

Okaloosa County News Release

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PR08-415

PAWS Audit Topic of July 31 Workshop

A staff workshop is scheduled for July 31, 2008, at 6:00 p.m., to discuss recent audit findings concerning the animal control contract with the Panhandle Animal Welfare Society (PAWS). The workshop will be held in the Commission Conference room (3rd floor), at 1804 Lewis Turner Boulevard in Ft. Walton Beach. The public is invited to attend.

PAWS is audited annually by a certified accountant firm which provides a copy of that audit to the county. The County Clerk of Court's office recently began a thorough internal audit of PAWS' operations and processes, including the handling of fines and fees, to insure that all laws and statutes are followed. Suggestions for improved processes will likely be a result of this audit as well.

In 1994 the County contracted with PAWS to provide animal control. PAWS has a board of directors that oversees and guides the staff members at PAWS. This board includes three officers and nine other professionals from local businesses and organizations. In addition to their oversight and direction, the County's Assistant County Administrator and staff respond to questions, concerns and issues related to the animal control contract and the Animal Services Division's handling of that contract.

For more information, visit www.okaloosaf.com or call 850-651-7105 or 689-5007. PAWS may be contacted at 243-1525.

More

STAFF WORKSHOP
ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACT WITH PAWS
JULY 31, 2008, W&S BUILDING, FWB, 3RD FLOOR, 6:00 P.M.

Items for Discussion

Recommendations: Recommendations are items that require corrective action by management and as such will have a management response attached to it.

Considerations: Considerations are merely observations made by the auditor during the course of the review. These are proposed for informational purposes. Management can react to the considerations in any manner they chose

Finding # 1: During the course of this review, an examination of thirteen counties similar in size and population was performed. Granted all the counties have their Animal Control incorporated within their operations, normally under Public Safety. Most of the counties have a very detailed website that provides easily accessible information to the public. In addition, during the citizen interviews, it was identified that the County needs to have a more transparent involvement with the PAWS operation.

Recommendation: The County needs to create a subset to their website that provides a direct link to PAWS; but also provides information to the public; especially since PAWS is the County's Animal Control agency. Some of the items that could be included in this website are frequently asked questions, condensed statistics, current news updates and the County contact person; in addition to any other information that the County might feel would be relevant. Bay County and Alachua County both have very informative websites.

Management Response: County Management stated that they will work with the County Public Information Officer and IT staff to improve web presence and information provided.

Finding # 2: As part of the contract with PAWS, the County allows Paws to use gasoline utilizing the County's gas pumps. In 2006 and 2007, their contract called for a not to exceed amount of \$17,000. The actual amounts for 2006 and 2007 were \$27,538.15 and \$27,302.70 respectively. The contract amount for 2008 was raised to \$24,000. At the end of April, 2008, PAWS was already at \$21,397.35. If you extrapolate for the year, and take the cost of gasoline into effect, the actual amount for gasoline to PAWS will be somewhere around \$40,000.

Recommendation: The gasoline related to PAWS should be monitored and any change orders should be processed in accordance with County policy and procedures.

Management Response: The County has modified their procedure this year and will not be allotting gasoline for PAWS use as part of the contract. Instead, they will still use the county pumps, but Fleet Operations will bill them monthly as they do other users, such as OCT. In addition, the overage amounts for 2006 and 2007, as well as the estimated overage for 2008 have all been reconciled with the contract funding for fiscal year 2009.

Finding # 3: Examination of the PAWS Contract for Services dated September 4, 2007 (Section 2) states that “fines and penalties collected by PAWS pursuant to this contract shall be retained by PAWS to assist in offsetting the cost to the County of Animal Control.”

Ordinance 92-25 (Section 22) states that “all revenue derived from the fines, penalties and license fees collected under this ordinance shall be used exclusively to recover or offset the costs of enforcement and administration of the animal control program and this ordinance.”

In the past, any fines collected by PAWS officers would go automatically into their bank account to offset operating costs; the fines and fees collected by the court, would also go back to PAWS at the end of the year. Since Revision 7 to Article V, all fines and fees collected by the court related to PAWS now go to the State. In addition, it appears, that the \$6,000 to \$7,000 of Okaloosa County fine and penalties collected by PAWS officers now needs to be run through the Clerk and sent to the State.

Recommendation: Until I meet with the Clerk’s Courts Director, I don’t have a specific recommendation. However, it is rather obvious that a mechanism will have to be implemented that requires the County’s PAWS related fines and penalties to run through the Clerk and be remitted to the State just like all other fines and fees.

Management Response: The County will work with the Clerk of Court staff wherever needed to accomplish this task.

Finding # 4: Because there have been changes in the Animal Control operations, the following Sections of the contract need to be revised or eliminate:

- Section 2 dealing with the collection of fines and fees.
- Section 4 dealing with the licensing procedures, since this was eliminated with ordinance 08-04.
- Section 7 dealing with public education may have to be revised because currently there is no budget for public education. The officers do speak occasionally at schools

and some information is transmitted through the Humane Society newsletter. Also, Paws has a website that provides some basic information.

Management Response: Management will work with the County attorney to change the contract in these areas for consistency and accuracy.

Finding # 5: Because there have been changes in the Animal Control operations, the following Sections of the Ordinance 92-25 need to be revised or eliminate:

- Section 22 dealing with the use of revenue from fines, penalties and license fees. Section 18 was eliminated requiring licensing of dogs; but it is still reference in Section 22.
- Section 23 fines and penalties collected for deposit in the animal control fund; this is no longer the case, since all fines should go to the State.

Management Response: Management will work with the County attorney to change the ordinance in these areas for consistency and accuracy.

Consideration #1: If the County develops its own website, they may wish to consider putting the Animal Control Function under Public Safety. As the County's Animal Control Coordinator, this function requires a lot of time, effort and coordination with the public. As part of this audit, 13 counties were surveyed, and the Animal Control normally fell under Public Safety. The Assistant County Administrator's time may be better utilized on other projects.

Consideration #2: The County needs to review the Quarterly reports from Paws and determine if the format and content is adequate and sufficient. Other information, data, and format may be more meaningful for County oversight and public purposes.