



**Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2019 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

In Attendance:

Michael Cahill
Sheri Gustafson
Anité Casas Figueroa
Laura Marwill
Dr. Martha Smith-Blackmore
Kara Holmquist
David Feldman
Dr. Edward Schettino
Cheryl Traversi

I. STAFF UPDATE

Sheri stated that the Program Coordinator, who has been out on leave, has informed the Department that she will not be returning. The Community Outreach Specialist Anité Casas Figueroa whose contract was set to end on 4/15/19 has been extended through 6/30/19.

II. FUND TOTALS, BUDGET LINE ITEM AND EXPENDITURES

The Fund's Revenue Document was distributed to attendees.

Sheri went over Fund totals. FY19 tax season donations for February were reported at \$105,865. June-January were slower donation months than in the previous year, however February 2019 was our highest start to tax season to date. FY19 total intake for donations is \$129,243. Current numbers reflect that the FY19 is \$21,434. down from where we were at this time in FY18, but 2019 calendar year is starting \$5,500 up from this time in 2018. Currently there is \$292,793 unexpended in the Fund. Sheri reported that looking at past tax season donation trends, she is still hoping that the fund will take in \$127,000-\$150,000 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 \$226,243 in revenue and has spent \$335,103 for expenses. \$108,859 has been utilized from prior surplus allocation. Sheri mentioned that we are hoping for a high donation tax season but we will be slowing down voucher flow until we get numbers. The FY19 is reflecting the following allocations: 65% for veterinary services, 4% for ACO training, 1% for marketing, 29% for Administration, and 1% for surplus, which is based off of a revenue goal of \$400,000 which included the \$100,000 budget line item and \$300,000 in donations.

Sheri mentioned that we will continue to review and adjust the budget as tax donation numbers start to roll in, and that she will start to work on FY20 Budget once we receive final tax season numbers after May 20, 2019.

III. BUDGET LINE ITEM

Sheri stated that the \$100,000 line item from the FY19 Massachusetts State Budget has been fully spent between July 18-Oct 18 and was utilized to do an additional 712 spay/neuter surgeries. Kara mentioned that we should know if there is a line item allocation amendment for the Fund in the FY20 Budget sometime in late 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 10,460 vouchers /assistance have been redeemed.

To date in FY19, \$250,495 has been spent to spay and neuter 1,684 dogs/ cats across the Commonwealth. Sheri also mentioned that our redemption rate has increased substantially, largely due to the success of voucher days. In past years voucher redemption rate stayed under or around 70%, we are now closer to 75% of vouchers issued being utilized. Benefits to voucher days: easier to budget, animals on the waitlist can get done faster if they can get to the locations, and provider gets extra support from MAF staff.

Anité reported that as of April 8, 2019, we have 590 animals on the waitlist. Since January 2018, we have received 177 requests for feral cats. We are redirecting feral requests to other resources if available. We are currently issuing non priority vouchers from January. In January we were issuing vouchers at a rate of around 40 a week, but have slowed to around 20 a week, not counting Animal Control Officer (ACO) animals and emergency cases. Anité mentioned that to encourage individuals on the waitlist to utilize Voucher Days she has been placing calls to owners and leaving a lot of voicemails. Anité sent out 143 provider applications to veterinary practices in low coverage areas. The Fund has received 7 new applications for providers.

Sheri stated that the new Veterinary Provider Request for Response (RFR) and Municipal Partner RFR will open up to new applications around April 29, 2019. Contract amendment packages were sent out to all 37 active providers in December 2018. To date 5 providers have not returned the packages and are still being reimbursed according to the three tier reimbursement scale. By June 30, 2019, all providers will have to complete new contracts and they will have to apply under the new RFR through the Combuys system. The Fund is working on updating our application process to make the new system easier to use. Dr. Schettino, from the Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL), offered to provide feedback on the system once the RFR opens up and ARL starts the renewal process.

Michael asked for an overview of the Municipal Partnership and how it will benefit the program. Sheri responded that the Municipal Partnership will allow municipalities to get direct reimbursements for spay/neuter vaccinations costs for animals in ACO shelters done at any veterinary practice, even if the practice is not a contracted MAF provider. Municipal reimbursements will be according to the same tier system as veterinary providers.

V. EMERGENCY FUND

Sheri mentioned that FY19 Emergency Fund expenditures have only slightly changed since the January 2019 meeting. Ninety-eight animals have received emergency fund assistance in FY19, totaling \$13,975.00. Many of the Emergency vouchers currently being issued are going through the regular voucher program and are for single animals, we have not received any requests for hoarding cases in 2019.

VI. Promotions/Events

Sheri announced that the website migration from www.massanimalfund.com to www.mass.gov/animalfund is complete. Due to contract issues the migration was necessary, but that there are advantages to being on the mass.gov website such as: free technical support, better security, no associated fees, traffic tracking, and ease of use. The previous domain is set up with an automatic redirect that will continue to function for the next 5 years. Sheri reported that since the migration completed just a few weeks ago, we have had over 50 visits to our online donation portal, which reflects an upturn in direct donations. Sheri mentioned that the last page she needs to add to the site will be annual report data. David suggested a one page report focusing on highlights instead of a full report. Sheri mentioned that the Fund has hit many milestones this year such as: 10,000 animals helped, \$1.2 million spent on animal care, increased reimbursements for providers, and over 500 ACOs trained, and she will work on a timeline or another way to highlight them.

Sheri stated that the Facebook page has been increasing its likes and that the page is up around 400 likes higher than this time last year. There are currently over 70 advertisements circulating to promote the Fund, with new ones being created weekly. The Fund is actively using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube to get the word out about the tax donation option.

VII. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER PROGRAM UPDATES

An ACO Training handout was distributed to all attendees.

Sheri stated that the 2019 Designation Forms were sent out to all municipalities in December of 2018. To date, we are still waiting for Designation Forms from 65 municipalities. According to Designation Forms received and the ACO database, 102 ACOs will need to complete the Core Competencies training for the first time in 2019. Additionally, 24 ACOs will need to retake the Core. The Core training will be held over three sessions in Fall 2019. Proposed dates and locations are: September 4 and 5 in Chelmsford, September 17 and 18 in Northampton, September 24 and 25 in Westborough. Sheri is hoping to have venues confirmed so that registration can open in the next couple of weeks. Two trainers who have previously taught the Core have expressed interest to teach in 2019. The Fund will consider adding 1-2 additional trainers if needed. The proposed training will cost the Fund approximately \$5,715. /approx. \$50 per ACO.

The Fund received notice on 4/9/19 that our Animal Control Representative is resigning from her seat on the MAF Advisory Committee.

Next Meeting

Thursday, June 13th, 2019
10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Conference Room
251 Causeway Street Suite 500
Boston, MA 02114