



Municipality of Anchorage
Animal Control Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2025



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

Board Members Present:

Raylene Griffith, Matt Hall, Cathy Foerster, Sandy Potter, Pam Schamber, Sam Fierro and Tim Ebben

Board Members Absent:

none

Staff Present:

Tamiah Liebersbach and Debbie Burks – Anchorage Health Department (AHD)

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

2. **Minutes from May 22, 2025:**

A correction was made to the May 22, 2025 minutes to move Sam Fierro from absent list to present list. A motion to approve the minutes as corrected was made by Sam Fierro, seconded by Pam Schamber, and carried.

3. **Requested Presentations:**

none

4. **Persons to be Heard:**

none

5. **Standing Reports:**

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

**Melissa Summerfield Updates -
Shelter Manager**

- The shelter focused on recovery after a major dog seizure. With strong community support, all animals were saved – none were euthanized.
- The shelter is experiencing a surge in kitten intake and an increase in hoarding cases. Staff are working to expand the foster network to manage capacity and care for underage animals. Social media and rising spay/neuter costs may be contributing to the uptick in cases.

Joel Jorgensen Updates - Outreach & Program:

- **Community Support**

After taking in 71 dogs —doubling the shelter’s population—kennel space was limited. Shelters across the state helped by accepting transfers, and fosters signed up daily. Over 60 adoptions happened that weekend alone. Thanks to overwhelming community support, no animals were euthanized. Only one dog was returned, and all remaining dogs are either adopted, in foster care, or still available.

- **Small Animal & Feral Rabbit Update:**

Rabbit intake remains steady, but the feral rabbit population in the community continues to grow and is beyond the shelter’s capacity to manage. Petco (Dimond location) is assisting with placement of other small animals, including guinea pigs, a turtle, and parakeets, helping to free up shelter space.

6. Committee Reports:

Title 17 - Sgt. Matthew Hall Report:

- **Title 17 Update**

The working group continues to refine proposed changes related to cost of care provisions. Recent discussions included input from a former prosecutor/defense attorney and a meeting with the Municipal Prosecutor’s Office. Updated draft language is under review.

- The July 10th Title 17 meeting will be skipped.

7. AHD Staff Reports:

Tamiah Liebersbach:

- **Board Membership:**

- Two board seats remain vacant: awaiting updates from the Mayor’s Office on new applicants.

- **Animal Control Request for Proposal 2026:**

- The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the 2026 Animal Control contract closes June 30, 2025.
- Evaluation committee will review proposals and make an award recommendation.
- Early timeline supports upcoming municipal budgeting process.
- RFP details remain confidential until an award is posted.

- **Title 17 & Legal Updates:**

- Working group (AHD, APD, Legal, Prosecutor’s Office) is reviewing proposed Title 17 changes, including cruelty/neglect sections.
- Revisions are being informed by recent incidents (e.g., vehicle fire case).
- Committee feedback will be shared with the board once finalized.

- **Facility Upgrades:**

- \$100K secured for design work; \$200K was originally needed.
- Priorities under review, with focus on aging incinerator and building needs.
- Walk-in cooler repair is pending part delivery and contractor scheduling.

- **Staffing/Leave Notice:**

- AHD Manager may be on leave due to a recent infant placement for adoption.
- Coverage will be provided by designated staff, including Debbie.
- Updates on leave status will be shared as available.

8. Old Business

None

9. New Business

Summary of continued Advisory Board Discussion on Vehicle Fire, Dog Deaths, and Title 17 Enforcement Gaps - Pages 4 and 5

10. Persons to be Heard on Meeting Topics:

None

11. Informational Items:

- a. The next Title 17 Review Committee **meeting July 10th has been cancelled**. Next meeting will be on August 14, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Anchorage Animal Care and Control.
- b. The next Animal Control Advisory Board meeting will be held Thursday, July 24, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Anchorage Animal Care and Control or call-in to 907.343.6060

12. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn at 7:38 p.m.

Summary of Group Discussion on Vehicle Fire, Dog Deaths, and Title 17 Enforcement Gaps

The following summary reflects discussion among the Animal Control Advisory Board, Health Department staff, and Animal Care & Control staff regarding the investigation into the November 2024 vehicle fire that resulted in multiple dog fatalities, the related enforcement limitations under Title 17, and potential future policy improvements.

Internal Investigation and Report Concerns

- The Anchorage Assembly requested an investigation into a vehicle fire that resulted in the death of multiple dogs.
- The Health Department asked Legal to conduct the investigation, which was then delegated to Internal Audit.
- Internal Audit concluded there were no violations of municipal code or policies.
- Participants questioned Internal Audit's qualifications, especially their understanding of Title 17 animal code.
- Report language around non-resident dogs and licensing requirements was unclear and potentially misleading.

Key Enforcement Challenges

- The individual had a known prior case in Mat-Su involving the seizure of 50 dogs but was never charged.
- No active charges were pursued in Anchorage due to jurisdictional limitations and lack of evidence.
- The individual remained mobile, often evading follow-up, and frequently provided out-of-area addresses.
- Officers made contact several times but were unable to escalate enforcement due to fragmented case management.

Missed Opportunities and Frustrations

- Case closures occurred too quickly without linking prior violations or building a case history.
- Officers noted difficulties in maintaining consistent tracking of a repeat offender across multiple incidents.
- Public calls about the individual were often too late to take effective action; the suspect remained under the radar.

Legal and Code Gaps Identified

- Title 17 lacks a clear definition of “long-term confinement” for animals in vehicles.
- There is currently no mechanism to escalate repeated minor violations into a more serious offense.
- Legal limitations prevent seizing animals unless clear evidence of cruelty or neglect exists.

Potential Code and Policy Revisions

- Suggest creating specific care standards for animals kept or transported in vehicles.
- Proposal for a “multi-animal vehicle compliance checklist” based on facility license standards.
- Recommendation to establish a formal interjurisdictional policy for communication (e.g., with Mat-Su).
- Suggested enforcement model: if four or more dogs are transported in Anchorage, the owner must meet minimum care requirements.
- Discussed creating a system where repeated violations could lead to criminal charges or seizure authority.

Public Perception and Due Diligence

- Concern expressed that Assembly members and the public may conclude the Health Department failed to act.
- Staff emphasized that internal documentation provides more detail than what was shown in the audit report.
- Plan to provide the Assembly with additional context, case notes, and examples of actions taken to demonstrate due diligence.