

**Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**January 23, 2019 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

In Attendance:

Mike Cahill

Sheri Gustafson

Anité Casas Figueroa

Ray West

Laura Marwill

David Feldman

Martha Smith-Blackmore

Kara Holmquist

**I. STAFF UPDATE**

Sheri Introduced the Mass Animal Fund new Community Outreach Specialist Anité Casas Figueroa and stated that she will be focusing on Voucher Program and outreach assignments from now through the end of tax season on April 15, 2019. Martha asked for an update on the Coordinator position and Mike responded that the Coordinator is still out on medical leave and no approximate return date has been set. Sheri is currently serving as the Acting Program Coordinator during the absence.

**II. FUND TOTALS, BUDGET LINE ITEM AND EXPENDITURES**

The Fund’s Revenue Document was distributed to attendees.

Sheri went over Fund totals. FY18 revenue numbers have been reported and total donation revenue for FY18 was $361,948.83. FY19 Revenue numbers have been low. June-December was slower donation months than in the previous year by 57% with only $19, 718.42 collected. In FY 2019 the Fund did receive a state budget line item of $100,000, bringing the total intake of all funds for FY 19 to $119817.42. Current numbers reflect that the FY19 is $26,935.00 down from where we were at this time in FY18, but for calendar 2018 we finished $3,079.06 up from calendar year 2017. Currently there is $287,767.31 unexpended in the Fund. Sheri reported that looking at past tax season donation trends she is still hoping that the fund will take in $340,000 in FY19 and has adjusted the budget accordingly.

An Income and Expenditures Balance sheet was distributed to attendees.

Sheri explained that the balance sheet illustrated all income and expenditures of the Mass Animal Fund since the beginning of the program in 2013. The balance sheet also contained proposed spending for the rest of FY19.The Fund has received a total of $119817.42 in revenue and has spent $223,664.86 for expenses. $103,847.44 has been utilized from prior surplus allocation. Sheri mentioned that we are heading into tax season with enough in surplus funding to prevent a voucher slowdown for now, but if we see a delay in donations or low numbers we will have to reevaluate. The proposed FY19 contained the following allocations: 48% for veterinary, 5% for ACO training, 1% for marketing, 28% for Administration, and 18% for surplus and was based off of a revenue goal of $440,000 which included the $100,000 budget line item and $340,000 in donations. Ray suggested that more funding be allocated into veterinary and less into surplus. Mike mentioned that it is important not to dip into far into surplus, since that is essential to keep the fund operating between tax seasons and in periods of lower donations.

Ray asked for an explanation in the increase in the administration allocation and Sheri responded that it was due to having a fluctuation in staffing during the Coordinator absence. Kara mentioned that the Coordinator position was moved into the Fund at the end of FY17. Laura suggested that we try to find a way to decrease the administrative costs. Sheri stated the approximate costs of employees with salary and benefits. Mike stated that the program requires at least two employees to handle the responsibilities of the voucher program and ACO training.

Sheri mentioned that we will continue to review and adjust the budget as tax donation numbers start to role in.

**III. BUDGET LINE ITEM**

Sheri stated that the $100,000 line item from the FY19 Massachusetts State Budget has been fully spent on spay/neuter surgeries. The Line Item funding was utilized for surgeries from July 2018 through Oct 2018. Kara mentioned that we should know if there is a line item allocation for the Fund in the FY20 Budget sometime in April of 2019.

**IV. SPAY/NEUTER VOUCHER PROGRAM**

The Mass Animal Fund Spay/Neuter Voucher and Emergency Fund Total Sheet were distributed to attendees.

Sheri shared that since the Voucher Program’s inception; over 9,900 vouchers /assistance have been redeemed. Sheri predicted that the Fund should hit the Milestone of over 10,000 animals helped as early as February 1, 2019. The Fund hit a milestone in July having spent over $1,000,000 on cats/dogs in need in the Commonwealth.

Sheri reported that the average cost of surgery in 2018 increased to $142, and that we will also see an increase in this number in 2019 due to the new reimbursement rates. To date in FY19, $169,615.00 has been spent to spay and neuter 1161 dogs/ cats across the Commonwealth.

Anité reported that as of January 2019, current unexpired vouchers equal 498 and a total of $69,615.00. There are 484 dogs and cats on the Voucher Program waitlist. If all requests were granted on the waitlist, it would cost the Fund $73,275.00. Of the waitlisted requests 140 of them are for feral cats. Anité is working on a project to redesign the feral request form to provide more information so that determinations can be made if the animals are best addressed by the Fund or by alternate resources. Anité will be reaching out to feral requesters currently on the waitlist to evaluate. Mike mentioned that we have to screen feral requests closely due to a TNR group requesting for ineligible animals in the past. Anité presented two charts to the committee illustrating voucher redemption rates verses unredeemed/expired by county.

Four voucher days were planned in 2019 to help alleviate wait times: January 19th at MSPCA Methuen, February 4th at Second Chance in North Brookfield, February 12th at MSPCA Boston, March 6th at Sterling Animal Shelter Inc. MSPCA Nashoba and MSPCA Cape Cod are hoping to start voucher days soon.

Sheri mentioned that the new Provider reimbursement rates went into effect on January 1, 2019. Contract amendment packages were sent out to all 37 active Providers. The Fund received 3 new provider applications since December 2018. The Fund will be doing a push for new providers over the next few weeks, and is currently working on figuring out if new applications will have to go through the CommBuys website.

The Current Scope of Services for Veterinary Providers was distributed to attendees.

David asked on the status of the Municipal Partnership Program. Sheri mentioned that there has been a delay due to contract amendments and RFR adjustments, but that she is hoping the municipal program will be ready to be announced and start enrollment by April 2019.

Kara asked on the status of online voucher processing. Sheri responded that once website migration is complete, the option will be explored.

**V. EMERGENCY FUND**

Sheri shared that in FY19, 88 dogs and cats were helped through the Emergency Fund, totaling $11,575.00.

**VI. Promotions/Events**

A Facebook Insights sheet was distributed to attendees.

Sheri stated that the Facebook page has been increasing its post reach and that in the last few weeks it reached over 30,000 individuals. Sheri mentioned that over the last 4 years she has created 78 video ads and 81 still ads to promote the tax donation option. In the next few days the ads will be reviewed to see which ads are relevant to reuse for the 2019 push. In addition, Sheri is working on an explainer video about how to write in a donation on the tax form. Sheri is hoping that all ads will be scheduled for the entire tax season in the next couple of weeks.

Sheri mentioned that the Fund will once again be presenting its pet safe plants campaign at the Boston Flower and Garden show. Sheri will also be speaking at the Growers Association meeting.

Ray asked if the Fund was able to secure free billboards through MassDOT. Sheri responded that she worked again with the Mass media team and MassDOT and that 4 billboard designs will be displayed across the state from January 1, 2019through April 30, 2019. The Billboards are free of charge.

Sheri mentioned that the Fund is in the process of migrating the Mass Animal Fund Website to mass.gov with the help of MDAR staff. Sheri stated that the migration is necessary and that the Fund had obstacles that would prevent them from remaining on the current site. The migration process is about 50% complete and should be finished in the next few weeks. Sheri hopes the new website will be easier to navigate, and will retain some of the current branding. By having the website on mass.gov the Fund will have in house tech support. Sheri is in the process of securing the current domain name so that visitors will be automatically redirected to the new site.

**VII. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER PROGRAM UPDATES**

A ACO Core Competencies Training handout was distributed to all attendees

Sheri stated that in 2018 70 new ACOs and 24 prior ACOs were training through sessions. The Core Pass rate has improved to 98% verse 78% from the previous year. Sheri mentioned that there were curriculum changes due to the Paws II passing, in the report writing and in Wildlife. The cost of training per officer has remained consistent at around $76.

The 2019 Core Training dates, and location will be announced after the 2019 designation forms are entered and numbers are gathered on how many ACOs need to attend training. Sheri predicts that she should have these numbers in March.

Sheri reported that the Fund has received 3 new continuing education training partner applications in the last few weeks.

Sheri mentioned that 2019 Designation Forms were mailed out to all municipalities on December 28th, 2018. To date 365 have been returned. All Designation Forms are due back on February 1, 2019.

**Next Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 9th, 2019**

**10:00 AM- 12:00 PM**

**Conference Room**

**251 Causeway Street Suite 500**

**Boston, MA 02114**