

## **FRIENDS OF PLACER COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER'S RESPONSE TO ALVMCS (Dr. Dena Mangiamele) SHELTER CONSULTANT REPORT**

We believe the study recently completed, bought and paid for with tax dollars was one that sought results that only foster the current rhetoric of Placer County Health & Human Services – regardless of how dysfunctional their leadership has proven to be during the past eight years and even more so in the past two.

In addition to the flawed recommendations of the ALVMCS report, some members of animal services staff were prohibited from speaking with the consultant. A 1.5 hour meeting with the consultant Dr. Dena Mangiamele; Rosemary Frieborn, Friends of Placer County Animal Shelter President; the retired director of Environmental Health; the former Program Manager of Placer County Animal Services and Linda Klinger, member Friends of Placer County Animal Shelter, was **completely omitted from this report - a conspiracy we believe was perpetuated by Health & Human Services administration.** Individuals who brought insight, history, and outlined the current failures of a department that struggles under inadequate mismanagement is nowhere to be found in the reports 42 pages!!!

At the conclusion of our meeting, collectively, we requested the consultant research reporting models at other government agencies, report her findings and recommend a more effective method of management.

### **We are requesting an appendix to the recent ALVMCS study to address these omissions of fact.**

Below are minutes from our meeting with the consultant. At the end of the minutes, you will find our response to omissions and contradictions in Dr. Mangiamele's final report.

I believe however, the first question which requires a response is - why was this meeting with the consultant and the following list of discussion items, not addressed in her report?

- ✓ Little or no strong advocacy for Animal Services (AS) from the higher management of Health and Human Services Administration (HHS) or a commitment to making AS a program that the county could be proud of.
- ✓ To many layers of higher management overseeing AS and too much micro managing of the program. It has never been very clear who really runs the AS by many in the public, with volunteers and some of the staff.
- ✓ Little or no real understanding of AS and its programs and county and state mandates by HHS and many in county government. AS should be a program that reports directly to the County Manager and not be part of department that has little understanding of the law enforcement responsibilities and mandates of a government AS (animal control) program and safety needs of staff required to carry out the many functions of AS. We are requesting that you research reporting models within other agencies and make a recommendation on options to streamline the oversight of Placer County AS.

- ✓ **AS staff has had the feeling for years that HHSA and the county would rather AS would just go away so that it wouldn't have to deal with the many needs and requests made by the public, volunteers and the staff to spend resources on animals.**
- ✓ **Many in county government see AS as a program that is for animals only and not a service program that provides services and protection to both people and animals. Many have stated that money spent by AS helps animals only and that the county's main concern should be providing services to people.**  
**There is little understanding and acknowledgement that AS is a program that protects people, animals, property and the environment. It helps to improve the quality of life for those that reside in Placer County. It is a service demanded by the public.**
- ✓ **HHSA has shown time and time again that it would rather have the staff at AS not get involved with abandon/cruelty cases as mandated by county and state codes. When staff has done what is required of it, HHSA tried to keep it from becoming public instead of seeking publicity that would show the public that AS was doing its job of protecting animals and people. This also would generate support for AS and bring in donations. When staff has done what is mandated, it has had to defend and explain in detail why it took the action it did and in some cases has been criticized and investigated by HHSA and Risk Management.**
- ✓ **Little or no support and/or backing by HHSA when the public complains about an employee, the impoundment of an animal, enforcement of a code, etc.**
- ✓ **There is a feeling at AS that HHSA does not take seriously the request and needs of AS. Time and time again requests were submitted to HHSA on a variety of needs and recommendations. When inquiries were made as to why nothing was been done, AS discovered that the request had been forgotten, lost or misplaced and had to be resubmitted.**
- ✓ **Little or no recognition by HHSA for jobs and tasks well done by staff, volunteers and the Friends of the Shelter. Good example: Increase in adoption rate, the decrease in euthanasia, improved animal health and care, increase outreach, etc.**
- ✓ **No input into the budget process until this year and that only came about because it was request by the Program Manager, who had been inquiring why staff was not included in the process when it is criticized for over spending for things needed for the shelter, animals and staff.**
- ✓ **It is almost impossible to convince and get HHSA to allow money from the Trust Funds to be used to help improve animals care and safety and shelter conditions as promised county employees it would be.**
- ✓ **Time and time again AS has had to explain why it wanted and needed to send staff to training. For example it promised to the Civil Services Commission, after they approved changes to the job description that made it possible to attract a greater number of applicants for animal control officers, that all officers would be sent though basic formal training soon after they were hired and advanced training at a later date. This information and the promise made to the CSC has had to be repeated every time a request was submitted for training approval to HHSA. It was explained time and time again the importance of training and requirements of county and state, but was not taken seriously or it was difficult to convince HHSA to fund it.**

- ✓ **The Tahoe staff has an arrangement with the non-profit rescue group that allows the organization to use the county shelter facility as a “foster home” and charge and collect adoption fees in excess of county fees but without remitting any money to the county and without taking custody of the animals at any time prior to adoption. This blatant omission constitutes taxpayer theft.**
- ✓ **Changing fees and revising the animal ordinance has been another challenge for AS. It is a process that takes a considerable amount of time and energy and needs the support of HHSA if it is to be done. The present fee structure for adoption of an animal is complicated and it has been suggested and recommended that it be changed to conform to those of animal services programs in the greater Sacramento area. This change would reduce the time it takes to adopt an animal and eliminate the confusion that now exists.**
- ✓ **No follow through by HHSA and county on a variety of issues and projects such as: new shelter, new shelter management software, new vehicles, improving phone system, improving front area of the shelter, new heating and air-conditioning system, security glass at front counter and office space at Tahoe.**

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**Areas of the report which we take exception – our comments are in bold letters:**

May 31 – Night meeting with Rescues (page 18) – **the consultant held a meeting with the rescue groups. What was the outcome of this meeting?**

**The shelter does not have an evidence locker; procedures for the chain of custody of evidence; nor any one designated person responsible for handling of evidence. The consultant failed to address this matter. Improper handling of evidence in formal legal proceedings is costly to taxpayers. The shelter must have procedures and accommodations for seized evidence.**

Safety (ADM – S) (page 22) The entrance to the back parking lot at the Auburn Shelter has a rolling gate that remains unlocked during hours the shelter is open to the public and is not monitored by personnel or video.

ADM – S Recommendation One: The rolling gate into the back of the facility should have a chain and padlock that is secured at all times.

**The “rolling gate” the consultant refers to requires much more than a chain and padlock 24/7 it poses a risk of injury to the staff (and volunteers) when they attempt to push/pull the heavy gate – especially when it falls off its track and/or rolls over your foot.**

ADM – S/HR Finding Five: (page 22) According to clerical staff, there is no official Clerical Supervisor on site at the Auburn Shelter.

ADM – S/HR Recommendation Five: An on-site Supervising Clerk should be designated.

**Correction – During our meeting with the consultant and according to the former Program Manager, there is no official Clerical Supervisor on site at the Auburn Shelter. The Clerical Supervisor paid through the Animal Services budget, is also the Environmental Health Director's Secretary located at Environmental Health. This impedes her ability to direct and supervise the clerical staff at the shelter.**

**It was clear by the consultant's surprised and shocked expression that this was the first time she was receiving this information. We find it very interesting and alarming that she claims she initially heard it from the clerical staff!!! But that would be about right – if she disclosed the actual source of this information, she would have been required to acknowledge our meeting with her – a conspiracy for which we still have no answer.**

ADM – S Finding Four: (page 23) At the Auburn Shelter, there is an emergency call button located under the counter in the clerical area which activates a doorbell that rings in the ACT trailer (former ACO trailer). The objective of activating this doorbell was to alert a uniformed officer that assistance is needed in the front lobby.

ADM – S Recommendation Four: Utilize a doorbell alert system at the public counters that allows clerks to contact available employees who can provide protection/assistance to the clerical division.

**CLEARLY, NOT ALL “employees” ARE suitable to respond to squabbling situations. Uniformed ACO's trained in diffusing conflict situations with citizens are seldom in the trailer giving the counter staff a false sense of security. Delayed response could result in severe injury to clerical personnel. If this is the only means of summoning a call for help, this is a foolish and poorly thought out recommendation.**

ADM – BR/ER Finding One: (page 24) Floors at the Auburn Shelter in cat holding rooms have numerous areas of damage, uneven surfaces and other irregularities.

ADM – BR/ER Recommendation One: Replace damaged flooring in animal holding areas and lobby with troweled epoxy resin flooring over concrete.

**The present flooring was prepared three years ago and was an interim “band aid” until a new shelter was built. Delving deeper into the ALVMCS report, the consultant addresses numerous areas of physical deficiencies/deterioration within the shelter facility and recommends not replacement of a functionally obsolete shelter but more taxpayer resources (~\$40,000 for epoxy flooring) to shore-up something that has served the citizens well but is no longer useful. What possible reasons can the consultant offer to explain why she fell short of a complete and accurate recommendation of these deficiencies – that being a new shelter? We dare ask, have there been other closed-door discussions at the County level which have left the public and pet placement partners out in the cold? None-the-less, the Administration through**

**this consultants work should not be perpetuating a substandard facility. Both The Humane Society of the United States and Grand Jury recommendations have called for a new shelter.**

ADM – BR/ER Finding Two: Tahoe Shelter

The poor condition of the building and inanimate objects it contains not only contribute to the public's first impression of the department's professionalism, but may result in public safety concerns.

- The rusted chairs directly outside the entrance to the facility should be removed and replaced by chairs that are appropriate for remaining outdoors and are secured to the facility.
- The worn and dirty carpet runner needs to be cleaned or replace with a vinyl, non-carpeted entry floor mat.
- The following professional signage should be obtained and placed in the Tahoe shelter:
  - Entrance to the facility indicating clerical, animal relinquishment, stray and adoptable animals
  - Entrance to the Dog Kennels (including stray and adoptable animals)
  - Entrance to the Cat Room (indicating stray and adoptable animals)
  - No public entry to the bowl washing room on both sides of the door
  - No public entry on the exit door to the outdoor exercise enclosure

**If this is her impression of Tahoe, surely her impression of Auburn is the same - for both facilities possess "building conditions and inanimate objects" which are similar in condition and design!!**

ADM – BR/ER Finding Three: (page 24) At the Auburn Shelter the entrance of the lobby is currently set up in a manner that is not user friendly and poses the risk of altercations between animals that are brought in by the public.

ADM – BR/ER Recommendation Three: Both doors to the lobby should be utilized and the counters redesigned so that clerical staff could work two counters from one side of the room, and the opposite side of the room should be used for animal receiving (stray and surrenders).

- Live animal side of the lobby should contain a bank of holding cages on a moveable rack, a desk area, and space to place cat traps.

**Clearly the consultant is not a space planner. The area which she recommends redesign amounts to approximately 75 square feet!!! Her theory might handle one person surrendering an animal but multiple people with animals? - We hardly think this recommendation will remedy the situation. Certainly any remodel is yet another expense to the taxpayer on an outdated substandard facility!!**

ADM – BR/ER Finding Four: (page 24) Clerks were observed completing transactions with constant interruptions by member of the public wandering into the lobby and asking where animal and services were located though out the shelter.

ADM – BR/ER Recommendation Four: Install signage at the entrance to the Auburn shelter that directs the public to the clerical area, viewing adoptable animals, or searching for lost pets.

**It is not the absence or presence of signage that causes public to interrupt the clerks that sit immediately inside the entrance door but more that they are "asking permission" to enter the facility. The current shelter design does not lend itself to a self-guided tour as newer more modern shelter floor plans provide for. The basic flaw is the design not signage.**

**Staffing (VET – S)**

**VET – S Finding One: (page 25) Animal Services does not currently have a full or part-time veterinarian or Registered Veterinary Technician on staff which has resulted in a reduced level of medical care for ill animals.**

**VET – S Recommendation One: Hire a full-time California licensed veterinarian, and hire a full-time RVT.**

**Although the current study indicates the shelter "hire a full time licensed veterinarian and a full-time licensed RVT", the veterinarian/consultant makes no mention as to what expanded roles these additional employees would perform. Certainly without the use of the trailer for surgical purposes i.e., spay/neuter surgeries, a full time veterinarian would not be needed nor could their salary be justified with offsets by adoption revenues. This incomplete recommendation is not the best use of taxpayer resources.**

**In addition and with regard to the spay/neuter/surgery/treatment trailer at the back of the shelter. No mention by the veterinarian/consultant as to its function or lack thereof, was included in the report. Why was this allowed to not be addressed? - ANSWER: because since its installation, the Health & Human Services Director has refused to allow the unit to be used for shelter animal spay/neuter surgery; its intended purpose for which citizens within the community provided the funding to accomplish!!**

**Euthanasia Procedures (VET – EP)**

**VET – EP Finding Two: (page 25) ACO's and ACT's are not consistently performing euthanasia in the designated euthanasia room; at the Auburn shelter in the feral cat room, RFA room.....**

**VET – EP Recommendation Two: Animal should be euthanized in a designated room that is non-accessible to the public.**

**SHELTER S10 - Consultant does not account for the safety of the staff when unnecessarily having to handle feral cats or fractious dogs in an attempt to move them from their kennel and into the euthanasia room. Special equipment is available and on hand to euthanize animals in the confines of their kennels with minimum staff contact and should have been explored prior to a recommendation that puts staff at additional risk. Nor does she have any regard for the animals level of fear when it is hauled out (oftentimes in a safety net or on a catch pole) of their kennel and transferred to a "designated" euthanasia room. I also believe the shelter IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC when euthanasia is performed therefore the current procedure does not provide any**

**safety issues to the public. If it is not closed to public, she failed to mention this finding. Euthanasia during operating hours when public is visiting unacceptable.**

FIELD – SUP Finding Four (page 29): Auburn officer complained that Tahoe officers are not held accountable for field call completion and administration does not follow up or recommend disciplinary action regarding incidents of animals disappearing from the Tahoe Shelter.

FIELD – SUP Recommendation Four: Officer at both locations should be accountable, evaluated, and supervised similarly.

**The personnel issues that have plagued both facilities are a direct result of poor administration from Environmental Health and Health & Human Services. Through the years, we have witnessed their unwillingness to manage personnel issues, their lack of support for decisions made by the department's immediate Program Manager, a complete understanding of the mission of an animal services department, and ineffective leadership causing a rippling effect throughout both shelters.**

**Furthermore, the consultant does not adequately address the “disappearing” of animals. Did she research these allegations and find them to be true? Are we talking about dangerous animals that disappear? The citizens that have paid \$24,000 for her review are certainly entitled to more information and recommendations for corrective action.**

FIELD –FC/PUB/S Finding One: (page 31) The current Spay/Neuter Outsourcing Program involves daily delivery of adopted animals to multiple private veterinary hospitals which can take officers several hours each morning resulting in an increased number of field calls not answered in a timely manner for that officer’s “beat”.

FIELD – FC/PUB/S Recommendation One: The Spay/Neuter Outsourcing Program should be adjusted to that adopted animal are delivered by ACO’s the following day to one veterinary hospital.

**Again, with regard to the spay/neuter/surgery/treatment trailer at the back of the shelter. No mention by the veterinarian/consultant as to its function or lack thereof, was included in this section of the report. Utilizing the trailer for spay/neuter surgeries on shelter animals directly speaks to the issue of eliminating wasted staff time. Again, it is the administrations rhetoric that this consultant defers to, NOT a complete and unbiased review of the issues.**

**SHELTER S5, S6 & S7 - These findings have to do with moving and handling dogs in various parts of the shelter. While the finding appear to be valid, the consultant makes no suggestions on where these animals are to be held while their kennel is being cleaned and air-dried in an expedient manner to open the shelter in time for public’s arrival. No solution is offered because there is none - simply put, the facility was built**

**without any intention of “sheltering” animals for any period of time yet the consultant fails to AGAIN recommend a new facility suited for long-term animal care/holding.**

SHELTER S Finding Twelve: (page 35) The feral cat room ceiling at the Auburn Shelter has sections missing where cats gain access and can travel throughout the building and if not located have the potential for injury or death by starvation.

SHELTER S Recommendation Twelve: Repair the missing ceiling sections in the Feral Cat Room.

**The consultant fails to acknowledge that the ceiling sections in the feral cat room are missing because feral cats regularly “punch” their way through this area in an attempt to escape capture – another design flaw. Replacing loose ceiling tiles will not prevent future escape problems. The consultant makes no recommendations for permanently eliminating the problem.**

SHELTER S Finding Fourteen (page 36) The ACO at the Tahoe Shelter that interacted with the contractor stated that he was not qualified or trained to make behavior determinations on animals at the shelter even though he was adopting animals to the public and that all animals impounded into the shelter would eventually be adopted.

SHELTER – S Recommendation Fourteen: The County must uniformly train all employees on the official Behavior Assessment procedure if they are involved with the adoption process.

**The consultant refers to an “official” Behavior Assessment yet as an “expert in the field” stops short of providing such assessment or recommending a specific assessment program.**

SHELTER S Finding Sixteen: (page 36) The RFA room at the Auburn Shelter which is used for decapitation procedures in order to submit samples to the County veterinarian for Rabies testing is inadequately secured. The plywood sides do not fully come together making it easily accessible and the room contains a variety of knives and other large cutting implements.

SHELTER S Recommendation Sixteen: The RFA enclosure needs to be repaired and secured or relocated to a more secure room within the shelter.

**The consultant failed to recognize that the RFA room WAS the overnight depository and did not address the issue of animals being tied up to the front door or being set free in the Dewitt center because the shelter no longer has provisions to provide this necessary and sought after service. Consultant should have adequately addressed the lack of this public service and the need for the shelter to reinstall the kennels and properly staff them.**

IT – ACDM Finding Two: (page 42) There is currently no location designated within the current physical organization of the Auburn Shelter to digitally photograph impounded animals and in turn upload these photographs to the Animal Service website.

IT – ACDM Recommendation Two: Create a designated area for taking digital photographs of impounded animals (i.e., relocate the laundry room to the nearby storage area and change the set up of the room to accommodate the camera system.)

**The recommendation to relocate the laundry room to the nearby storage area demonstrates the ill conceived thoughts and ideas of a consultant who based recommendations not on the fact that the shelter is inept to keep pace with simple upgrades like data collection but instead worked under the premise that if we recommend something we can say we earned our consulting fees. At a cost of approximately \$40,000 to remodel the current laundry room, (washer and dryer were donated!!) any attempt to dismantle or reassign its purpose would be met with an outcry from the contributors who helped fund the initial project. Any through contractor would have and should have researched the history of the making of this amenity prior to finalizing a half-baked recommendation.**