at CASPCA goes into their foster home program annually. The foster home program is very flexible – foster homes can find homes for their pets as long as the final paperwork is done at the shelter, or they can take them to offsite adoptions or they can return them to the shelter once they are healthy and ready for adoption. In addition, the CASPCA performs about 4,900 low cost (and sometimes free) spay/neuters for the public's animals every year.

Intake of animals from the public (owner surrenders) are by appointment only and include counseling to try to find an alternative. Owners must also pay a \$50 intake fee for pets not altered or not up to date on shots and a \$30 intake fee for pets that are fully vetted. Adoption fees for dogs are \$100, puppies \$150, cats \$75 and kittens \$95. As a courtesy, the CASPCA also lets pet owners display their own pets that they want to find a new home for on the CASPCA website.



## Appendix 2: Shelter Facility Operations with Cost Estimates

General Assumptions		Purchase Assumptions		Per Sq Ft	
Square Feet	31,000	Finance Period (In Years)	30		
Land Acquisition (in Acres)	4	Interest Rate	5%		
Price/Acre	\$250,000				
Professional Fees at 15% of Improvement	15%				
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	5%				
IT	5%				
Contingency	15%				
<b>Lease of Building</b>					
				<b>Annualized Cost</b>	
<b>Lease Assumptions</b>					
Years of Lease	20				
Annual Est. Lease Cost Per Sq Ft.	\$22	\$(682,000)	\$(682,000)		
Est. Improvements Per Sq Ft	\$200	\$(6,200,000)	\$(310,000)		
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	5%	\$(310,000)			
IT	5%	\$(310,000)			
Professional Fees at 15% of Improvement	15%	\$(1,023,000)	\$(51,150)		
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$(1,043,150)</b>		
<b>Renovation of Existing Facility</b>					
<b>Building Purchase</b>		<b>\$(3,000,000.00)</b>			
Renovate An Existing Structure	200	\$(6,200,000)			
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	5%	\$(310,000)			
IT	5%	\$(310,000)			
Professional Fees at 15% of Improvement	15%	\$(1,023,000)			
Contingency @ 15%	15%	\$(1,176,450)			
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$(12,019,450)</b>	<b>(\$781,882)</b>		
<b>New Construction</b>					
				<b>Annualized Costs</b>	
<b>Land Acquisition</b>		<b>\$(2,000,000)</b>			
New Construction	250	\$(7,750,000)			
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	5%	\$(387,500)			
IT	5%	\$(387,500)			
Professional Fees at 15% of Improvement	15%	\$(1,278,750)			
Contingency @ 15%	15%	\$(1,470,563)			
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$(13,274,313)</b>	<b>(\$863,513)</b>		
<b>Lease/Purchase of a Facility</b>					
<b>Lease/Purchase Assumptions</b>					
Finance Period (In Years)	30				
Interest Rate	3%				
Developer Fee as Percent of Construction	12%				
				<b>1st Yr</b>	<b>2 Yr Plus</b>
<b>Costs</b>					
<b>Land Acquisition</b>		<b>\$(2,000,000)</b>			
New Construction	<b>250</b>	<b>\$(7,750,000)</b>			
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	5%	\$(387,500)			
IT	5%	\$(387,500)			
Professional Fees at 15% of Improvement	15%	\$(1,278,750)			
Contingency @ 15%	15%	\$(1,470,563)			
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$(13,274,313)</b>	<b>(\$677,246)</b>	<b>(\$677,246)</b>	
<b>Developer Fee as Percent of Construction</b>		<b>12%</b>	<b>\$(1,592,918)</b>	<b>\$(1,592,918)</b>	<b>0</b>
				<b>\$(2,270,163)</b>	<b>\$(677,246)</b>



## **Appendix 3: Accomplishing the Mission – Enhanced Program Recommendation Highlights**

### **Staffing**

#### **A. Increased Field Officer Staffing Levels**

Beginning in the first quarter of 2011, DASE reduced its field coverage to 10 hours per day, Monday – Saturday, because of a shortage in personnel. Officers each work 10-hour shifts four days per week. Thus, a maximum of 5 officers are responsible for the entire County during any given shift. On Sundays and after hours, a single DASE field officer is on call for emergencies. Ideally, the pets and people of DeKalb County should be afforded adequate field coverage, from 8am until midnight everyday, with at least 6 officers available in the field during these hours. This would essentially double the number of field officers currently on staff. At a minimum, the County should consider the addition of 4 field officers to provide an acceptable level of field enforcement.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$140,000 (inclusive of 28% benefits factor)

#### **B. Increased Kennel Staffing Levels**

The National Animal Control Association (NACA) has developed a formula for determining kennel staffing needs which takes into consideration the number of animals impounded and the required holding period. With an approximate intake of 8,500 animals annually and a required holding period of 5 business days, the NACA formula indicates DASE should have at least 13 dedicated kennel personnel to meet minimum standards of animal care during the required holding period. If animals are held beyond the required holding period for adoption or transfer to rescue, personnel requirements are increased. Currently, DASE has 8 dedicated kennel personnel. An additional 5 employees are needed in the kennel area to meet minimum national standards.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$160,000 (inclusive of a 28% benefits factor)

#### **C. Animal Adoption/Rescue Coordinator**

Currently, one DASE employee is responsible for all activity that enables animals to leave the shelter alive. The positions summary is as follows:

Responsible for planning, developing, and implementing various programs and marketing initiatives to promote the DeKalb Animal Services and Enforcement (DASE) adoption, foster, and volunteer programs; revamp and maintain Internet website to reflect daily availability of animals; assist adopters on pet selection, pet care, and owner responsibilities. Develops, coordinates, implements, and presents various educational programs to schools, residents, businesses, and county employees; acts as a liaison between DASE and rescue groups; develops working relationships with other counties and the community. Provide administrative support to division staff.





At a minimum, DASE should consider adding two additional staff to share these responsibilities.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$75,000 (inclusive of benefits)

## Operations Improvements

### A. Hours of Operation

To facilitate adoptions and community involvement, the DASE shelter should be open to the public for adoptions during hours when working citizens can come to the shelter – at least one weeknight and both Saturday and Sunday. This would add approximately 15 additional hours each week to the shelter’s current hours of operation.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$75,000

### B. Software/Database Purchase and Implementation

DASE’s current shelter management software is generally non-functional. An appropriate application that meets the needs of DASE record keeping and interfaces with other public safety/police functions (dispatch, citations, etc.) is needed.

Estimated Purchase and Implementation Cost: \$20,000

## Programs

### A. Public Spay/Neuter Program

DASE should subsidize free spay/neuter/vaccination services for pets of low-income residents. All medical procedures would be outsourced. Program administration likewise could be outsourced. Subsidized spay/neuter has yielded significant cost savings over time in other communities. A study in New Hampshire over a six-year period showed a savings of \$3.2 million from reduced shelter intake with an investment of \$1 million for subsidized spay/neuter.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$100,000

### B. Offsite Adoption Program

DASE could potentially double its current rate of adoptions by taking animals to the community through weekend adoption events. Current staffing levels limit offsite adoption events to quarterly occurrences at best. An offsite adoption program could be outsourced to accommodate weekly events every Saturday and Sunday.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$75,000



### **C. Public Awareness Campaign**

Potentially accomplished with a volunteer public relations task force, DASE should implement a comprehensive public relations effort to include seasonal campaigns focused on key DASE programs.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$50,000

### **D. Foster/Volunteer Program**

By adding additional Animal Adoption/Rescue Coordinators, DASE should be able to implement a foster care program and increase volunteer involvement. A robust foster care program could conceivably increase the shelter's capacity by 20%. DASE also could consider outsourcing the management of a foster care program.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$50,000

### **E. Animal Behavior Rehabilitation Program**

An animal behaviorist position would enable DASE to create programs to assist shelter animals with behavioral issues and provide counseling to citizens to prevent pet relinquishment and reduce shelter intake.

Estimated Annual Cost: \$75,000

## **Total Costs**

Staffing	\$375,000	for 12 positions (4 field, 5 kennel, 3 adoption/rescue)
Operations	\$95,000	for additional hours of operation to accommodate the public and provide basic software, now non-existent.
Programs	\$350,000	for spay/neuter, adoptions, foster, behavior, and public relations programs.
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$820,000</b>	



## **Appendix 4: Leadership – Job Description for Director of Animal Services**

First and foremost, the Task Force recommendations establish a new mission and vision for DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement with lifesaving as a central focus. Leadership is key to the fulfillment of this new mission. Whether operations are outsourced or continued under the current framework within the County, the following recommendations serve as guidelines for the leader of DASE.

### **Director of Animal Services**

The ideal candidate will have excellent management and supervisory skills and the ability to develop a cohesive and positive team, which will be customer-service and animal oriented. She or he will be a self-starter who is well organized, innovative, and professionally motivated to develop and implement the goals, objective, and policies for DASE. The ideal candidate will have exceptional interpersonal skills that can build bridges with the community and must be an effective communicator with the ability to speak to a variety of audiences. Finally, he or she must be firmly committed to saving the lives of animals that come under the care of DeKalb County. Although prior sheltering experience is not required, candidates who do have such experience should have a demonstrated record of lifesaving success.

### **Job Responsibilities**

#### **Humane Care and Shelter for Animals in Need**

- Oversee the care provided for the animals that come under the protection of DASE and ensure their humane treatment.
- Implement short and long term strategies which responsibly reduce intakes, increase adoptions, improve animal care, provide behavior and medical rehabilitation, encourage spaying and neutering, and help pets stay with their responsible caretakers.
- Ensure responsible pet care through enforcement of animal cruelty laws.

#### **Program Development and Administration**

- Plan, organize, coordinate, review, evaluate, and direct the implementation of programs providing animal care services to the general public and other animal welfare agencies.
- Direct the administration of such programs including, but not limited to, shelter management, adoptions, fundraising, veterinary services, and animal welfare education.
- Assure that the organization has a long-range strategy which achieves its mission, and toward which it makes consistent and timely progress.

#### **Communications**

- Work with representatives of other animal welfare organizations, non-profit organizations, businesses and community groups to develop and implement collaborative programs and services, and to raise alternative sources of funding to aid in overall DASE goals.



- Provide assistance to community and volunteer groups, animal welfare organizations, and the general public.
- Oversee marketing and publicity for the organization's activities, programs, and goals.

### **Staff Management and Development**

- Be responsible for overseeing the recruitment, employment, direction, management and release of all personnel, both paid staff and volunteers.
- Ensure that job descriptions are developed, that regular performance evaluations are conducted, that motivation systems are utilized and that sound human resource practices are in place that abide by local, state and federal law.
- Maintain a climate that attracts, retains, and motivates a diverse staff of top quality people who support and promote the mission and goals of the agency.

### **Budget and Finance**

- Be responsible for developing and maintaining sound financial practices.
- Prepare financial reports, budgets and summaries; submit budgets for approval, and monitor compliance of expenditures within approved budgetary constraints.
- Oversee grant-writing and fundraising efforts.

### **Compliance with Laws, Regulations, Policies, and Guidelines**

- Understand and implement operational compliance with current federal, state, county, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines that affect operations.
- Oversee record keeping practices for legally compliant adoptions, staff personnel files, budgetary accountability, and all other functions.
- Maintain official records and documents.
- Perform related work as required.

### **Training and Experience**

The ideal candidate will be an innovative and dynamic individual who brings skills, enthusiasm, and accountability to animal care and control. It is not absolutely essential that the successful candidate have senior management experience of an animal shelter. Rather, DASE should seek someone with specific and transferable skills (working in a team environment, leadership, financial control, management, bottom line results) that can be transferred to the shelter environment, such is found in other professions (business, law, veterinary medicine, public administration, public relations, etc.). However, candidates who do have prior sheltering experience must have a demonstrated record of lifesaving success and commitment.

### **Education**

A BS or BA is required in Business, Public Relations, Communications, Public Administration, Public Health, Veterinary or Animal Sciences, Law, or a related field.



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### **Experience**

A minimum of three years experience in a supervisory position is required with transferable skills such as business, law, veterinary medicine, communications, public administration or other related field.

### **Physical Requirements**

Ability to work with and around animals including diseased, injured and/or vicious animals, loud noises, chlorine and other chemicals, inclement weather, and evening and weekend work.

### **Compassion**

Affection for animals, concern for their welfare and a willingness to accommodate animals in the work place is an essential quality.