



Macon County  
Public Health

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH  
MINUTES  
9/24/2024**

**Members:** Garrett Higdon, Engineer; Paul Higdon, County Commissioner; Vacant, Optometrist; Dr. Roy Lenzo, Veterinarian; Vacant, Pharmacist; Dr. Matt Corbin, Dentist; Ellen Shope, Nurse Representative and Vice Chair; Dr. Michael Dupuis, Physician; Members of General Public, Jerry Hermanson Chair, Dr. Charlie Vargas; Vacant, General Member

**Members Absent:** Roy Lenzo, Paul Higdon & Charlie Vargas

**Staff Present:** Kathy McGaha, Jimmy Villiard, Jennifer Garrett, Melissa Setzer, Lisa Browning, Jessica Baucum, Chaz Allen, Ashley Garrison

**Guests:** Animal Shelter Volunteers

**Media:** Bobby Coggins, Macon Media and Thomas Sherrill, The Franklin Press

**Call to Order:** Jerry Hermanson called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

**Welcome/Intro/  
Departures/  
Recognition/  
Announcements:** Kathy opened the meeting welcoming everyone. She announced new staff Cheyenne Bennett (MOA Clinic), Peighton Bartell (MOA Clinic), Martine Salter (School Nurse), Vanessa Wimpey (School Nurse), Bella Thews (Nutritionist WIC), Toni Hall (WIC Processing Assistant), and Ryan Hildale (Animal Control Officer). Staff promotions were Lauren Powell to WIC Director, Chaz Allen to EH Program Specialist for PDWW/OSWW, Ashley Woody to EH Program Specialist for F&L, Lisa Browning to EH Supervisor II and Ruthie Capaforte to Public Health Nurse III

**Public Comment:**

1. Marcia Doty: She is an Amazon driver that has concerns with dog fighting and also chicken fighting. She states that there are places in Macon County that have many dogs that are being used for dog fighting which also leads/involves drugs here in our county. She would like to see our Animal Control Officers setup and do a better job to address this concern
2. Stephanie Price: Spoke on behalf of PAWS volunteers and Noah's Ark. They feel like the shelter is in crisis mode and needs more shelter attendants and officers. Volunteers currently are helping to pick up what the current employees can't do. Also states that the shelter is not big enough to house all the current animals. Would like to see the County

change the officers to a Sheriff's office position to help with the demand. Also would like to see the 10 day stray hold changed to 4 days to match what is being done nationally. In the last 4 years the animal intake has increased by 150%.

3. Steve Grissim: Came to speak and support Stephanie Price and the animals. He wants to help and make some suggestions on how to improve the shelter and workload. Also would like to see all the BOH members visit the shelter and see for themselves the issues at hand.
4. Betsy Carson: She started volunteering about 1 week ago. Was ran thru very quickly as to what she would be doing. She stated that she has went home and cried at the amount of work that the volunteers and workers do. Also mentioned that they have lots of challenges especially when appliance brake (ex: Dryer) and they are having to tote the laundry to the laundry mat to be dried.
5. Ashley Higgs: She is the manager at Appalachian Animal Rescue and also has volunteered for MCAS. In the past year MCAS took in approx. 1000 animals and AAR took in almost 700. AAR has a set ratio of 1 employee to 10 animals and states that adoptions are low. States that MCAS needs more space and more officers to enforce the laws and issues here in our county. Also there is so lots of mental health concerns with MCAS since we do euthanize animals
6. Meg Kremer. She has been a resident here in Macon County for 8 years and has concerned with why we transport so many animals from here to shelters up north. Would like to see a higher reclaim fee and also make owners spay/neuter there animal before receiving it back. Also stated that there is need for more county support for staff and volunteers. Lastly stated that we need to have better laws in this county to help with all the issues that are going on with the county.
7. Doug Kersey: Shared his observation with the BOH about what he has seen at the Animal Shelter. The volunteers should be providing exercise and enrichment for the animals but instead it has become more of a fill in roll for the paid workers due to staffing issues and the work load they are expected to accomplish daily. Stated that there is a volunteer that spends \$200 per week on food for the animals out of their pocket. Also the volunteers help to pay for medical treatment and transportation for the animals to receive vet care. He also stated that the shelter is in need of some maintenance repairs and feels like parts of the building are unsafe for use. Would like to see better finding from the county to help fix these issues.
8. Wynette Wiles: Community member that states there are issues with stray cats in her neighborhood and in the county and that nothing is being done about this. She believes that the problem is that the shelter is too understaffed to take care of these issues and also funding is a factor that plays a part in this role.
9. Jennifer Barrett-Tatum: Been in the foster/shelter life for over 20 years and says that this group of workers and volunteers are doing an amazing job. She is very worried about the mental health of the employees and how they are going to be able to continue to take care of all these animals. Also she would like to see some policy and procedure changes to help the employees and volunteers.
10. Autumn Lucas: She read a letter from former employee Chloe. The letter stated that when she left there were 38 dogs/48 cats currently at MCAS. Also concerned with how daily they were supposed to clean kennels, wash bedding, wash food bowls, give meds, exercise the animals, enrichment with animals as well as daily office duties such as answering phones, making appointments for spay/neuter, arrange transports and also intake of new animals.
11. Joan Evans: Current volunteer at the shelter. Went in one day to huge pile of laundry and dishes and worked for 5 hours trying to help get them caught up. Literally went home and cried at the amount of work theses employees are expected to complete on a daily basis. She said that just 1 day she was physically exhausted and wore out.

Board Chair Jerry Hermanson would like for all the BOH members to visit the shelter to access the issues for themselves.

Matt Corbin stated that he appreciated all the passion that the volunteers had for these animals and would be will to help advocate at County Commissioners meeting to help get funding or other needs met that we might have.

Meeting was adjourned for a 10 minute break.

Agenda Approval: Dr Dupuis made a motion to approve the Agenda Garrett Higdon seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Presentation:

Respiratory  
Disease

Jennifer Garrett, gave an update on the current 24-25 respiratory virus season (Covid 19, FLU, and RSV). The CDC has come up with new standards in trying to align all the viruses with the same guidelines. If you are getting better without fever and no use of fever medications for 24 hours then you should be able to return/start back to normal duties or school. But still for the next 5 days you will need to still use precautions like covering your cough, washing hands and using hand sanitizer. Also they are recommending that you test for these viruses. IF you think you may have one of these please stay home. With Covid-19 the CDC is recommending that everyone over the age of 6 month gets vaccinated. We do have the COVID Vaccine here and it's available by appointment only. This year's pricing is \$38 for regular and \$84 for the High dose Flu vaccines are currently available and we will be holding a drive thru clinic tomorrow, then we will be scheduling them by appointment. CDC stays the best time to receive a flu shot in in September and October. We have already seen cases of flu here in Macon County this fall. RSV is extremely contagious and effects nose, throat and lungs. Common in the fall and winter and usually peaks in January. Currently it is recommended that the RSV Vaccine is given to adults 60 & over, pregnant women between 32 and 36 weeks and infants 8 months and younger. We do have the vaccine available for pregnant women. Cost of the vaccine is \$329.

Approval of  
Previous Meeting  
Minutes:

Garrett Higdon made a motion to approve the minutes from 07/23/2024. Ellen Shope seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

**Fee Guides:** Melissa Setzer spoke about the Billing, Clinical, Animal Control and Dental. These fees were approved at the September County Commissioners meeting. However the Environmental Health fees were denied. Kathy spoke about how Paul Higdon (County Commissioner) wants to see a reduction in the fees for environmental health and wants a committee to look and access these fees. Currently Kathy McGaha, Lisa Browning, Chaz Allen, Paul Higdon and the county attorney are on the committee. Kathy would like to see another Board of Health member to be on the committee and Garrett Higdon has volunteered and will also be a part of this process. The health department fees are currently recommended by the board of health then go before the County Commissioners and once both have approved them we can proceed with any changes. According to the statues both parties (BOH and County Commissioners) have to approve the fee guide if they do not agree them it falls back and stays at the current rate fees.

**Animal Services Update:** Jimmy gave us an update on Animal Services. As of September 5<sup>th</sup> we had already taken in 1000 animals this year. Service calls are almost to 700 and this time last year we had responded to somewhere between 400 & 500. Jimmy provided some handouts with charts showing all the increase in animal intake, service calls and a summary breakdown of these. Jimmy also stated that this year when doing budget that Derek Roland (County Manager) has said no new staff so therefor we were denied another officer. In the previous year we did have funding to change from a administer position to an officer but the job did not get reclassified in time so it was lost. For the current physical year we also as for new kennel door as an improvement for the shelter which would also help to make cleaning easier in the kennel area. The county does cover all the cost of food for all the animals. The volunteers will buy extra treats which is a big help. We also do have an animal food pantry located in the shelter for those who are having a hard time affording food for their animals. Jimmy also stated that he would like to partner with the sheriff's office to maybe have them bring animals from roadside calls (wrecks, fires etc.) to the shelter to help our officers be able to no have to get up as much at night and also this would help with their overtime. Currently the shelter does not open to the public until 1pm daily to allow the employees and volunteer's time to feed the animals and also clean the shelter. Jimmy also noted that we have the same amount of staff in 2024 as we did in 2020 in which our workload has increased tremendously. We have outgrown the current shelter and it is getting outdated. Current Staff: 2 Animal Control Officers and 1 Full time shelter attendant and 1 part time attendant. We are down 1 Animal Control officer and 1 part time shelter attendant. Also Kathy stated that we only have enough money to pay for the 2<sup>nd</sup> part time shelter attendant until the end of December. Jimmy also stated that we have no employees that can euthanize so he is having to go down and take care of this for them and he is doing this on his personal license. Also we have a county ordinance that we are required to hold all strays for 10 days prior to them being able to be adopted. NC Law is that we only have to hold for 72 hours. This has been send to the county commissioners to be addressed and changes but was tabled. Also the county commissioners was ask to make the citations a tiered fee scheduled which was also tabled.

Kathy's recap of Animals Services Update: All Board of Health Members are to contact Jimmy to schedule a time to visit the shelter to have a hands on look at the issues there. Also she will email all members a copy of the proposed ordinance and other changes that was presented to the county commissioners that had been tabled. She also stated that they would let all members research the ratio of workers to animals needed before the board of health makes a decision of how much more staff is needed and also how will be able to fund this staff as well as asking the county for more positions

New Business:

No new business

Approval of Going  
into Closed  
Session:

Matt Corbin made a motion to go into Closed Session at 8:41 p.m... Dr Dupuis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Matt Corbin made a motion to come out of Closed Session at 9:39pm... Dr Dupuis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting Date: The next BOH meeting will be November 19, 2024. (We will have general updates and emerging issues, etc.)

Adjournment: Matt Corbin made a motion to go into adjourn the meeting at 9:40p.m. Dr. Michael Dupuis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes Recorded by: Ashley Garrison





