

## **Stakeholder Feedback Attachment**

*This section includes final comments from the Community Stakeholder Group. Members of the group were first asked to provide comments on a preliminary draft of the report. Pursuant to those comments the Work Group incorporated suggestions and made revisions to the draft.*

*Subsequently, Stakeholder Group members were asked to provide comments and recommendations on the final report as they saw fit, preferably in letter or memo format. Only those final comments are included here. They are included exactly as received excepting the addition of headings for sets of comments that did not include one and format clarification.*

**Animal Services Community Stakeholder Group**  
**Document Review and Feedback**  
Strategic Plan 2009-2011  
Operational Master Plan 2009-2011

Dr. R. Bradley Crauer  
October 2, 2008

First, I'd like to commend the Interbranch Workgroup for the development of the Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan in its current form. It is obvious in this final draft that the Work Group incorporated the views and concerns of the stakeholders to help shape the document as it is now presented.

After the passing of Motion 12737, I was asked to recruit and lead a group of volunteer veterinarians to provide "pro-bono" veterinary support for KCACC. Our role was to be a candid, non-politicized third party. We were not proponents for or against a "no-kill" system and had no bias regarding KCACC or its agents. We were there simply acting as advocates for the animals under the care of KCACC. Our goal was to remove whatever stressors possible to allow KCACC to implement well documented and much needed changes. For over four months volunteer veterinarians were present at the Kent Shelter once to twice weekly and occasional visits to Crossroads. We provided rescue by removing over 60 of the sickest animals which were treated at our hospitals then placed in adoption homes. It is with my personal experience with the KCACC leadership, the Kent and Crossroads Shelters and the direct feedback from my volunteer team in mind that I will proceed with the Strategic and Operational Master Plan review.

Moving forward, my biggest concern with the Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan as an outline for decision making is the lack of accountability, transparency and accuracy of the statistics it contains. Specifically, I question the numbers associated with the foster program and euthanasia rates.

KCACC documents a very large number of animals going into the foster program each week. The disposition of these animals is not tracked or counted in any of the census figures. At best, their removal from the accounting process distorts all of the numbers as a total and as percentages. At worst, it puts in question the transparency as to the outcome of animals under the care of KCACC. A specific example we observed was a population (20-30) of very sick Panleukemia cats which disappeared. We were told by an ACO that they were euthanized but acting Shelter Manager Al Dams said they were put in foster homes. This disease has a potentially high mortality rate and treatment can be very labor intensive. If they did go to foster what happened to these cats? How many died? Once healthy did they get adopted from the foster home? These cats were not documented as euthanized but a suspicious log of 74cc being used to euthanize a single cat (typical dose 4cc) was recorded around the same time. Because the disposition of animals "fostered" is not followed or documented it puts both the foster and euthanasia statistics in question.

After reviewing months of the daily euthanasia log, I voiced concern about the potential for inaccurate reporting of euthanasia solution (Fatal Plus). I am not surprised that Dr. Hopkins recent review showed the volume of Fatal Plus balanced with the log. My question is directed at the inconsistency of its dosage not the accuracy of the balance.

The UC Davis report, on page 141, documents the Fatal Plus dosage routinely used by KCACC. It states the following: 2cc per kitten, 4cc per cat, both given IP (Inter-peritoneal) and 8-10cc per big dog or 1-2cc per estimated 10lbs of body weight IV. These doses were considered by the UC Davis report to be appropriate. On my first visit to KCACC in April, I asked about euthanasia protocol. I was told the routine dose was 3cc per cat and approximately 10cc per dog depending on size. In May, (May 6<sup>th</sup> specifically) when I first questioned the documentation of inconsistent usage patterns, Sharon Nelson made an inquiry and was told by KCACC that the routine dose they used was 10cc per cat and 13cc per dog.

With respect to Dr. Hopkins, her report states that KCACC increases the Fatal Plus dose to 5-8cc per cat when given IP in feral cats. This directly conflicts with the UC Davis report and any prior acknowledged dosing. I have reviewed the euthanasia log day by day over several months and the most common dose is 3cc per cat. There are regularly days where more than 5-8cc are used on each cat and a majority of those cats are not documented as feral. At best, this reveals a lack of consistency of policy protocol or communication as to what the actual protocol is. At worst, it opens the door to the possibility that logs are being falsified by documenting excess usage on some animals to cover for the euthanasia of others off the record.

I am not surprised the euthanasia log census matches with Chameleon software. The real concern is the Chameleon software itself and those managing the data. If hundreds of animals are disappearing into a foster program with no accountability as to their disposition, who is to say that they are not being put into foster-hoarder situations, euthanized or sold out the back door for that matter. We just don't know and KCACC cannot tell you. These animals are off the Chameleon "grid", their actual outcome or whereabouts is unaccounted for. A common and repeating trend that we observed was all of the sickest animals seemed to "disappear" just prior to a scheduled inspection. This lack of accounting transparency puts all the numbers stated (and percentages) in question. With the foster count on a continued increase this year I would not advise making any decisions assuming that the statistics as reported in the Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan to be accurate.

My second major concern involves the current and established culture of KCACC and their ability to make the changes necessary to move towards the goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan.

Our veterinary group stepped up as an unbiased third party to try and help KCACC overcome some of the many challenges it faces. Our presence was met with various degrees of suspicion, divisiveness and hostility. The volunteer survey sheets were

ridiculed as attacks, our suggestions discounted as unattainable and ultimately we were demonized for our presence. As a group we did not make any observations or bring forward any suggestions that did not coincide with those outlined by the UC Davis report or by the Workgroup in the Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan.

It seems that many agents of KCACC are so threatened and paranoid of outside help that they feel the need to denigrate it at every turn. In order to successfully move forward it will be paramount that positive relationships with outside groups be fostered, valued and promoted. The current culture has not proven it has the desire or ability to do so.

The ability of the current culture of KCACC to make real, sustainable change is also in question. So many times we were told changes were being made, isolation protocols implemented, medical documentation in place, intake procedures improved etc. etc. These changes were all too often lip service. When outside oversight was absent so were the supposed changes. Saying there have been changes made does not constitute actual change. Cleaning the shelter for an inspection does not constitute actual change. The improvements recently implemented have been last minute and under mandate. I worry the motivation is to placate you, the decision makers.

In summary, I believe KCACC is greatly lacking in accountability and transparency and has an established culture that inhibits the possibility of real, sustainable change. These are the main reasons why I believe Option 3, the Community-Based Services Model, is the preferred option moving forward. I have no opinion on the retention of ACO's to maintain Animal Control Services. It has been well documented that the care provided by the KCACC shelters has been substandard and is nothing King County should be proud of. As a taxpayer, I see various private models in our own community who are doing a far superior job caring for the animals they are entrusted with. It is time for King County to get out of the sheltering business.

Thank you for your time,

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**King County Animal Services**  
**Interbranch Work Group**

**King County Animal Services Strategic Plan and  
Operational Master Plan, 2009-2011**

Stakeholder Review

Claire Loeb Davis  
President, Coalition for a No Kill King County

*October 2, 2008*

As a member of the community stakeholder group asked to participate in the development of King County's Animal Services Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan, I have been asked to provide comments on the near-final draft of the strategic and operational plans. However, the stakeholder group has not been provided with the facilities master plan for comment, and some portions of the appendix to the plans appear to be missing. Because of many delays in the completion of the strategic and operational plans, and pressures to complete these plans in time for the King County budgeting process, the time allocated for stakeholders to provide comments has been severely compressed – such that we have been given less than a week to read a 120-page document and provide thoughtful comments. This timing is unfortunate, and I would urge King County to plan more carefully in the future in order to be considerate of the time of its volunteer stakeholders, as well as to fully utilize the expertise they have to offer. (Please also see my conclusory comments for a discussion of other problems with the stakeholder review process.)

That said, it seems as if the time spent to develop the final draft of these plans was well spent. With the exception of the continued inclusion of statistics that have no credibility, there has been a vast improvement in these plans since they were first presented to the stakeholders in draft form, and it is clear that a lot of work and effort went into them in the time between that draft and the final versions. I commend the members of the Interbranch Work Group on this effort. Many of the stakeholders' comments on the draft plan were incorporated; some were not. I will not repeat here my specific comments concerning elements of the draft plan that are still part of the final draft, but I note for the record that I continue to have the same concerns as those I originally explained.

**I. Recommendation: The County Should Pursue Option 3-B**

My recommendations are based on an analysis of the options as presented in the strategic and operational plans, an evaluation of the expert reports provided to the county, my pre-existing knowledge and experience with animal sheltering models around the country as a former animal law advisor for Best Friends Animal Society, and my specific knowledge and experience with King County Animal Care and Control – which began about 15 months ago when I was asked to serve on the KCACC Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Based on this knowledge and experience, I strongly recommend that King County adopt Community-Based Services Model Option B, which would transfer all sheltering and animal control services to private entities within the community, and the responsibility for animal cruelty investigations to the King County Sheriff's Office and other community law enforcement agencies. I make this recommendation with several caveats:

- A. In its negotiations with private entities, King County must fairly assess the realistic cost of contracting with these entities to provide services. As described below, I don't believe a reasonable assessment of these costs is provided in the current operational plan. Although King County must be responsible with taxpayer money, it must also ensure that it provides sufficient funds for the contracting entity or entities to be successful. Transferring services must not be seen by the county as an easy and inexpensive way out of problems with animal services that it has allowed to fester for many years. On the other hand, as noted below, it is very likely that a private organization will be able to provide King County citizens with far more for their money, so the transfer of all sheltering and control services is likely to create the most cost-effective solution for taxpayers.
- B. King County must make every effort to convince the county's municipalities to join with the county in this contract, so that the community can work together to develop a model No Kill program. Toward this end, the county must make clear to the municipalities its apparent intention to begin to charge them their fair share for animal services no matter which plan is adopted, and regardless of whether current services are enhanced. Municipalities should not get the (mistaken) impression that they are being asked to pay for services only because the county is trying to develop a model No Kill program, when the reasons for this cost-sharing appear to be separate from that goal. Since the operational plan makes it clear that this cost-sharing transfer would not take place overnight under Option #1 (indicating transfer would not be complete until 2010), there should not be any different expectation under Option #3. Having taken on the responsibility to provide county-wide animal services, King County now has the responsibility to transfer those services in a responsible way, and to continue to subsidize the services provided to municipalities until they can be given an appropriate amount of time to make the necessary financial adjustment.
- C. Similarly, King County must take a responsible approach to the transfer of the responsibility of animal cruelty investigations. Ideally, it would establish an Animal Cruelty Task Force within the King County Sheriff's Office, and encourage municipalities to contract for these services. At a minimum, it should provide training to municipal police departments that wish to take on these services, and pool the expertise and resources necessary to promote effective responses to complaints of cruelty and neglect across the county.
- D. King County must contract for animal care and animal control services with a qualified non-profit (or non-profits) with a track record of providing excellent services to the animals and the public.

- E. King County must mandate, through either contractual terms or legislation, that contracting entities meet the goals of a model, No Kill program, including providing the county and the public with transparency as to their progress; meeting the statistical goals laid out by the county (although obviously within an extended timeframe, given the delayed start); and implementing the elements of a model program laid out within these plans, the Council’s original motion, and in the recommendations of the KCACC Citizens’ Advisory Committee.
- F. As suggested in the operational plans, King County should continue to take responsibility for the welfare of animals within the community, by sponsoring a capital campaign to build the new animal shelter that has been badly needed for so long, and by subsidizing free and low-cost spay/neuter services. The county could either provide these services directly, or (preferably) contract with other agencies within the county who have a proven track record of providing efficient and cost-effective spay/neuter. If these services are effectively provided, hopefully the incoming shelter population will *decrease* over time, rather than increase as predicted in the strategic plan. Investment in these spay/neuter resources would be cost-effective for the taxpayers over the long-term, as it would reduce the amount of money that would need to be spent sheltering animals in future years.
- G. As part of the work that King County will need to do to implement Option 3-B, the county should open up the county code and reevaluate the regulations related to licensing, pet limits, and special permits. This examination should be done with the input of community stakeholders and contracting entities, so that the county can ensure that none of its existing regulations are inhibiting the development of a model, No Kill program.

## **II. Analysis**

There are many reasons why it would not only be impracticable, but impossible, for KCACC to meet the county’s objectives within its current structure. Based on both its past track record and its current performance, KCACC has shown an inability to take the steps necessary to develop a model program – or, indeed, to even provide basic levels of humane care, responsible animal control services, and competent animal cruelty investigations. In addition, (although I understand this is not part of the impracticability finding), it would be financially irresponsible for King County to spend the amount of money that would be necessary to make the transformation of KCACC even a remote possibility.

### **1) KCACC’s poor track record leaves little hope for future improvement.**

It is difficult to imagine entrusting the development of a model program to the same agency, under the same leadership, that over the last decade has been content to provide a standard of care for the county’s animals that did not meet even minimally acceptable levels. Despite years of complaints and a program that obviously failed to provide humane care, KCACC and the King County executive branch demonstrated no interest in improving the animal services program until the events of the last year brought the program into the spotlight. Even now – more than one year after the KCACC Citizens’ Advisory Report, more than six

months after the reports from the experts hired by the county, and after an infusion of nearly \$1 million in extra funds – the program has failed to make the improvements necessary to provide basic humane care. As discussed below, KCACC has continued to alienate community stakeholders and volunteers, has shown a disregard for the advice provided by experts retained by the county, and has actually sank in its level of credibility and transparency. As recent news reports have revealed, KCACC has also been content to provide animal control services that utterly fail to protect county residents from free-roaming and aggressive dogs – admitting that it usually does not respond to such complaints until *after* someone has already been bitten.

Perhaps there is no more convincing evidence of KCACC’s inability to improve than the current state of the KCACC shelters. Despite repeated and detailed recommendations by both the veterinarians with the U.C. Davis Shelter Medicine Program and community volunteer veterinarians, KCACC has failed to implement the basic policies and protocols necessary to ensure humane care of the animals within its custody. Over the past two weeks, KCACC has put its entire stray dog holding area at the Kent shelter into quarantine because of an outbreak of canine parvovirus, and eliminated for two weeks public or volunteer contact with the cats in the Kent shelter because of an outbreak of feline panleukopenia. Both are serious and often fatal diseases, whose spread can be limited with proper shelter protocols such as cleaning, isolation, intake exams, and vaccinations. (Although KCACC apparently claims that there were only isolated instances of these diseases in animals coming into the shelter, an informal survey of other shelters confirms that such a scenario is not consistent with the drastic actions taken in response.) At the same time, the Kent shelter (which is always far over its capacity), is reportedly even more full than ever. Instead of using the funds provided by council to *replace* old, inhumane cat cages, KCACC has (by its own admission) used the new cages to expand capacity – continuing to use the old cages that its own experts have said are not suitable for the humane housing of cats. And even though its own experts have said it is not acceptable to house animals outside without proper shelter, KCACC has been housing dozens of cats and dogs outside on the loading dock of the shelter – despite the cold and rainy weather of the first week of October.

Most fundamentally, KCACC has failed to take any action to take control over its shelter population. The necessity of this action was made clear in every expert report. By KCACC’s own admission, its adoption rate has decreased since 2007. Although County Executive Ron Sims promised an emergency adoption drive last spring, that adoption drive never materialized, and KCACC turned down offers of help for this drive from stakeholders and community rescue organizations – saying that there was “no emergency.” Despite being given the money to do so, KCACC has not significantly expanded its holding capacity for dogs. Despite the fact that its own experts indicated that if the animals receive proper exercise, the shelter at Crossroads was actually more humane than the Kent facility, KCACC has taken action to *decrease* the quality of care provided at Crossroads, and has continued to underutilize the space there. Finally, despite warning after warning that it could not simply attempt to reduce shelter killing without concurrent programs to move more animals out of the shelter into permanent homes, KCACC has done just that. The result is that the Kent shelter is reportedly more crowded than ever before, such that it recently had to close down to admissions for at least a week, despite the fact that it is housing animals in every nook and cranny. Given this record overcrowding, and the



observations in the U.C. Davis report, it is clear that KCACC is not able to provide all the animals with humane housing, and does not have sufficient staff to provide them with basic care.

## **2) KCACC lacks the transparency and honesty necessary for success.**

As indicated in the surveys presented to the KCACC Citizens' Advisory Committee, KCACC has long had a credibility gap with its community stakeholders, volunteers, and area rescue organizations. This credibility gap has only increased over the past year.

There is no better example of this than the absurd statistics contained in these plans. Despite the fact that King County executive leadership has admitted that its statistics are unreliable, and agreed at one point to discontinue using them until they were audited, KCACC continues to use these statistics to support false claims of progress. The extensive problems with these statistics were discussed at length in my comments to the draft strategic plan, and were mentioned by multiple other stakeholders during our group discussions. Yet, KCACC has responded to these concerns by simply altering the statistics included in the draft report, without any justification for these alterations, or any explanation as to why the new statistics are any more reliable than the old ones. It is not sufficient to simply note in footnotes that these statistics have not been audited – they are so flawed and unreliable that they should not be considered as part of the decision making process.

The 20 serious concerns I noted about these statistics in my comments to the draft report remain, ranging from a failure to intake animals into the system to the lack of any control over records that are added, altered, or erased. I will highlight only a few of the more serious concerns.

First, it is apparent on the face of it that KCACC cannot be at a 20% kill rate, down from a nearly 40% rate in 2007. Unless the shelter is simply stockpiling animals in inhumane conditions without appropriate care (a very real possibility), it cannot have reached a legitimate 20% kill rate when it has uncontrolled outbreaks of disease, a lack of functional programs, and stressful conditions that guarantee that animals will get sick and develop behavior problems. A shelter with a legitimate 20% kill rate is a functional shelter (such as some of the other shelters in our community), with appropriate housing and disease management, effective adoption and foster programs, and aggressive community outreach. KCACC has none of these things. Those facts speak for themselves.

Second, after it was observed by the community stakeholders that the statistics included in the draft report only added up to 86% of the animals, and left more than 800 animals unaccounted for, KCACC simply changed the statistics. It subtracted nearly 500 animals from its intake number, reducing the intake rate to significantly less than for the same time period in 2007 – despite the repeated claims by shelter leadership that intake this year has increased. It also added 196 “dead on arrival” animals, who should not be included as “intakes” in the first place. It is self-evident that statistics that simply morph in response to criticism cannot be reliable.

Third, KCACC has still failed to properly account for the numbers of animals it claims are entering foster care. During the 20 weeks for which KCACC has provided weekly reports and statistics to the Council, it has claimed that it has sent 1,096 animals into foster care. This 20-week total is nearly 10 times the number of animals sent to foster care in all of 2007, yet KCACC has not demonstrated an increase in either program resources or foster volunteers that would explain this meteoric rise. (A report generated at the end of May 2008 listed fewer than 70 foster homes, once repetitious and inaccurate entries are removed. Although a few of these foster homes were very active, many had only fostered a single animal over an extended period of time.) These foster numbers equate to nearly 10% of the total yearly shelter population being sent into foster care in just 20 weeks, and is outside the norms of the well-functioning foster programs operated by any of the model jurisdictions, despite the fact that they have exponentially more foster homes than King County. In order to make its reports to the Council appear to balance, KCACC is also reporting the animals going to foster care as final “dispositions,” a severe error that, once made, skews all of the other statistics. Finally, KCACC has failed to account for what has happened to these 1,096 animals, in addition to all those that must have been sent to foster during the 20 weeks for which reports were not filed. These discrepancies alone would account for the claimed 20% decrease in the kill rate from 2007 to 2008.

Finally, KCACC has not provided an adequate explanation of the severe discrepancies in its euthanasia logs as reported to the Council. On October 2, the stakeholder review group received a report filed by Dr. Sharon Hopkins of the Public Health Department, which indicates that she spot-checked KCACC’s euthanasia data and found no irregularities. However, Dr. Hopkins seems to have taken for granted KCACC’s new assertion that its protocols call for up to 8 cc to kill a cat and 16 cc for a dog. This is despite the fact that the U.C. Davis team indicated in its March 2008 report (p. 141) that the accepted routine dosages at KCACC were 8-10 cc for big dogs, and less as a dog’s size decreases, and 2-4 cc for cats, taking into account that the shelter routinely uses intraperitoneal injections to kill even cats who can be easily handled. Veterinarians indicate that even these doses are on the upper end of what is acceptable. But the euthanasia records submitted to council indicated that these routine dosages are often doubled, sometimes tripled, and occasionally increased by a radical amount (such as one reported dosage of 74 cc for a single cat.) Whether or not the bottom line of the euthanasia logs matches the bottom line of the amount of Fatal Plus that is used, these significant and regular discrepancies raise serious concerns. While it is possible that these aberrations are the result of sloppy and haphazard dosing, it certainly leaves a large opening for KCACC to be euthanizing far more animals than it reports – while still being able to balance its euthanasia books.

I am hopeful that the King County Auditor will be able to shed some light on the enormous statistical irregularities that exist in King County’s records. Until that happens, these statistics should not be used in public discourse, and their continued use only serves to further undermine KCACC’s credibility, adding to the dubious public claims regularly made by the agency. For instance, KCACC continues to claim in the final strategic plan that it has a “partnership” with the Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Project, even though the founder and president of that program is part of the stakeholder review committee, and has insisted that no such partnership exists. KCACC continues to claim that it is an “open-admission” shelter, even though it frequently diverts animals to other shelters, and was closed to admissions just last

week. KCACC continues to proclaim that it has made significant progress in disease control, even while behind closed doors it is dealing with frequent outbreaks of canine parvovirus and feline panleukopenia. KCACC also has misrepresented previous disease outbreaks to the press, even when their claims are contradicted by direct observations, emails, and veterinary records. And so on, and so on.

Since the first revelation of the severe problems at the agency, KCACC has continued to operate in denial, even in the face of mounting and irrefutable evidence. Because it refuses to openly admit the problems it continues to face, it will never be in a position to solve them.

### **3) King County has alienated the people and the organizations in the community necessary to build a successful model program.**

The strategic and operational plans correctly note that a successful No Kill model program must include effective community outreach, a strong base of committed volunteers, cooperation from the community, and good working relationships with area rescue organizations. In ways that are too numerous to mention, KCACC continues to alienate those community stakeholders who are essential to its success. It continues to communicate poorly with area rescue groups – refusing or ignoring offers of assistance from some groups, and despite its claims to the contrary, failing to even notify other area shelters this week when it closed the Kent shelter to admissions. King County routinely maligns its largest rescue partner, the Seattle Humane Society, whether through the inappropriate “twittering” of King County Executive Sims, or the frequent snide comments made by KCACC staff members. Although King County hired a volunteer coordinator this spring to expand the volunteer program, that coordinator has actually significantly curtailed vital volunteer responsibilities and thus reduced the level of care provided to the animals, while alienating a significant portion of the volunteer work force. Just last month, 31 of KCACC’s volunteers authored a letter objecting to these changes, and many have stopped their volunteering efforts as a result. In an example that speaks for itself, even Friends of KCAC – a group formed solely to support the shelter – has voted to distance itself from KCACC because of KCACC’s failure to properly account for funds received, KCACC’s mismanagement of donations, and a belief that the funds that Friends provides are not being used effectively to help the animals.

### **4) KCACC has not embraced the goals mandated by the county, and there is little indication it will do so.**

From the time that the King County Council passed legislation calling for a model, No Kill program, KCACC and the King County Executive Branch have taken a variety of approaches to the mandate. In interviews with the press, King County Executive Sims said that he did not agree with the goal mandated by Council, publicly challenging the Council’s No Kill policy. Indeed, more than a year after the Council declared that the pursuit of No Kill was the policy of the county, KCACC continued to hire senior staff members (the current communications director and volunteer coordinator) who are openly hostile to the No Kill philosophy. In the 2008 Operational Plan, KCACC declared that meeting the goals would be impossible, a stance that has since been frequently reiterated. More recently, KCACC has

decided to manipulate its statistics to make it appear as if it is meeting the Council's objectives, even though it has not implemented the programs that would be necessary to do so.

Representatives of the model programs studied by the KCACC Citizens' Advisory Committee emphasized that the single most important factor in creating a model No Kill program is to have staff and leadership who fully embrace this goal. KCACC has never done this, and there is no indication that it ever will.

**5) KCACC refuses to accept feedback from either community stakeholders or experts who have been hired by King County.**

KCACC and the King County Executive leadership have taken three distinct approaches to the expert evaluations that have been provided to the county. From the beginning, they have largely ignored the KCACC Citizens' Advisory Committee report. They lashed out against consultant Nathan Winograd, and continue to attack him for his findings, even though they have been largely confirmed by subsequent experts. Finally, they pretend to embrace the report authored by the U.C. Davis veterinarian team, even though they largely ignore its findings. The examples are too numerous to list. Just for example, nearly six months after the U.C. Davis team insisted that KCACC immediately stop the inhumane practice of testing dogs for "cat aggression" by allowing them to attack cats in ground floor cages (p. 112), King County proudly released a report justifying the killing of a dog because he failed this very test. Just last month, KCACC announced that volunteers were no longer allowed to walk stray dogs at the Crossroads shelter, even though KCACC made no provision for staff members to do so, and the U.C. Davis report clearly stated that all the dogs at Crossroads must be regularly exercised because of the extremely small size of their kennels (p. 47). Although the U.C. Davis report noted that it was inhumane to house cats outdoors without proper shelter and in tiny "Carnation" cages (p. 56-60), KCACC continues both practices at the Kent shelter, as well as continuing the condemned practice of housing multiple incompatible dogs in a single kennel (p. 46). Most importantly, KCACC has ignored the advice of every single expert report, in failing to institute appropriate disease control measures, and failing to take the actions necessary to increase the number of animals leaving the shelter, resulting in inadequate care of shelter animals, and the long-term housing of animals in inhumane conditions.

Some of these recommendations are somewhat complicated to implement, although one would expect significant progress to have been made in the year that has passed since many of them were first noted. Other recommendations, such as discontinuing the cat aggression test for dogs, are extremely easy to implement, as they are cost free and require no additional space or staff training. However, KCACC has demonstrated a consistent pattern of refusing to listen to experts – whether they be the county's hired consultants, the volunteers on the advisory committee, or the volunteer community veterinarians. As a result, it will never fix the problems these experts have identified.

**6) It would be financially irresponsible to spend the money necessary to have any hope of turning KCACC into a functional agency, let alone a model program.**

The operational plan estimates that \$8.3 million would be necessary to transform the current KCACC agency into a model No Kill program. For the reasons listed elsewhere in these comments, no amount of money will be enough to effectuate this transformation. However, \$8.3 million is far more than a functional agency should need to meet the county's goals, and far exceeds the amount spent by other programs. For example, although the operational plan indicates that this cost is "comparable to other successful no-kill programs," this is not the case. (Excepting, of course, programs like the San Francisco SPCA, which spends millions of dollars on programs not directly linked to animal sheltering.) The example used by the operational plan (p. 55) proves this point: while the Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA spends \$468 per animal in its program, King County's proposed budget would equate to \$671 per animal. This is not comparable.

All this said, I agree with the Work Group that this kind of investment would probably be necessary to bring KCACC to the staffing levels of a model program, because of the extremely high salaries paid by the county. These salaries far exceed the salaries that are standard for either the animal welfare industry or for local conditions.<sup>1</sup> Just for example, at KCACC a veterinary technician costs the county \$73,000 in salary and benefits, while the rough community average salary for that position is \$32,000. In fact, the veterinary technicians at KCACC cost even more than the average community salary for a veterinarian, which is around \$65,000 to \$70,000 (KCACC vets cost \$101,000 each). An animal control officer at KCACC costs the county about \$73,000, while the rough average salary for that position is \$32,000. The new KCACC volunteer coordinator costs \$93,000, which is significantly higher than the salary of even the *executive director* of most locally-based animal welfare organizations, and more than double the average salary for volunteer coordinators. This discussion of salaries is not meant as an affront to the people who work for KCACC, but it is an example of elementary economics. If KCACC pays its staff up to double the going rate paid in the private sector, it will cost the taxpayers twice the amount of money to appropriately staff KCACC as it would for a private organization. As a result, county taxpayers should not be led to believe that \$8.3 million is the cost of running a model, No Kill animal services program. This is simply the cost of attempting to bring *King County* up to the staffing and service levels necessary for such a program, given the very high salaries and enormous financial inefficiencies inherent in the King County system.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that a private organization could do far more with the same resources provided to KCACC, and that the county should contract with this organization for the full range of services it can responsibly provide. On the other hand, the operational plan's estimates of what it would cost King County to contract with a private organization are ludicrous. Although the operational plan estimates it would cost \$8.3 million for King County to create a model program, it guesses that it could contract for those same services for only \$1.9 million. This is clearly an unrealistic estimate that should not be used as the basis for policy decisions. King County cannot expect to extricate itself from the mess it has created of animal services without giving the contracting agency or agencies the money necessary to turn the program around.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures are rough averages obtained through several Internet search engines listing average community salaries, as well as an informal review of the salaries at local organizations and model jurisdictions. They are rough estimates only for the purposes of discussion.

**7) Law enforcement responsibilities should be in the hands of qualified law enforcement personnel.**

For all of the reasons that are well articulated within the operational plan, it is clear that law enforcement officials, such those in the King County Sheriff's Office should be in charge of investigating reports of animal cruelty. Animal cruelty is a crime, and should be treated like one.

As the plans note, under the current system the primary responsibility for investigating complaints of animal cruelty and neglect falls to KCACC. However, KCACC officers have only the most rudimentary training in law enforcement. They are not armed, are not adequately trained to protect themselves or the public, do not know how to conduct thorough investigations and preserve evidence so that it can be used in court, do not have the power to perform arrests, and are not trained to protect the Constitutional rights of the accused. In short, they are not law enforcement officers. Frequently, KCACC responds to clear and egregious cases of cruelty not by prosecuting the offenders, but by giving them repeated chances to change their behavior, often with tragic results.

KCACC also lacks the ability to respond to animal cruelty complaints in a timely manner. The plans note that the King County Sheriff's Office has at least 200 patrol officers on the road who are able to respond to calls throughout King County, which covers more than 2,000 square miles. In contrast, KCACC usually has no more than seven animal control officers able to respond to both animal control and animal cruelty calls at any one time – and usually far fewer than that, because these officers are often tasked with other responsibilities, such as providing basic animal care. As a result, KCACC often has a backlog of hundreds of calls, and frequently fails to respond to either animal cruelty complaints or animal control calls in time to prevent serious injury to pets and people.

This conclusion that the investigations of animal cruelty should be transferred is even more obvious when we take into account the fact noted in the operational plan, that animal cruelty is often associated with crimes against humans. If someone is abusing their dog, it is more likely they are also abusing their spouse or child. If a person is engaging in dog fighting, it is more likely that they are also involved in drugs and gang violence. In fact, studies have shown that people who abuse animals are five times more likely to commit violent crimes against people, four times more likely to commit property crimes, and three more likely to commit drug or disorderly-conduct offenses. Anyone concerned with the public safety should object to the fact that unarmed animal control officers are frequently entering situations where crimes against humans are probably occurring – but they have neither the training or experience to recognize or investigate these crimes.

**8) In order to implement a model, No Kill animal services program, animal services must be in the hands of people and organizations whose first priority is the animals.**

As the model jurisdictions all note, the success of a model No Kill program comes down to the commitment of the people who administer it. KCACC has never placed either interest or experience in animal welfare, or dedication to the Council's model, No Kill objective, at the top of the required qualifications for its employees. In fact, in the job description released for the

KCACC manager position last year, the primary qualification was “five years of regulatory experience,” while some experience with animals was only “preferred.” There is no doubt that KCACC has some employees who are dedicated to the animals, and who are in their jobs for that reason. However, the culture does not require such dedication, and the leadership does not support or reward it. Instead, these dedicated people struggle against enormous obstacles— such as the veterinary technician who started the foster program in order to save animals, and operated it on her own private time for years without any support from KCACC leadership. By contracting with a private, non-profit organization with a track record of implementing the elements of a No Kill program, King County will enlist an organization and employees who will put the animals first. At the most fundamental level, that is what is necessary for a successful model program.

### **III. Conclusion.**

Finally, a comment on the stakeholder review process is appropriate, because it illustrates the inherent dysfunction and lack of effective leadership with the executive branch that oversees KCACC. The community stakeholders were invited into this process by a Work Group that combined both executive and council representatives, in addition to representatives from other county departments. It should go without saying that the stakeholders should have been encouraged and supported in providing diverse viewpoints, even if they disagreed with the policy direction advocated by the current executive branch leadership. Quite to the contrary, however, members of the executive branch have engaged in a campaign to intimidate, silence, and even destroy KCACC’s critics, including several people involved in the stakeholder review process. This occurred despite the best efforts of co-chairs Saroja Reddy and Elissa Benson, who by all observations attempted to preserve a fair and objective process within the work group. Nevertheless, during the review process many of the stakeholders were personally and publicly attacked for expressing views contrary to those of the existing executive administration. These attacks were openly supported by King County Executive Ron Sims, in an apparent attempt to coerce several stakeholders into resigning from the process or moderating their viewpoints. In order to facilitate public ridicule of the stakeholders, executive branch officials also leaked confidential documents and disclosed confidential discussions that were conducted within stakeholder review meetings.

It is a credit to the strength of the community stakeholders – and their commitment to the animals – that most of them have persevered under such intolerable conditions, and continued to do their best to provide King County with candid advice. However, it clearly illustrates the dysfunction of KCACC and the King County Executive leadership that the stakeholders had to function under such intolerable conditions. Not only does it make it clear that KCACC will be unable to establish the necessary partnerships within the community to build a successful program, but it calls into question the viability of King County continuing to seek citizen input into *any* decision making process. This is especially clear given the fact that the KCACC Citizens’ Advisory Committee was dissolved by the King County Council earlier this year, after a majority of the active members suspended their active involvement, largely due to a lack of cooperation from KCACC and a lack of support from the King County executive branch. At the same time, members of the KCACC advisory committee were also being publicly maligned and

ridiculed, although it was not known at that time that these efforts were supported by the King County executive.

The members of both the KCACC Advisory Committee and the stakeholder review group were community volunteers, who donated their time and expertise to the county. During both processes, the community volunteers were expected to function under intense time pressures that created significant inconveniences, since in both cases King County failed to convene the groups in time to conduct their work on a reasonable timeline. The fact that King County found community experts who were willing to serve under these conditions is a testament to the people of the county. However, King County must not invite citizens into the decision making process unless it is willing to support an environment in which diverse and honest viewpoints are encouraged. Otherwise, soliciting citizen involvement is worse than meaningless – it is an unethical means of silencing divergent viewpoints within the community. Unless King County can correct this inherent dysfunction within its process, it should immediately disband all citizen advisory committees, as it is fundamentally unfair to ask citizens to serve under these circumstances. Both branches of county government should be grateful to the community experts who are willing to aid them in their decisions. It goes without saying that these community volunteers should be thanked by the county that asked them to serve – not attacked for their service.



Comments on the final draft of King County Animal Services Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan

Barbara L. Drinkwater

No matter which option is selected, any progress toward a model program in King County will depend on a change in management. Yes, there have been improvements at the Kent Shelter as a result of the evaluations provided by outside reviewers, but the current atmosphere of recriminations and personal attacks on those involved in evaluating the present situation do not suggest a group open to constructive criticism or suggestions for further improvements.

In order to accomplish a total overhaul of the program and rapid progress toward a marked decrease in euthanasia rate, my recommendation would be to select Option 3. This, of course, assumes that there is a community group willing to accept this responsibility. Whether that Option would be A or B would depend on the willingness of the community partner to assume the responsibility of field services. That would be up to the community partner.

My concern with any option that decreases service to cities within King County is whether they are equipped to provide the type of services they will be losing. Rather than one poorly maintained and managed shelter will we have several throughout the county? It is essential that these communities share in the cost of a properly managed county wide program, but they must be convinced that will be far less expensive than attempting to provide these services themselves.

For any option to be successful a new facility large enough and staffed to meet the needs of the county is essential. In spite of the current financial conditions, I believe the community will respond to a major fundraising effort. This is a county which by and large values the humane treatment of animals.

Finally, this has been a challenging task for those asked to put this report together. They have listened courteously to our suggestions and have incorporated a number of them within this revised report. I would hope that none of the professionals involved have been responsible for leaking reports of our discussions to the woman who has attacked many of our group in her vicious and profanity-laced blog that is a disgrace to those she purports to help.

**KING COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES  
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETINGS**

**King County Animal Services Strategic Plan 2009-2011  
King County Animal Services Operational master Plan 2009-2011**

Documents Review and Feedback  
Report #2

Jim Dugan  
Dugan Foundation

October 3, 2008

**KCASCSG Preface**

On Thursday, August 21, 2008, the King County Animal Services Community Stakeholder Group (KCASCSG) convened the first of two, possibly three meetings. Meeting number two was scheduled to occur on Thursday, August 28, 2008.

KCASCSG members that did not attend the August 28 meeting we rescheduled for an alternate second meeting on either Wednesday September 3<sup>rd</sup> or Thursday September 4<sup>th</sup> – the exact date still pending as of August 21, 2008.

The date for the third meeting or final submittal of feedback information had not been scheduled, however, King County advised it would likely be on or before mid-September.

A summary of the KCASCSG anticipated review schedule at that time was as follows:

Meeting #1	August 21, 2008
Feedback Required	August 26, 2008
Meeting #2A	August 28, 2008
Meeting #2B	Sept 3 or Sept 4 – TBD
Final Feedback	September, 10, 2008
County Exec Recommendation to Council	Mid September
County Council Budget Adoption	Mid October

The KCASCSG was advised that three documents in total would be provided to us over the following couple of weeks, for our review and feedback. The three documents referenced were:

- King County Animal Services Strategic Plan 2009-2011
- King County Animal Services Operational master Plan 2009-2011
- Facilities Master Plan 2009-2011

The two documents we were directed to review at that time were:

- King County Animal Services Strategic Plan 2009-2011
- King County Animal Services Operational master Plan 2009-2011

Written feedback was requested received no later than Tuesday, August 26, 2008. We were advised the Facilities Master Plan would be provided to the KCASCSG at meeting number two.

Additional documents provided to the KCASCSG for reference were:

- King County Animal Care and Control (KCCAC) Citizen's Advisory Committee Report
- No Kill Solutions Report
- U.C. Davis Koret Shelter Report

Additional information given to the KCASCSG while reviewing the 2009-2011 Strategic and Operational Master Plans included:

- The current plans are drafts
- Need to identify the big errors and/or omissions
- Feedback received from the KCASCSG will be considered/used/incorporated into the development of the Final Plans
- The Final Plans will be provided to the KCASCSG for a second and final review

For reference purposes, Motion 12737 defined the Strategic Plan to include the following components:

1. Regulatory and Policy Framework
2. Vision and Mission Statements
3. Prioritized Medium and Long Range Goals
4. Priority Outcomes for each Goal and a primary Department Accountability to achieve each goal
5. Performance Measures for each Goal and a primary Department Accountability for Improvement of each performance measure

My specific comments and recommendations in regards to Motion 12737 are listed below and are referenced by category as indicated in the summary above:

- Item #3 is incomplete. Six (6) goals in total are cited however they are not prioritized as "Medium" or "Long" range goals
- Item #4 is incomplete. Table #2 on page 8 is titled, "Strategic Priorities and Objectives". This table generally lists the desired outcomes but does not specifically define or quantify each item so that it can be measured, nor does it define the primary Department Accountability as required by Motion 12737.
- Item #5 is missing entirely. Performance measures are quantifiable measurable metrics. Such metrics are absent entirely. Further, the primary Department Accountability is not identified and no information was provided for Improvement (monitoring and course correction as needed) of each performance measure as required by Motion 12737

On August 25, I submitted my feedback regarding the review of the above two referenced documents as provided. My feedback was provided in the following categories:

- (1) Preface
- (2) Overview Comments
- (3) Specific Review Comments
  - Strategic Plan

- Operational Master Plan

(4) Final Comments, Conclusion and Recommendation

Other than my recommendation to follow the actual order of work as directed by King County Council and amend the development, review and approval process overall (versus the way it is actually being done), the primary areas I recommended for adjustment/inclusion/expansion in the next and final version of the Strategic and Operational Plans were to:

- Include a defined Model Shelter Program as an end-game target for development
- Include the scope of services and costs for a fully developed Option #3
- Make it possible to compare apples-to-apples for all three options and in doing so, make it possible for review and decision making by the County Executive or County Council
- Develop and include measurable metrics for change and/or improvement to be able to plan and scope and cost how to get there
- Develop and include a Milestone Development Schedule that outlines the what will be done when to achieve each of the three goals
- Develop and include a continuous improvement plan to adjust and change as needed along the way
- Provide solid forecasted data telling the story of what to expect for the next three years
- Develop the Operational Master Plan after the development and approval of the Strategic Plan not concurrently.
- Develop the Facilities Master Plan after the development and approval of the Operational Master Plan not concurrently.
- The work done to date does not in fact reflect the direction given by Motion 12737
- The work done to date does not in fact reflect the findings of the Consultant Reports and the gravity of the deplorable conditions they assessed

On September 4, 2008, the KCASCSG team met in Meeting #2 B (I could not attend the first Meeting #2 – two sessions were scheduled to capture all feedback) to discuss as a group all of our reports and feedback.

During Meeting #2, we were asked to summarize our feedback into the top three to five items that needed to be changed, added, adjusted, included, removed, etc., in the development of the final draft planning documents.

My top five recommendations were:

- (1) Strategic Plan - Develop the above into an actual Strategic Plan outline – Use industry standard and best practice based formats and protocols. To include but not be limited to:
  - Values (follows Mission Statement and precedes Objectives)
  - Stakeholders (list of primary individuals and/or groups that are affected by the Strategic Plan)
  - Internal Strengths
  - Internal Weaknesses

- External Opportunities
- External threats
- Assumptions
- Key Areas
- Milestone Defined Goals

Complete the development and approval of the Strategic Plan first, then develop the Operational Master Plan that supports the option of choice, then develop the Facilities Master Plan that supports the Operational Plan of choice.

- (2) Define a Model Shelter Program – Carefully outline the goal(s) and in doing so, define the metrics required to measure success.
- (3) Provide Data - Provide accurate past, current and forecasted data of human and animal shelter requirements – Carefully outline the volume, needs and services that will be required to be provided inside the model shelter program structure, year over year for the next 5 and 10 year increments
- (4) Develop The Options - Fully research and develop all three options for service provision – Develop each of the three options into a summary matrix to ensure they may be evaluated appropriately and accurately by the KCASCSG team and King County Council.
- (5) Milestone Schedule - Provide a Milestone Schedule for option implementation – Develop a schedule plan that ties the calendar to goals and objectives for the development of each plan and in doing so make it possible to evaluate progress while in option development.

### **Final Comments and Recommendation**

Overall, a lot of work went into the revised versions of both master plan documents. It was clear to me that my recommendations were generally complied with and incorporated into the current documents.

Please accept my thank you and appreciation for the attention to such detail and for honoring the work done previously.

I evaluated the current Strategic and Operational Master Plans thru the filters of my top five recommendations. For ease of evaluation, I copied my top five recommendations below and provided my current feedback/comments on each of the five listed items in a different color and font.

#### COMMENTS:

##### Strategic Plan

*Feedback: Vision, Mission and Values were added/expanded into the Strat Plan as requested. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and assumptions were not. Key areas were defined. Milestone schedule dates were discussed but not explicitly defined. The requested strategic objectives were defined and easily understood.*

*Overall, the structure of the revised Strat and Ops Plan is improved. The absence of the qualitative evaluation metrics reflects (in the documents) a planning inability to clearly see the market place and market conditions that support alternative option evaluation. The revised plans provide and refer to what*

*the consultant reports described, but do not take the next step to own the findings, carefully define the current system shortcomings and state clearly the shortcomings as weaknesses.*

*Finally, a fully developed Strat Plan is an outline document, a visionary plan that sets forth the goals and objectives to achieve that vision. The current Strat Plan contains this information but it is too hard to find and distill out in a clear and concise, sustainable, repeatable manner.*

#### Define a Model Shelter Program

*Feedback: The Model Shelter Program (MSP) definition within the revised Strat Plan does summarize the key areas of such a program. It also does provide relational information between the MSP and the Strat Plan Strategic Objectives. Well done.*

*The MSP as provided in the revised Strat Plan does provide the metrics for evaluation of performance in regards to euthanasia volumes and rates. It does not provide the metrics for performance evaluation regarding all of the other categories. The absence of such metrics makes it impossible to ensure KCAC full and complete understanding of what to expect to have to do and when and how to course correct if said performance is not meeting planning requirements.*

*During previous meetings, it was recommended that KCAC research nationally for a sample MSP that best reflects the current and forecasted demands of the King County region and further, that the recommended MSP for KC reflect such an existing MSP that is proven as a performer and sustainable as an example or basis for the KC MSP outline. The research to find such a program and the programs that would otherwise be found and provided were not a part of the revised Strat Plan MSP.*

*The summary provided in the revised Strat Plan regarding compliance with the County Council requirement of “No-Kill” is weak. The revised plans do not state, implicitly or explicitly, that the goal is to achieve a “No-Kill” status as defined by the KC Council motion or for that matter even include the definition of “No-Kill” as required by the KC Council. This needs to be added into the revised Strat Plan to ensure the KC Council has evidence that KCAC does in fact include this as their goal for a MSP.*

#### Provide Data

*Feedback: Data was provided in all areas that were not provided before. Current and forecasted data that defines what has been done and to how many, what is being done and to how many and what is forecasted to be done and to how many – was provided.*

*That said, the past and current data is suspect to me. The numbers provided in the first version and the numbers provided in the current version of past and current statistics, are not the same. As a result, I cannot assume the past and current data is accurate. Further evaluation of the past and current data is required.*

*The forecasted data is adequate for planning purposes at this time. Whether the forecasted data is accurate or not is not as critical as that forecasted data exists for evaluation and planning purposes. I recommend an independent outside third party consultant be hired after the option of choice is selected, to provided KC with objective and verifiable forecast data for human demographic and the resultant companion animal demographic volumes, geographic locations and potential services required – based on national models done and in progress for cities and services like ours.*

#### Develop The Options

*Feedback: Information provided in the revised Strat and Ops Plans for all three options is adequate for evaluation at this time – which is defined as adequate for evaluation of the option of choice.*

Once the option of choice is selected, then, the real work needs to begin. When one of the three options is chosen, the KCAC org needs to fully define the option chosen and outline in a line item detail manner, the connection of the option chosen to the detail tenants and metrics of the MSP defined. In doing so, the chosen option will function and operate in a consistent and measurable manner defined by the MSP outline and the vision, mission and goals statements.

### Milestone Schedule

*Feedback: The purpose of a milestone schedule is to develop a schedule plan, a road map of scheduled goals and objectives, that ties the calendar to goals and objectives for the development of each option plan and in doing so make it possible to evaluate progress while in option development and implementation. Such a milestone schedule and deliverable commitments does not exist in the revised Strat and Ops Plans. Reference is made to the resources needed to accomplish specific tasks and the relational role each task has with another task. Such a narrative outline is not a milestone schedule of deliverables.*

*The development of any plan requires the development of the scope of work (MSP and Option selected that defines what needs to be done), the development of a milestone schedule (when it will be completed) and costs (what it will take to deliver the scope of work in the required time frames). The absence of a detailed milestone schedule is indicative of a partial plan and not a detailed plan.*

*I recommend the development of a detailed milestone schedule inclusive of deliverables necessary to achieve the MSP when the option of choice is selected. It is simply impossible to get where you are going if you don't know what needs to be done when, by whom and with what.*

### RECOMMENDATION:

My final recommendation is based on my review of the work done to date thru the KCASCSG, my experience with strategic and operational planning throughout my career and my experience with the planning and implementation of institutional change (changing from the way it has always been to the way it needs to be going forward) in all business sectors.

I recommend:

- Option #3. Institutional change is not possible with incremental effort. Additionally, the change that is needed requires more than what KC can provide at any cost or budget allocation. Funding is not the solution. Integrated community participation in a multi-faceted interdisciplinary, public , private and non-profit, is proven as a successful model. Public agencies are perfectly designed for compliance regulation, monitoring and policy development. They are not designed for metric based performance that allows for immediate and effective course correction and adjustment as needed, when needed, Such a nimble, flexible, moving and changing work philosophy is critical to the success of the vision, mission and goals of KC and the performance of a MSP and the goal of "No-Kill".
- Once Option #3 is selected, develop accurate past and current data and hire a third party consultant to provide future forecasted data. Use this data to define the volume and type of services needed by region going forward. The overlay of a MSP design with accurate future data will bench "what" needs to be done as part of the further development of the Option #3 chosen and as such, will bench the contents of the milestone schedule that needs to be developed.
- With Option #3 chosen and the future forecasted data captured, develop the detailed line item development Milestone Schedule that ties the MSP requirements and strategic objectives to the

work anticipated over time. In doing so, evaluation of program performance is both possible to ensure performance to plan, as well as possible for course corrections along the way, as needed, to react to the changing demands between what was planned and what was actually needed over time. Such a plan is also the key tool for public communication of what the people/companion animals you serve can expect over time. Program integrity is based on careful planning and effective implementation.

It has been my pleasure to participate in this work. I wish you the very best with the decisions that are pending and remain available to you at any time for any reason to accomplish the goals and objectives of the development of a No-Kill companion animal community.



**KING COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES  
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

**King County Animal Services Strategic Plan  
and Operational Master Plan  
2009-2011**

Final Stakeholder Review

Arie van der Hoeven  
KCACC Volunteer

October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008

Based on the inability of King County Animal Care and Control to provide transparent and accurate data regarding animal intake and outcomes and the deeply rooted cultural and institutional resistance to oversight and scrutiny I recommend that council and the executive adopt Community-Based Services Model Option B in the Operational Master Plan. King County would provide only law enforcement, public health and pet licensing services. King County would partner with a community agency or agencies to provide both shelter and field services. Animal cruelty investigations would be transferred to the KCSO.

The King County Animal Services Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan was developed in response to findings from the *KCACC Citizens' Advisory Committee, No Kill Solutions* and the *University of California – Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program* in 2007 and early 2008. These reports were critical of shelter conditions, animal care, euthanasia rates, and general program operations. In plain terms animals were suffering and dying at unacceptable rates and the system lacked the leadership, staffing, protocols, culture and funding to address this. Cruelty investigations and field officer performance were also areas that were deemed lacking, given that a low percentage of cruelty complaint were resulting in convictions.

Having read the three outside reports and relying most heavily on the UC Davis study it is clear that organizational and operational changes were needed that result in substantive and transparent improvements in animal care and survival rates. The question is - has this been achieved or is it possible given the current structure and nature of King County Animal Care and Control? To help answer this I have been reviewing requested shelter intake and outcomes data from KCACC and took a full shelter tour on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 guided by Acting KCACC Director Wendy Keller.

The Strategic Plan highlights a number of improvements and I witnessed substantive progress in facilities, management and animal health at the Kent facility considering the dire state the facility was in earlier in the year. However, accurate reporting of animal intake rates, outcomes and other data is the best indicator of animal health and welfare. One frustration that was discussed at length during the stakeholders meetings has been the lack of transparency or availability of statistics and records. Shelter data given in early drafts did not add up in that total number of intakes did not approximate total outcomes. In the final draft of the report table 2 summarizes KCACC's outcomes this year through the end of June, 2008 with outcomes balancing intakes.

Table 2 KCACC’s claimed outcomes this year through the end of June, 2008.

	Intake during reporting period	Beginning of reporting period	End of reporting period	Animals out to foster care during reporting period	Animals back to shelter from foster care during reporting period	Adopted by public No. (%)	Accepted by a rescue group No. (%)	Strays reunited with owner No. (%)	Dead on arrival at shelter No. (%)	Died or lost in care No. (%)	Euthanasia (including owner-requested) No. (%)	TOTAL OUTCOMES No. (%) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>2008 Jan-Jun</b>	5,577	421	515	603	373	2,001 (38%)	1,318 (25%)	694 (13%)	196 (4%)	68 (1%)	1,045 <sup>[2]</sup> (20%)	5,322 (100%)

This chart suggests that a goal of 20% euthanasia rate has been achieved; however there are serious problems here to include:

- There is not auditable data to back up the claims made here.
- Each year shelter volumes and euthanasia spike during the summer and early fall months due to the influx of kittens or what is commonly referred to as “kitten season”. This sampling ends in June before the majority of kittens arrive at the shelter.
- There is no comparison with comparable data from the year before.
- There is poor accounting for animals in foster care. According to the data there was a net increase of 230 animals into foster care during this period. Such increases are not sustainable.
- The data analysis shown in Appendix A shows that a large number of intake records are not accounted for.

As a result of the lack of supporting data I object to this table being used in the report.

During my tour I asked Ms. Keller about the priorities and projects on her board and why improved data transparency, accounting and reporting was not listed. She implied that it was difficult topic by saying that it should not be tackled by someone acting on an interim basis. Ms. Keller and her staff have made a number of basic improvements including cleaning protocols, personnel changes, improved facilities management, plans for new modular buildings and partnerships with the PIMA Medical Institute. Regardless of the outcome, these advances should be continued and built upon. There are also a number of areas where recommendations made in the UC Davis report have not been made or attempted, such as doing behavioral assessments of dogs upon intake. This is one of a number of areas that require continued investment, staffing and cultural change to meet the goals of a model shelter system. This type of fundamental change requires more than a competent interim director and a few new staff can accomplish.

By not tackling the core issue of accuracy and transparency in shelter statistics leadership may have realized that there are deeper institutional and cultural problems that make such

<sup>[1]</sup> Row percents may not total 100% due to rounding.

<sup>[2]</sup> Dr. Sharon Hopkins, Public Health Veterinarian for PH, reviewed euthanasia data based on a 10 percent sample and confirmed its validity insofar as the Chameleon database output matched the DEA drug log.

accountability impossible. The statistics published by KCACC have not been supported. It is probable that the death and euthanasia rates from 2007 and prior were much higher than reported. It is also possible that progress is being made in 2008, but that any attempt to accurately measure it would disclose data discrepancies and indicate a greater crisis than what has been previously reported.

During stakeholder meetings we closely questioned Denise McVicker, Deputy Director of The Humane Society of Pierce County about data entry practices. They have strict protocols and enforcement mechanisms that not only account for every record, but track which employees make a given change or entry. This level of accountability comes natural to private organizations that rely on community giving and are under board oversight. Ms. McVicker was able to talk confidently about shelter goals, statistics and shortcomings of her organization. KCACC leadership cannot.

Given the information at hand I urge the council and executive to move to a community based plan as outlined in Community-Based Services Model Option B. I believe my conclusion will be further validated by the King County Auditor's findings to be released at a later date.

Regards,

Arie van der Hoeven  
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## Appendix

The tables below show the results of the limited analysis done by using these reports since they did provide animal IDs, intake dates and type of animal all in one row.

### January 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> 2008

Total intake #s from A0021867 to A0030436	8569	Significant decline over prior year.
Actual found assigned numbers	7213	Decline over prior year.
<b>Number of missing or skipped numbers</b>	<b>1356</b>	Could be due to merged #s, animals licensed but not recorded as intakes, reports of lost pets that were given IDs, deleted records, or other causes. Note that this number declined significantly from 2007.
Duplicate numbers found	793	This could be a result of returns or foster cats reentering the system.
Numbers outside range	6	Typo? Mistake?
Old numbers	198	These were likely animals with prior records with KCACC, thus they were assigned their original number.
Number of Cats	4172	This shows a decline over the previous year. KCACC management stated that there was a dramatic increase in cats this year. This was likely based on staff perceptions only.

### January 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> 2007

Total intake #s from A0007349 to A017451	10102	
Actual found assigned numbers	7826	
<b>Number of missing or skipped numbers</b>	<b>2276</b>	
Duplicate numbers found	239	This could be a result of returns or foster cats reentering the system.
Numbers outside range	26	Typo? Mistake?
Old numbers	77	These were likely animals with prior records with KCACC.
Number of cats	4413	

**FINAL COMMENTS**  
**Denise McVicker**  
Deputy Director  
Humane Society for Tacoma and Pierce County

*Via email:*

I am sorry to say this is not as complete as it could have been, but this week has not allotted me much time to devote to this project. I attach a document with some specifics and will provide a general overview here: All options have some viability. With any change - even though it seems positive - expect criticism. There will always be folks who think you can't get it right and depending on the option chosen, the blame will be spread accordingly. Overall, option 1 seems to be the most viable and may be easier to implement. Option 2 will take an extremely coordinated effort and will likely see a decline of results in the near future. With all the hands in the pie and the expected red tape I would think there will be finger pointing and confusion. Option 3 seems like the least likely choice of all.

*Via attached document:*

Comments regarding final draft review of KCAS Strategic Plan and Operational Master Plan:

Page 5, paragraph 4 – minor change to show Table2 on page 14 rather than page 15)

Page 8, #3, end of page – TNR program continues to refer to “release” which indicates not “returning” cat to a responsible home/caretaker. This is semantics but a point of contention for supporters of the program.

Page 17, 5<sup>th</sup> bullet – loose livestock - consider turning this duty over to the state brand inspector

Page 18, 1<sup>st</sup> bullet – insufficient capacity to respond to the majority of service calls – decide on priorities. With insufficient funding by municipalities for level of expected services, plan on a dropped level of response. Example: the 1<sup>st</sup> complaint of barking generates a letter to the pet owner with a warning and copy of the law and a letter to the complainant that lets them know the owner is now aware of the issue and the appropriate forms for petition or other action against the pet owner.

Page 18, last bullet – inconsistent practices around exercising animals in stray hold- consider the liability if these animals are "accidentally lost" while under your care because they are outside the shelter environment during the “stray hold period.”

Page 19, last paragraph – as programs send more animals to rescue organizations.....  
– I believe this is an assumption as most rescue organizations take your lesser adoptable animals. If the rescue agency is taking only your highly adoptable animals then you should revisit that relationship.

Page 26, 1<sup>st</sup> bullet – Inadequate facilities to house feral cats – this merits careful consideration as housing in any shelter situation is usually very stressful and unhealthy for truly feral cats. (Also applies to page 43, number B)

Page 43, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – refers to 2,500 spay/neuter surgeries. It is much more effective to have 4, 10 hour days rather than 5, 8 hour days. The normal high volume, high quality spay/neuter clinic type setting can easily produce between 4,500 and 6,000 surgeries per year. There are many models to follow to get to this number

Page 43, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph – vouchers – use other resources to get these vouchers in the hands of those who need them. Use public agencies i.e.: DSHS, senior centers and food banks. Also give a voucher to anyone who brings you a litter if they will keep the adult female and get her spayed.

Page 44, 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet – relationships with rescues for hard to place breeds – these rescues are usually at capacity and may not have an opening for some time. Be realistic in this expectation.

Page 46, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – Veterinary Technicians – I see no reference to veterinary assistants. Much of the work performed within either the treatment clinic or spay/neuter clinic is work that requires a lesser skilled person and would be wasted on a person with LVT skills. Consider getting 3 or 3 ½ veterinary assistants for the same cost as 2 LVTs.

Page 54, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph - City Contracts- contracts with municipalities are notorious for not being fully funded and being subsidized by other shelter funds. You are probably aware of this, but it bears repeating.

Page 57, last paragraph – shifting responsibility for cruelty investigations to KCSO – have you asked for input from them? Sheriff departments do not normally consider animal complaints as a priority when considering all the other calls types they have.

Page 76, #B – this option will be difficult to manage and will be very confusing to the public because of what they are used to. The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County still experiences a high volume of calls from individuals who are either used to calling us (3 years after we stopped animal control) or because they do not get what they need or do not know who to call. There will still be a tremendous volume of calls that will be for referrals and explanation only.

**FINAL COMMENTS**  
**Christine Wilford**  
Veterinarian

*Via email:*

Hi All,

Sorry I can't review the entire document, but again I'm making the time to review the feral cat sections. I still stress the philosophical issues from before, but apparently big changes aren't happening to this document, so those issues (not accepting feral cats into the shelter in the first place, mediating complaints instead of using traps as the first response) are apparently not being included in this discussion. I do hope they will be considered down the road as details are worked out, if KCAC continues to shelter. Without these two components, there cannot be a model program that includes feral cats.

What is left is mostly the same corrections that I stated after the previous draft and a few new ones.

Page 25, Section J

States that KCAC partners with FCSNP for spays and neuters. As I stated in the previous review, there is no active partnership or collaboration between FCSNP and KCAC. I'm not sure who is saying this, but it is simply not true.

Page 26, Section K

Proper terminology is "trap-neuter-return" not "Trap Neuter Release". If releases are planned, such as with barn cat programs, then "return and release" should be the terminology. However, successful animal control programs have very few "release" and mostly "return".

Feral Cat Spay/Neuter project does NOT have a TNR partnership with KCAC, as I stated after the previous draft.

Referrals of citizens to FCSNP for spay/neuter does not constitute a partnership. Many veterinarians, agencies and rescuers make referrals. "Partnership" vastly overstates the relationship between KCAC and FCSNP.

KCAC has not notified FCSNP of any ear tipped cats entering the shelter for an extended period. There is no communication going on of this sort. The partnership described does not exist.

Page 107

Medical Care

This section states that PIMA veterinary technicians are volunteering to provide care. In truth, these are not technicians (legally implies more skills and a license). In private practice, it is illegal to call oneself a veterinary technician unless they have met all training, requirements and passed licensing examinations. The PIMA volunteers are students in the veterinary assistant or technician programs. Some have little or no experience with animals and their knowledge is limited to classroom instruction or limited externships. Furthermore, this section states that PIMA is considering moving a trailer on-site to provide more experience for

their "veterinary students", a term used to describes programs that trains veterinarians. PIMA has no such program. The term should be "veterinary assistant and technician".

Page 109

Definition of "feral" only includes free-roaming. This excludes the cats living indoors with hoarders that are unsocialized to people. A more logical definition would simply be "Any cat that is unsocialized to humans." This would include indoor (hoarded) and free-roaming cats.

My opinion on the future role of KCAC is a model that transfers all sheltering, fostering, medical/ behavioral care, adoptions, rescue, pet retention and feral cat care to community agencies who already excel in these areas. These agencies can manage this for likely half the cost. KCAC should expand spay/neuter services and expand their referrals to community agencies for sheltering, etc. For ten years, we have seen lack of leadership to acknowledge the deficiencies at KCAC, much less, work to improve them. Even when a progressive leader was head of KCAC, changes were minimal. The obstacle sits higher than KCAC. Without acknowledgement, enthusiasm and a commitment to drastic and rapid changes, taxpayer's money will be wasted and conditions at KCAC will not elevate to acceptable levels or a model program.

i want to add that I am terribly disappointed to see Don Jordan resign. Having been on the Seattle Animal Control Commission before and during his becoming Director, I saw first hand what a progressive, open-minded leader can do to turn around an agency WITHOUT a legal mandate from the public. Don is the reason SAC evolved into the future and is a model program in our community. He accomplished this with a team of people, but without being the leader that he is, those people could not have accomplished all of those improvements on their own. In fact, with the wrong leader in place, their enthusiasm, skills and caring attitudes would have been stifled and the agency would have remained "business as usual". I believe that Don is in a unique position to advise KCAC as a colleague, as someone who has taken a program up the ladder to reach a greater potential. I do wish he could/ would extend his knowledge and talent to KCAC. Enough said.

Christine Wilford, DVM