

Report of the Animal Advisory Committee for 2017

The Animal Advisory Committee was formed in fall 2014 to address new state animal laws (especially MGL 140 [2012]) and some findings by the Massachusetts Department of Animal Resources. Many of our original charges have been accomplished, including reviewing how Rehoboth can best organize animal services, recommending policies for the shelter, and recommending a feral cat policy.

The solution that we urged for the problem of feral and semi-feral cats, often called “community cats,” was for an independent non-profit group to provide Trap-Neuter-Return services for the town (TNR). The Board of Selectmen agreed, and the Rehoboth Animal Advocates organization has developed this program. A recent report from this organization shows 145 community cats assisted in 2017. Cooperation is strong between the RAA and the town’s Animal Control program.

The Animal Advisory Committee is working with Animal Control Officer Robert Johnson to ensure planning that will accomplish needed improvements in the animal control program and the shelter. The evaluation report by Chelsea Reinhard, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and a resident at Tufts Veterinary School, has provided strong guidance to the Committee and ACO Johnson. An area of the shelter has been enclosed as a cat room, with storage above. Other improvements, such as installing a new washer/dryer, repairs to concrete, and improved room ventilation, have been made to the building. The Committee conducted a walk-through of the shelter this fall, preparing a list of issues that may still need attention. The Board of Selectmen has charged the Committee with recommending an action plan for physical and system improvements, considering urgency, timing, costs, and roles for volunteers.

There is progress in developing a more stable volunteer program, open hours, and enhanced web communications, and the Committee continues to work with ACO Johnson on computerizing records and further developing the volunteer and adoption programs.

The Animal Advisory Committee has completely reviewed the town’s compliance with and effective enforcement of town and state animal laws and regulations. With excellent assistance from a member of staff of the firm of our Town Counsel, Attorney Kate Feodoroff, we have a comprehensive draft of proposed by-law changes. When the Selectmen complete their review and we have a final version, we expect to present these proposals as warrant items for the regular Town Meeting in spring 2018.

The Animal Advisory Committee meets monthly but does not meet in the summer. Meetings occur regularly on the third Thursday of the month. Minutes are posted on our town website page. The Committee has five regular members and two alternates (the alternate appointments have been vacant throughout 2017); the Animal Control Officer participates actively but does not vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Panofsky
Chair of the Committee