

May 18, 2016

Honorable Mayor Rosenthal  
and Norman City Council  
201 West Gray Ave  
Norman, OK 73069

FILED IN THE OFFICE  
OF THE CITY CLERK  
ON 5-23-16

Subject: Recommendation to Establish an Animal Welfare Center Goal of “No Kill of Adoptable Animals”

Dear Mayor Rosenthal,

I am writing on behalf of the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee to request that you and the Norman City Council consider the attached Resolution that would establish a “No Kill of Adoptable Animals” goal for the Norman Animal Welfare Center (NAWC) and to change the name of the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee to the Animal Welfare Center Oversight Committee as described below. We suggest a broad definition for the term “adoptable animal” such that it encompasses any animal at the Center that is reasonably healthy and of sound temperament. Such a definition would be consistent with the process by which animals are currently evaluated at the Animal Welfare Center.

During the spring and summer of 2011, the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee hosted several public information presentations regarding the current status of the Norman Animal Welfare Center with the hope of building support for the funding of a new or expanded facility. During these meetings, we received comments from several audience members asking why the NAWC was not a “no-kill” facility. In response to these questions, we told the audience members that the staff of the NAWC does all that they can to avoid the euthanasia of adoptable animals, but that existing space limitations restrict the number of animals that can be housed at the facility and the length of time they can be held for adoption.

The Animal Shelter Oversight Committee has repeatedly discussed the pros and cons of establishing a “no-kill” goal for the NAWC. We are in unanimous agreement that such a goal would increase the community’s support for the NAWC and would help reach the City’s goal of decreasing euthanasia. Since the inception of the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee in 2005, the staff at the NAWC has provided a monthly summary of the facility’s intake and outcome statistics. These include the number of dogs and cats that are impounded, reclaimed by their owners, adopted to the public, turned over to animal rescue organizations and euthanized each month. As an added dimension to this report, the staff has been providing a breakdown of the number of euthanized animals that were considered to be adoptable and not adoptable.

Adoptable animals are those that are healthy and have a reasonably good temperament in the presence of people and other animals. In contrast, non-adoptable animals are typically those that show signs of illness or that behave aggressively toward people. The NAWC’s staff has worked

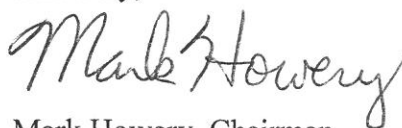
with great success to identify partnerships with breed rescue groups and local private animal welfare organizations including Hands Helping Paws and Second Chance of Norman to expand the placement of adoptable animals from the City's facility into new homes. As a result of these partnerships and increased community outreach through social media, networking with NAWC volunteers and off-site adoption events, the number of animals adopted to the public or fostered through animal welfare organizations now exceeds the number of animals euthanized.

The Animal Shelter Oversight Committee believes that the NAWC has made tremendous progress over the past decade in increasing the adoption rate and reducing the euthanasia rate. Each year, the NAWC functions increasingly like a no-kill shelter; however, the NAWC operates under several constraints that require the euthanasia of some animals. Foremost among these are the space and staffing constraints mentioned earlier that limit the number of animals that can be housed at the NAWC and consequently the length of time during which each animal can be held for potential adoption. Additionally, the NAWC staff has limited control over the number and timing of the animals that they receive. Unlike a private animal rescue or welfare organization, the NAWC cannot refuse animals that are taken to the facility by Norman residents and the staff regularly receives or picks up stray animals that are seriously ill or overly aggressive and pose a risk to people and other animals. Many of these animals cannot be placed into permanent homes as a result of behavioral and medical issues. Because of these constraints, it is not feasible for the NAWC to be a purely no-kill facility; therefore we recommend that the City of Norman adopt a more attainable goal of "no-kill of adoptable animals." During the past decade, the "no-kill" goal has become the standard to which most animal welfare facilities aspire, yet almost all facilities must employ humane euthanasia practices occasionally to prevent unreasonable suffering and to protect the welfare of other animals and/or people.

Secondly, we recommend that the name of the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee be changed to the Animal Welfare Center Oversight Committee to reflect the current name for the City of Norman's facility, which was changed in 2009.

Thank you for your review and consideration of our requests. We appreciate the support that each of you has provided to the Norman Animal Welfare Center and to the care of Norman's lost and homeless pets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark Howery".

Mark Howery, Chairman  
Animal Shelter Oversight Committee