

MINUTES

On April 23, 2025, the Animal Management & Welfare Advisory Board met at 5:00 P.M. in Conference Room 1500, located on the first floor of City Hall at 623 S. Johnson St., Amarillo, TX 79101 to discuss the agenda. Andrea Slater Gulley, Chairman called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Amarillo Animal Management & Welfare Advisory Board to order at 5:04 P.M.

VOTING MEMBERS	PRESENT	NO. MEETINGS HELD SINCE APPOINTMENT	NO. OF MEETINGS ATTENDED
Sandra McCartt	Yes	1	1
Dr. Bethany Schilling. DVM	Yes	12	11
Les Simpson	No	5	4
Glenn Crowder	Yes	1	1
Andrea Slater Gulley	Yes	3	3

Also, in attendance:

Victoria Jaramillo Medley
Ty Vernon
Brandi Bullock
Katrina Volden
Kali Dennis
Amanda Lincoln
Andrew Freeman
Brian Williams
Courtney White

Director, AM&W, City of Amarillo
Assistant Director, AM&W, City of Amarillo
Assistant Director, AM&W, City of Amarillo
Outreach Manager, AM&W, City of Amarillo
Rescue Manager, AM&W, City of Amarillo
Administrative Specialist II, AM&W, City of Amarillo
Deputy City Manager, City of Amarillo
City Prosecutor, City of Amarillo
Assistant City Prosecutor, City of Amarillo

ITEM 1: Introduction

The board members introduced themselves. Sandra McCartt, Dr. Bethany Schilling, Glenn Crowder, and Andrea Slater Gulley were present. Les Simpson was not present.

ITEM 2: Public Address

- No public comment.

ITEM 3: Approval of Minutes

The motion to approve the minutes from the January 22, 2025, board meeting was presented. The minutes were approved by a vote of 4-0.

ITEM 4: Regular Meeting Items

4.A. Presentation and Possible Action Regarding a Spay/Neuter Voucher Program:

- VJM presented a plan for a spay/neuter voucher pilot program that included preliminary research results, eligibility criteria, recommendations for veterinary partnerships, and financial considerations. The pilot program would be limited to one hundred (100) vouchers, to study the impact on local veterinary clinics, AM&W, Empowerment Zones' neighborhood associations, and the public.
 - Eligibility Criteria
 - Based on research into similar voucher programs in the state of Texas and in conjunction with Health and Human Services recommendations, it is recommended that the focus of spay/neuter voucher programs be on underserved areas within the city. For the City of Amarillo, this would correspond with previously identified 'Empowerment Zones', which have also historically seen high volumes of strays, failure to confine citations, and unvaccinated/ unaltered animals. Based on this, the first eligibility criteria for the pilot program would be proven residence within an identified City of Amarillo Empowerment Zone.
 - Limited to four (4) vouchers per household at any given time, to align with existing city ordinances concerning the number of allowable animals per residence.
 - Veterinary Partnerships
 - Fixed-cost agreements with local private veterinary clinics, with vouchers covering \$200.00 for dogs and \$100.00 for cats.
 - To alleviate veterinary clinic concerns about historically unvetted animals, AM&W, in conjunction with the Bissell Pet Foundation, will vaccinate, microchip, and complete the initial microchip registration for eligible

animals prior to issuing a voucher. This will be achieved through pop-up clinics coordinated with the Empowerment Zones' neighbor associations and the City of Amarillo Office of Engagement and Innovation.

○ Financial Considerations

- AM&W does not currently have a re-occurring budget line item dedicated to a spay/neuter voucher program. Upon advisory board approval, a consideration will be made by the Amarillo City Council on whether to include this in a future budget.
 - An application was submitted for an HHS grant specifically intended for statewide spay/neuter programs by AM&W. If approved, this grant would provide three (3) years of coverage, up to \$20,000 or \$30,000.
 - Ensure that all funds, whether provided by grants or allocation, are being used in accordance with local, state, and federal guidelines.
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- Sandra McCartt asked when the pilot program could begin, in relation to having the program approved and the logistics of getting started. Concerning the former, VJM responded that if the AM&W advisory board moves to approve the spay/neuter action item, then it can be then taken to the City Council for approval. On the latter, VJM stated that AM&W would be prepared to begin with thirty (30) days. Delays may occur based on space availabilities at Empowerment Zone neighborhood association locations.
 - Sandra McCartt asked about scheduling for spay/neuter appointments, and whether local veterinary clinics would be overwhelmed by the large influx of voucher recipients. VJM responded that veterinary clinics should have the power to manage scheduling for all voucher-related appointments, but this will ultimately be addressed in the contracts that are being drafted by AM&W and the City of Amarillo's legal team. Additionally, VJM stated that the Empowerment Zones' neighborhood associations are willing to coordinate with veterinary clinics to provide transportation for citizens who do not have vehicles.
 - Sandra McCartt asked whether the vouchers will be transferrable. VJM stated that this would not be possible, as the vouchers are not tied to a resident, but to a specific animal. In cases of changes in ownership, the new owner would need to ensure that the microchip registration has been properly updated before the voucher could be used. In other cases, such as the death of the animal attached to the voucher, AM&W would ask that the voucher be returned by the associated resident, so that it could possibly be reissued under another animal.
 - Sandra McCartt asked if there was a time limit within which a resident must use the voucher. VJM responded that based on previous research into other voucher programs, and considering the population being serviced, that best practice would likely be a time limit of 90 days. This limit can be adjusted as needed, based on evidence from the pilot program.
 - Sandra McCartt wanted assurance that funding for the program will not be wasted in cases where the voucher is not used. VJM responded that if the voucher is not used

within 90 days, then it will be considered null and void. Additionally, as funds are not issued until after services are rendered – and go directly to the veterinary clinic used – there should be no concerns of funds going unused.

- Andrea Slater Gulley asked where money for the pilot program will be coming from. VJM responded that money for the pilot program was previously allocated by the Amarillo City Council from the discretionary 2023-2024 working budget. Brian Williams also stated that, if a full program is eventually established, that veterinary services would be procured as “Professional Services” within the budget.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked whether any local veterinary clinic would be able to participate in this program. VJM responded that the program would be open to any local veterinary clinic, as long as they continue to meet the legal requirements to operate per local, state, and federal laws.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked whether the contracts being drafted for participating veterinary clinics would include a minimal level of care – up to including pain management and complication coverage. VJM stated that the contract being drafted by AM&W and Courtney White of the City Prosecutor’s Office does include language to cover these aspects of care. Additionally, AM&W contract veterinarians will review the contract to ensure an acceptable minimal level of care is being provided and that complications are being appropriately addressed.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked whether veterinary clinics will still be reimbursed if the percentage of no-shows exceeds normal levels for that clinic. VJM stated that the City of Amarillo will likely not pay for services not rendered. She also stated that in other nationwide programs, that this was addressed by requiring residents put a small down payment – of about \$35.00 – when scheduling the appointment. If they keep the appointment, they are then reimbursed for that down payment. This both incentivizes residents to keep appointments and helps to cover losses from veterinary clinics in the cases of no-shows. While not originally part of the program plan, upon advisory board recommendation, this proposal will be considered for addition to the pilot program.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked if there was data available from other spay/neuter program that show definitive, positive results relating to stray populations. VJM stated that there is currently no consistent data over any significant period for any of the researched programs, largely due to financial constraints.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked if it was possible, in addition to contracting out to local veterinary clinics, if funds could be allocated to hire a veterinarian and/or veterinarian technician to work solely on spay/neuters for the voucher program. Additionally, she asked whether AM&W could partner with non-profit to achieve a similar result, and whether either option may be more financially viable than solely contracting out to local veterinary clinics. VJM responded that other voucher programs have tried this, but that it is something AM&W would have to look further into to determine viability.
- Andrea Slater Gulley presented a motion to approve the action item regarding the spay/neuter voucher program as presented by VJM. The action item was approved by a vote of 4-0. VJM stated that the action item will now move forward to the City Council for approval.

4.B. Discussion on Potential Ordinances to Address Effective Animal Population Management, including Registration of Pets and Mandatory Microchipping of Pets:

- VJM presented the board with general information on City of Amarillo ordinances, including fine ranges, mandatory court costs, and common ordinance violations seen at AM&W.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked if fine ranges could be increased for specific violations. VJM stated that this would have to be considered and approved by the City Council.
- VJM presented the board with results from research concerning mandatory pet registration and mandatory microchipping ordinances within the state of Texas. Most mandatory pet registration ordinances in Texas have been repealed due to very low compliance rates, database creation and maintenance costs, negative public perception, and inferior usefulness to pet owners in comparison to microchipping. To replace them, most cities within Texas have initiated mandatory microchipping ordinances. This system takes advantage of pre-existing data infrastructures, is overall more useful to pet owners, and is only a one-time cost for citizens with pets.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked if citizens could demand religious exceptions to microchipping their animals. VJM stated that she did not come across religious exceptions in cities where mandatory microchipping was implemented. The only exception seen were medical exceptions, which required adequate documentation from a veterinarian before being approved.
- VJM notified the board that AM&W, in coordination with the Bissell Pet Foundation, has been and will continue to offer free microchipping clinics to the public.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked if, when providing microchips and updating microchip registrations, if AM&W requests multiple phone numbers to add to pet profiles. VJM stated that owners are always asked for primary and secondary contact numbers, as well as emails, to increase the chances of contact in case of a found pet.
- Sandra McCartt asked if AM&W registers the pet, along with the owner's information, when providing microchips to the public. VJM stated that yes, standard procedure within AM&W is to complete the initial microchip registration for all animals that are provided with one. VJM also verified that AM&W would not have any visibility on or update authority for microchips provided by private veterinary clinics, or in cases of owner transfers.
- VJM stated for consideration by the board that, given the low number of Animal Management Officers, and lack of mechanism, that enforcement of a microchipping ordinance would not be systemic or organized. Andrea Slater Gulley agreed and stated it would likely be enforced in a similar fashion to rabies vaccines ordinances.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked what AM&W was currently charging for microchips. VJM stated that the current rate is \$10.00, but that the rate may increase to \$15.00 depending on economic conditions.

- Sandra McCartt stated that, based on her experience, mandatory registration fees are met with immediate public discontent and that microchipping is much easier to sell to the public.
- Andrea Slater Gulley asked if other cities within Texas that implemented mandatory microchipping did so for both cats and dogs. VJM stated that yes, they typically did it for both.
- VJM presented information on an ordinance that would enhance penalties for multiple animal-related convictions.

ITEM 5: Discuss Items for Future Agendas and Next Meeting Date

- The next meeting will have two action items that will address ordinances related to mandatory microchipping and enhanced penalties for multiple animal-related convictions.
- Sandra McCartt requested that advisory board meetings be moved to once a month, for as long as population and compliance issues persist in such high numbers.
- **Set the Schedule for the Next Advisory Board Meeting:** The AM&W Advisory Board set the schedule for the next board meeting for May 14, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. in Conference Room 1500, City Hall, 623 S. Johnson St., Amarillo, TX 79101.

ITEM 6: Adjourn

- The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 P.M.

ATTEST:

Andrea Slater Gully, Chairman