



TOWNSHIP OF EDISON

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TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Sonia Alves-Viveiros, Business Administrator
COPY: Robert Diehl, Chief of Staff
Louis Rainone, Esq., Township Attorney & Director of Law
SUBJECT: Animal Shelter Update
DATE: November 9, 2023

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM

The Township is providing the governing body with a comprehensive update with regard to the operations at the Edison Animal Shelter. On or about July 20, 2023 there was an inspection and report generated by Dr. Joseph R. Chiosi of Sayebrook Veterinary Hospital. See attached report. At the time of the inspection, Dr. Chiosi had a contract with the Township ending on July 30, 2023. During the brief visit from the veterinarian, there were several observations made as to the condition of the animal shelter. Noted in the report was also his dismay for non-payment of his invoices. Dr. Chiosi stated in his report that he would be deviating from his past practice of providing an inspection report and proceeded to list items of concern.

1. Vaccinations done post adoption and noted it should be the responsibility of the adopter;
2. Safety concerns relative to handling of aggressive dogs
3. Overcrowding
4. Vaccination prevention
5. Consistency in scheduled veterinary care
6. Improper handling of isolation room protocols
7. Use of proper sanitation equipment
8. Communication with staff

Dr. Chiosi further forewarned the Township with regard to possible criticism and scrutiny should the Animal Shelter issues he described in his report not be addressed. All of these points have been duly noted and the Township has since taken the following steps:

- Negotiated with the ASFCME collective bargaining unit with an addendum to address the need for personnel outside of normal 9-5 business hours. This would address any issues related to maintenance and proper handling of areas within the shelter.
- Contracted with the Monmouth ASPCA to provide professional services. The shared services agreement will assist the Township with creation of standard operating procedures, address training and assignments with staff, oversight, etc.
- Hired Dr. Nicole Feddersen as the Township's in-house veterinary provider.
- Created a new table of organization to address areas of Canine Adoptions, Feline Adoptions, Animal Care, Animal Control, Social Media, Behavior and Customer Service.

- Advertising for positions of Animal Control Officers.
- Putting together an RFQ for architectural services to address the potential expansion of the shelter to address issues of overcrowding.
- Conducted a financial analysis report which identified shortfalls from shared services agreements. A meeting with Piscataway has begun to address shortfalls. Their contract ends in December of this year.

	Edison	Dunellen	Metuchen	Piscataway	Highland Park	Total
<u>Shortfall</u>	<u>(350,460)</u>	<u>(4,086)</u>	<u>(6,526)</u>	<u>(120,047)</u>	<u>(11,726)</u>	<u>(492,845)</u>

Furthermore, the Township has since had an independent report completed to provide additional analysis and review as to how the Township will move forward with the animal shelter. Please see attached. The report covers areas of concern but more importantly provides action items. It also reiterates the fundamentals and benchmarks for the Township which will be very helpful as the Township addresses policies and procedures of the animal shelter. The Administration will continue to update the governing body regularly for purposes of transparency and items where council approval may be necessary in addressing areas related to infrastructure and any professional services.

Encl.

SAV

Chiosi Report

Name of shelter: Township of Edison
Address: 125 Municipal Blvd., Edison, NJ 08817
Telephone: (848) 225-4492

Inspecting Veterinarian: Joseph R. Chiosi, DVM
Date of Visit: Thursday, July 20, 2023

Dr Chiosi arrived at the shelter at 2pm for the inspection and met the Shelter Manager Tina Pasukinski outside. As I walked into the shelter the waiting area was full of people waiting. Tina had arranged adopters to have veterinary services provided. When I asked if animals were here for vaccines only or did she want me to do exams, she requested I do exams as well as vaccines.

The following animals were seen and services provided:

1. Puppy Chico Truz: about 11wks old, exam, DAPPL series, oral bordetella
2. Puppy Buddy Metrokotsaf: 8wks 4 days, exam DAPPL series, oral bordetella
3. Puppy Bandit Bandit Fresnedo: 8wks 4 days, exam DAPPL series, oral bordetella
4. Puppy Broc LaPosta: 8wks 4 days, exam, DAPPL and oral bordetella vaccines
5. Canine Bailey Beyer: exam, DAPPL, oral bordetella, Rabies vaccine
6. Puppy Belly Isparo: 8wks 4 days, exam, DAPPL series, oral bordetella
7. Puppy Daisy Rodriguez: 8wks 4 days, exam, DAPPL series, oral bordetella
8. Canine Gizmo Reh: recheck exam from spay on Monday
9. Puppy Axel Zanodi: 8wks 4 days, exam, DAPPL series, oral bordetella
10. Puppy Lucious Moncayo: 8wks 4 days, DAPPL series
1. Puppy Brownie ElShafei: 8 wks 4 days DAPPL series, oral bordetella
12. Puppy Oscar Leiberling: 8wks 4 days, exam DAPPL and oral bordetella
13. Canine Diamond, EAS, DAPPL series, Oral Bordetella, Rabies vaccine
14. Canine Kodiak: DAPPL, Oral bordetella, Rabies vaccine
15. feline Billie, EAS owned, had pyometra surgery about one week ago, underweight, anemic, dehydrated, not eating, exam, advise Mirataz and SQ fluids
16. kitten Asbury, EAS owned, recheck eyes from conjunctivitis great improvement on Idoxuridine

I did a walk through of the entire shelter after tending to the animals.

I am going depart from the normally filling out of the inspection form, and I am going to change the context of this report.

Our hospital has been the veterinary hospital providing veterinary services to Edison Animal Shelter (and other shelters) for many years. It has been me personally who has inspected the shelter the last few years. I have made shelter medicine a significant part of my practice for my 44 years as a veterinarian even running our own shelter. I am very concerned about the state of the Edison Animal Shelter. The main problem is that the person put in charge of the shelter has no experience with animals and how to run a shelter. I feel that the position mandates someone with both animal and shelter experience. The entire staff is very concerned on how things are being done. Some (but not all) of the issues are as follows:

1. I examined and vaccinated adopted dogs because I did not want to send people away and cause loss of goodwill for the shelter/town. That is not what I am suppose to do at a shelter inspection. Once people adopt a pet their care becomes the responsibility of the adopter. By the town offering free veterinary care does not foster the investment people should make in caring for their own pets. The town should not do it, and I will not do it unless an adjustment is made in our current contract.
2. Tina has been bitten three times in the first few months as shelter manager. It was my understanding that she was in charge of running the shelter from a managing and financial standpoint. Safe animal handling is a skill that is learned over time with training. At our hospital customer service representatives do not handle animals as we pay a different workers compensation rate for employees that handle animals versus those who do not handle animals.
3. The shelter is currently overcrowded including dogs in crates. The shelter cannot afford to take in animals that are individually owned or from outside non-contracted municipalities. The source of the parvovirus outbreak in the shelter came from such a municipality. Cages that were not previously used due to being deemed unsafe have now been forced into service with health concerns and unsafe problems the result.
- 4 . When medically possible animals should be vaccinated on entry to the shelter: dogs DAPPL (age appropriate) Oral Bordetella, felines FVRCP. This is not currently done and increases the chance of disease in the shelter which in the long run is far more costly. Prevention is more cost effective then treating clinical disease.
5. The number of missed appointments both with clinic and surgeries scheduled at Sayrebrook Veterinary Hospital has increased to an unacceptable level in the last few weeks. We are a very busy hospital where no shows futher complicate our scheduling. There are also missed appointment fees for both clinic and surgery appointments that the township incurs.
6. The presence of guinea pigs housed in cages on the floor in the cat isolation ward is inappropriate and unacceptable.

7. The newly constructed isolation room with wood partitions can not be disinfected properly. Stainless steel cages are standard in the industry.

8. Protocols which have been in place and changed need to be done with good reason and the understanding of staff. Staff who do not believe in how things are being done lose faith in leadership. Without question the moral of the staff is currently very bad as they do not believe that the animals' best interests are being served and are already overwhelmed by the increased workload .

There are other items which need to be addressed. I am very concerned on the direction the shelter is headed. A mismanaged shelter is not only bad for the animals and workers but can be a public relations nightmare for the town. When the Borough of Helmetta shelter came under criticism years ago there were Animal Rights protestors at the shelter and negative national media attention. It was very costly for the borough on a number of fronts.

I realize writing this report will upset some people but the issues need to be addressed and corrected promptly. I wonder how much longer I can continue to act as the shelter's veterinarian as the current bill approaches \$50,000 with no payments in months after repeated attempts to collect payment, repeated resending of invoices, and resent again when requested with no acknowledgement as requested. Some outstanding invoices go back as far as September 2022. Invoices are supposed to be paid in 30 days of invoicing being sent. Our current contract with Edison Animal Shelter expires on August 31, 2023, and I wish to continue working with the Edison Animal Shelter and The Township of Edison, but the circumstances need to change.

Veterinarian: Joseph R. Chiosi, DVM

November 1, 2023

Good Afternoon,

The Five Freedoms have been the basis of animal welfare since the 1960's. The concern of animal welfare is not new for professionals in the industry of caring for and raising animals. Happily, the general public is becoming more interested and concerned in the welfare of animals. The Five Freedoms are used as a benchmark in making sure we are meeting all the needs of the animals in our care. These basic measures are:

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
2. Freedom from Discomfort
3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease
4. Freedom to Express Natural Behavior
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress

After spending time in the Edison Shelter, many needs are being met but others need to be improved on.

A team with an interest, excitement, and commitment to move forward is necessary to be successful. I feel you have that in your manager and much of your staff.

Suggestions: Invest in your staff by giving them tools to perform and to stay safe. Examples regarding equipment include basic slip leads to walk dogs and safety stations if a problem occurs. Professional training in animal handling, body language, enrichment, medical protocols, and basic medical care are also necessary. Consider continuing education from professional organizations in animal welfare. These include, ASPCA, HSUS, UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine, University of Florida Maddie's Fund and University of Wisconsin Shelter Medicine. I suggest staff attend Humane Pro Expo next May.

Those who are not Team Edison need to be relocated. Unfortunately, a few have shown a reluctance to improve our organization. My hope is this initial discomfort will subside quickly.

The physical plant is damp, warm, cluttered and has an odor.

Suggestions: Improve air flow, rid clutter (a vector for disease). Take one room and clean thoroughly. Consider cleaning and sealing the floor professionally.

The small size of the shelter is challenging. A designated intake location for new arrivals is needed. Prey species (rabbits, guinea-pigs, hamsters...) need to be separated from predatory species (dogs, cats, ferrets...). A location to formally meet our animals in a more private location is also needed.

Improve the kennels, runs, and cubbies our animals live in.

This, I suggest, is a priority. We have dogs living in crates. Crates are used because we have exceeded our maximum housing capacity and are now relying on an unacceptable practice, crates. This brings us to a larger topic called Capacity for Care. The main factors that determine C4C are housing space and the number of staff to properly care for the animals inside a facility.

Our outdoor runs should have cover from the sun, rain, and snow. The surface should be non-porous, comfortable, and easily disinfected. Dirt and pebbles are not appropriate. Latches and closing devices must be secure. Separation between food, urination/defecation and resting areas should be maximized. Cats prefer to spend time on high structures. A soft resting place should be made available for all animals.

Enrichment is another priority. Enrichment refers to the process for improving the environmental and behavioral care of confined animals within the context of their behavioral needs. For example, chewing for dogs and scratching for cats. We do not routinely do this inside the Edison shelter.

Medical. All animals (unless under 4 weeks old or extremely sick) should be vaccinated on intake. Cats FVRCP, Dogs DaPPV and Bordetella. Rabies vaccines should be performed after the stray hold is over and the animal is older than 12 weeks. Animals who do not qualify for intake vaccine should be in a foster home or taken to a veterinary facility. The staff can be taught how to give these vaccines. Rabies is required to be given by a veterinarian. Vaccines decrease disease and this protocol must be implemented.

Suggestions: The Edison shelter needs to become self-sufficient. Resurrect the accounts you have with various companies to directly receive supplies/ medications. They all have shelter programs with discounted pricing.

We will need a secure location (locked cabinets) to store these products. We also need a table to perform exams and give vaccines.

Controlled drugs should also be at our facility. These medications would primarily be for sedation and euthanasia. Prior to utilizing my DEA license, I need with certainty that a lock box is placed, and a logging mechanism is utilized.

We are working on euthanasia guidelines. Please remember, when this difficult choice is made, it is after a conscious decision-making process that will protect more lives, avert more suffering, and conserve more resources for our lifesaving program. As an organization, we should be clear, transparent, and honest about our decision to euthanize. Once completed, we will review these guidelines with you.

Be kind to our local vets. We can work together and don't forget, we are a source of revenue for them. Adopters should not be returning to us for vaccines or for medical issues (with some

exceptions). It is the responsibility of the new family to take their new pet to their local vet. We have the responsibility for adopting out a healthy and behaviorally sound animal that should be vaccinated appropriately for age, altered, microchipped, tested for heartworm disease or feline leukemia and FIV along with being maintained on heartworm prevention and flea/tick prevention.

We are not meeting all those responsibilities but are doing our best to catch up.

A few other observations:

Improvement is needed in our record keeping. Moving to paper light with shelter software will be helpful.

Improving our relations with local police departments and HLIO's need to occur.

The adoption process needs to be easy and streamlined. Never turn away a potential adopter. Training is needed here. I also suggest cage cards that highlight the many positive traits of our animals.

I am happy to be here and to move forward together. In just these two weeks, I have seen improvements in the facility and an excited staff eager to help and learn. I have also met many highly adoptable animals who will benefit from your commitment to them.

Thank You,

Nicole Feddersen, DVM

Resources:

The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animals Shelters, Second Edition 12/2022

UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine, Facility Design, Shelter Animal Housing and Shelter Population Management 07/2022