

MINUTES OF BMHA MEETING OF 04-15-2016

Meeting called to order 6:01 PM

Board members in attendance: Donna Brownlee, John Rinehart, Jan Petersen, Tom Witten

BMHA members (not board members) present: Leeanna Muse (voting member)

ARACEO/Barkin' Basement Employees present: Erin Davis, Nic Howe, John Brinlee, Dana Rynearson

I. Approval of Minutes of prior two meetings: Approval was called for and seconded for the minutes of the two prior meetings. Motion to approve minutes passed unanimously.

John R. brought up the fact that it's very difficult to keep track of everyone via email because we don't have an up-to-date list of people with their email addresses, especially because of rapid gain and loss of members since January. John passed around a sign-up sheet for everyone to list their names, phone numbers, and email addresses so he can keep in touch with everyone a little better.

II. Cost-Cutting. It has become clear that the current level of expenditure is unsustainable; Nic calculated that without any changes, we have only 80 days of funds available before we have to close our doors due to insolvency. It is therefore imperative to cut our costs as much as possible to delay that closure long enough to bring in more funds, approve a contract with the County, and restore confidence among the public in the shelter and let them know what's really going on here. How to do that evoked much lively discussion on a number of methods:

A. Salaries. By far, our highest cost is salary to employees. Some measures to reduce salaries were discussed:

1. Donna will cut back to one day a week and will revert to volunteer status, removing her salary from the budget. This is probably for the best anyway, as there is a potential conflict of interest with a Board member also being an employee of ARACEO.

2. It may be possible for Erin's salary to be paid in part or in whole by the State; she will discuss this possibility with her case worker, and that might remove her salary.

3. Animal workers will be more tightly monitored so they do not take more hours to do the job than is necessary. We've had a problem with workers taking 8 hours to do a job that realistically should take half that, and they should not be taking as long given that we're going to

be working to increase our animal flow through to our partner shelters and keep numbers of animals low. In the past, we've had as many as 80 cats. This is unsustainable because the County gives us NOTHING; and even if we get a contract with them, they refuse to provide support for cats. Moreover, dog numbers will also be kept low, with a goal of no more than 6 dogs in residence, aside from our 3 special-needs cases.

4. Nic, our groundskeeper, is actively seeking another job, and it's likely a new grounds keeper would not be hired.

5. John Brinlee's salary may be reducible pending outcome of contract negotiations with the County (see below)

B. Better animal management. Some of this is detailed above, with increased flow-through of animals to our partners. In addition:

1. Existing farm animals and livestock must be dealt with, as they have cost us an excessively large amount of money. The animals were being housed for eventual return to their owners. However, those owners have not paid us what was agreed to by signed contract and have kept the animals at our facility for much longer than was expected. Feed, repairs, water, and insurance costs due to their housing have cost us tens of thousands of dollars, and we simply cannot afford that any more. Thus those animals, following a potential resolution on Monday 18 April involving the owners and the Animal Control branch of the Union County Sheriff, will be put up for immediate adoption.

2. Long-term resident animals need to be addressed. Nic suggested that 3 long-term special needs dogs must be more aggressively talked up and people to adopt them needed to be found. Several members noted, however, that we've been doing this constantly and none have surfaced yet. If they cannot be adopted, perhaps we can find a sponsor donor; John R. will work on this with respect to the web page and advertising.

C. Moving Barkin' Basement to the property next to ARACEO, which is part of the property owned by ARACEO. Doing this would allow us to establish more retail space, create greater visibility for the shelter, and increase parking, as well as saving us thousands of dollars per month in utilities and insurance costs as well as rent. Doing this would require the following: 1) establishing a parking lot (gravel) and a separate entrance to maintain shelter security and autonomous hours of operation; 2) a metal building, preferably 3,000 square feet, to house the store and its item storage, would need to be erected; 3) a road built from highway 30 or the side road next to the shelter; 4) approval from the County/City to allow retail sales in that area, currently zoned light industrial (we think), which would be one part of our contract agreement.

Tom said he knows of someone who might be willing to donate a brand-new steel building that never got put up, or sell it below cost, and Leeanna is also looking into it. Moreover, Leeanna has been in contact with the owner of WC Construction, who has said he will help with whatever we need; he might actually donate the cost of erecting the building and the foundation costs as a tax write-off and in exchange for advertising. The savings if this plan is implemented works out, based on last year's budget and expenses, to \$15,479.28 per year!

D. Water is a huge cost for us. We have been told we cannot drill a well and must use city water, but there may be an existing well behind the shelter that has already been drilled and simply capped off. If so, then it pre-existed the order to use city water and likely could be grandfathered in for our use. If so, we could tap into the well and reduce our water cost dramatically. Solar and a water catchment system would save us a great deal, and there may be companies who would donate all or part of the cost in exchange for the tax write-off and advertising.

E. If utilities cannot be eliminated, can they be donated in part or in full? We are looking into that avenue as well.

F. Grants. Six grant applications were completed in part or full but never sent off, and one was rejected because the former Vice-President forgot to include a page. Most of these are ready to go after a once-over to confirm accuracy and completeness. Leeanna will spearhead that process, and John will do a second look to confirm all the parts are there and nothing's missing.

G. Increase volunteerism. This is really tied to greater transparency, which we're clearly trying to improve.

H. Increased donations. This is critically tied to approval of a contract with the County and for them to promote us, as well as greater transparency and public confidence.

I. Corporate sponsorship: We need to actively look for corporate sponsors! All of us should be actively contacting local companies to ask if they would like to sponsor the shelter with regular donations or grants in exchange for advertising on the web page, at the shelter, and at the store.

J. Boarding of animals needs to be advertised on the website. The fee is \$19.00 for first day, \$15.00/day thereafter; people who adopt from us always receive the lower rate.

K. Radio spots. Why aren't we asking radio stations to do free public service announcements regarding the shelter, the store, and what we do? We need to!

L. Open House Saturdays, and a member day every 3rd Saturday, esp. during Spring and Summer? These events would allow us to show the community what we do. Most people have no idea we're high-save and that it costs more to run a shelter that way.

III. Contract offer from Union County: Members of BMHA are encouraged by an actual contract being on the table, and further encouraged by various suggestions from the County on how to increase income amounts. We feel their offer of \$30,000.00/year is a good start, and since we were encouraged, even expected, to produce a counter-offer, we discussed what the counter-offer would include:

1. We believe \$40,000.00 is a more reasonable number. While Steve McClure believes he can just contract with a vet for animal control, we have the written opinion of the Oregon Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, which oversees all vet practices in Oregon, and their opinion clearly states that running a high-kill shelter out of a veterinary office would be a violation of that veterinarian's oath, and they would surely lose their license. And if the Union County Commissioners were to try that, we would be sure to let every vet in the County know of that opinion by the Oregon BVME. So they really have little choice but to work with us, unless they want to bankrupt us, dissolve the Board, and start from scratch. In the meantime, who does their animal control?

2. We would like to try this for 6 months and reserve the right to renegotiate after that time, should the financial picture become better, and retroactive to January, so the initial payout would be \$20,000.00 for 1st and 2nd quarters so far.

3. We like the County idea to seek additional funding from the cities for the shelter, given that many cities in other counties already do this. Pendleton, for example, pays \$30,000.00/year directly to the shelter. We believe La Grande should pay \$20,000.00; Union, Elgin, and Cove \$5,000.00/ year each (and the Elgin mayor has already said they'd be happy to); and Imbler, Summerville, and North Powder \$2,500.00 each. These funds should be paid DIRECTLY to the shelter, not filtered through the County.

4. We like the idea of paying John Brinlee for the time he spends doing animal control on-call when an animal control officer is unavailable. We propose \$100.00/call as a contracting fee, to be paid out of the Sheriff's budget. We would also entertain a per-day fee, but we believe a per-call fee is a fiscally sound way to run things and would ultimately be better for all parties. If approved, it would allow us to reduce our stipend to the Director from \$18,000.00/year to something more like \$10-12,000.00/year, potentially saving us a great deal of money.

5. We would like to advance the idea that monies already paid to the County by the cities for animal control be retained directly by us instead of the County. In other words, that money should be provided directly to us.

6. We MUST be granted a variance to allow retail sales in our zoning. This is CRITICAL to our money-saving ideas, and it would allow us to sell higher-end pet supplies in the shelter and/or store that cannot otherwise be obtained in La Grande.

John B., John R., and Tom will meet next week to draft a counteroffer and will meet with the County as soon as possible. We're SO close!

IV. Removal of president. For numerous reasons not discussed in these public minutes, the Board moved to remove Mike as president with just cause. Motion passed with one abstention. Per the BMHA Bylaws, Tom Witten, previously elected to the Vice-President position, is now the acting President. He expressed his commitment to the future of the Animal Rescue and is eager to work with Board members and the county towards that goal. The feeling now is that we have a stable core of Board members who can work positively together and lead BMHA into a bright future, working with County and Municipal agencies towards the goal of responsible animal control in Union County.

Meeting adjourned 7:24PM: Minutes prepared by jer

Revised after member comments; approved 6/16/2014