



Municipality of Anchorage  
**Animal Control Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**April 24, 2025**



1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Matthew Hall.

**Board Members Present:**

Raylene Griffith, Matthew Hall, Timothy Ebben, Samantha Fierro, Sandy Potter, Pamela Schamber.

**Board Members Absent:**

Cathy Foerster

**Staff Present:**

Debbie Burks – Anchorage Health Department (AHD)

Melissa Summerfield, Eric Jonsen, Joel Jorgensen and Logan Robinson – Animal Licensing and Placement Services (ALPS).

2. **Minutes from March 27, 2025:**

Minutes reviewed, motion to approve by Pamela Schamber, seconded by Matthew Hall, motion passed unanimously.

3. **Requested Presentations:**

None.

4. **Persons to be Heard:**

Paul and Ruth Hilling, Rogers Park Community Council – attended to observe

5. **Standing Reports:**

**Anchorage Animal Care Control (AACC) Monthly Reporting and Public Outreach**

**Melissa Summerfield Updates -  
Shelter Manager**

- The summer season has begun, bringing a busy period for the team.
- Operations are running smoothly overall.
- New programs have been implemented and are effectively increasing animal adoptions.

**Joel Jorgensen Updates -  
Outreach & Program:**

- Tales on Trails program officially launched on April 4 and has quickly gained momentum.

- Over 100 people have applied to participate within the first few weeks.
- In just two and a half weeks, 22 animals have gone out on trail outings.
- A recent weekend saw 11 dogs participate, resulting in 10 adoptions.
- Social media posts featuring dogs' trail adventures have driven public interest and led to next-day adoptions.
- The program helps dogs return calmer and more relaxed, offering adopters a better sense of their home behavior.
- Longer trail outings (3–4 hours) provide more meaningful stimulation than brief kennel breaks.
- Staff are managing a high volume of applications and interest, which is a welcome challenge.
- There's excitement about the program's future growth and its potential to dramatically reduce in-shelter populations.

#### **Logan Robison Updates -**

##### **Outreach & Program Continued:**

- Attended a national conference hosted by the Humane Welfare Alliance (HWA), formerly the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).
- Several new programs are in development and will be shared once finalized.
- Partnering with Best Brand Animal Society to analyze shelter data, including case origin by city location and species trends, to identify service gaps and improve life-saving efforts. This partnership is backed by a national organization and expected to be highly beneficial.
- In response to community concerns on social media about animals getting loose, Logan spoke with a board member of Fi Nano, a collar and chip company, during the conference regarding GPS-enabled tracking collars.
- The shelter is exploring a potential partnership with Fi Nano, structured around adoption volume; specific costs are still being determined.

## **6. Committee Reports:**

### **Title 17 - Sgt. Matthew Hall Report:**

#### **Cost of Care, Bonding, and Forfeiture Draft**

- A draft was prepared addressing Cost of Care, Bonding, and Forfeiture of Seized Animals for inclusion in the community code (not the criminal code).
- The draft incorporates line-by-line feedback from previous committee meetings, statutes from other jurisdictions, and input from Animal Control.
- It currently covers approximately half of the intended language and was emailed to committee members after the last meeting.
- Members were asked to review the document for any errors, suggestions, or revisions.
- The goal is to complete the full draft at the next meeting for discussion, refinement, and possible action.

### **Animal Neglect Statute (AMC 8.55.015)**

- Minor edits were proposed by the working group, which includes Animal Control and the Prosecutor's Office.
- Clarification is still pending on subsection A4, specifically regarding whether due process is inherently covered.
- There was discussion on whether a civil violation can escalate to a criminal charge, or if it must originate as a criminal matter.
- The Prosecutor's Office confirmed that Animal Control officers acting reasonably—such as entering a vehicle to protect an animal—would be legally supported.
- Language was revised for clarity, including replacing vague phrases like “may” with “could reasonably be expected to,” in response to public feedback.

### **Animals in Vehicles (Proposed AMC 17.10.025)**

- This proposed code would prohibit animals from being left unattended in a vehicle for more than 12 continuous hours.
- Language was added to clarify that the 12-hour period restarts once the animal is checked on.
- “Unattended” is defined as the owner or custodian not being within visual and audible range and unable to intervene in an emergency or if care is needed.
- The definition addresses concerns about remote monitoring being used as a justification for absence.

### **Purpose Clause Update**

- A purpose clause was added stating that Title 17 sets the legal minimum standard of care for animals.
- The updated language also includes promoting public health and safety and encouraging responsible pet ownership and humane care.
- This addition clarifies that while the statute defines the minimum required, pet owners are expected to go beyond that standard.
- The clarification helps prevent misinterpretation about the intent and scope of the code.

## **7. AHD Staff Reports:**

### **Tamiah Liebersbach – Report (Read by Matthew Hall)**

- The Animal Control Neglect Review Working Group has reviewed proposed changes to AMC 8.55 and Title 17 on two occasions.
- Legal input has been received to help refine the proposed revisions.
- Tamiah is seeking volunteers to serve on the Evaluation Committee for the upcoming Animal Care and Control contract.
- The Request for Proposals (RFP) is expected to be published in mid-May, with committee meetings anticipated during the last two weeks of July.
- Interested individuals should contact Tamiah by email to express interest in participating.

## **8. Old Business**

None

## **9. New Business**

None

## **10. Persons to be Heard on Meeting Topics:**

Group Discussion -

### Financial Burden and Forfeiture

- Concerns were raised about how cost-of-care bonds affect low-income individuals and multi-animal owners.
- Participants questioned whether inability to pay results in automatic forfeiture and whether that provides fair opportunity to retain ownership.
- Clarified that bond amounts are based solely on the actual cost of care, not financial ability.
- Hearing officers may adjust the amount based on reasonableness but cannot consider income or personal hardship.

### Hearing Officer Role and Legal Process

- The hearing officer determines whether there was probable cause for seizure and sets the bond amount accordingly.
- Financial condition cannot be considered, but the actual cost itself can be contested.
- The process is separate from the criminal case and does not imply guilt.
- Concerns were expressed about hearing officers—not judges—handling decisions with serious consequences.

### Third-Party and Out-of-Jurisdiction Care

- Discussion included allowing third-party caregivers to take in seized animals as an alternative to municipal housing.
- Support was expressed for expanding this option outside of Anchorage, with appropriate agreements and oversight.
- Enforcement and legal jurisdiction challenges were discussed, particularly regarding animal control authority beyond municipal boundaries.
- Animal Control would retain responsibility for verifying animal welfare and maintaining access for inspections.

### Cost Structure and Standards

- \$14/day boarding fee is well below actual care costs, which are estimated at \$50–\$60/day.
- Suggestions included standardizing cost breakdowns, especially for multi-animal cases, and exploring payment plans post-hearing.
- Concerns were raised about consistency between claim fees and protective custody costs.

### Court Backlogs and Delay

- Participants noted the court system backlog could result in months of accrued costs, making it

difficult for owners to retain animals during appeals.

- Support was voiced for exploring expedited timelines in Title 8 for animal-related cases with cooperation from the prosecutor and court system.

#### Due Process and Legal Concerns

- Clarified that cost-of-care hearings focus solely on the lawfulness of seizure and cannot be used as evidence in a criminal case.
- Participants emphasized the need for procedural safeguards, especially in cases of false allegations or malicious reporting.
- Interest was expressed in inviting a legal expert to a future meeting to discuss concerns raised in similar cases in other states.

### **11. Informational Items:**

- a. The next Title 17 Review Committee meeting will be held Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Anchorage Animal Care and Control.
- b. The next Animal Control Advisory Board meeting will be held Thursday, May 22, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Anchorage Animal Care and Control.

### **12. Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 7:10 p.m.