

BMHA Meeting Minutes, Meeting of 11_15_2019

Meeting called to Order 4:31 PM

In attendance: Donna Brownlee, John Rinehart, Bob Rynearson; For the Barkin' Basement, Dana Rynearson

I. We need more Board Members! This is a crucial issue that we have GOT to deal with. John R. indicated that he has a full-time job and cannot devote the time necessary to doing the kinds of things he should be doing as an officer; we don't have groups that can form subcommittees for things like fundraising, grant-writing, etc. John R. pointed out that Donna has been trying to spearhead the grant-writing process and the fund-raising. Bob indicated that he's talked to people, but it's difficult to get anyone to commit to the service. John R. talked to Shelley in the County Commissioners' office, and she said that problem is typical with volunteer boards---all of them have had great difficulty in getting members. Bob noted that the Union County Fair lost a bunch of Board members last year and was forced to regroup. Dana suggested it's especially difficult in a sparsely populated rural county, and Donna said it's also because of all the negativity regarding the rescue that went on for so long. Dana has had an equally difficult time finding a volunteer to help at the Barkin' Basement. All members agreed that another problem is that the level of personal responsibility has really plummeted, so much so that volunteers fail to be consistent, and they say they will do something or be somewhere and they just don't even call Dana when they can't. Or call John B. if they're volunteering at the rescue. Donna said that volunteerism as a concept is going down according to several articles she's read. Dana stated that it would be important to have some "established" people in the community, people who are well-respected, as well as one or two younger people that might have a new or different perspective.

John R. indicated that he could talk to students again. One of the things that professional school entrance committees look for is service in the community. Our Pre-Vet club members are missing a golden opportunity to add that to their applications.

So John R. and Donna prepared a Board member application and questionnaire, which was then distributed to the group for comment. It was based on materials that Bob brought back from a Board member workshop in Idaho, and materials that Donna had gathered. Two pages, the first having just general and contact info (John R. needs to add a space for email address and contact phone number); the second with questions identifying why a person wants to serve and why, so they know it's a time commitment. This would give us a good idea of how they're thinking and if they have any ideas for the Rescue and BMHA. This will also allow us to screen out people who don't have the mission of the Rescue and the Board at heart. Bob and Dana both noted that asking people what they think are the biggest challenges at the Rescue isn't really going to work well, as the average person may have no idea.

John R. therefore resolved to do a “Board Member Blitz”, talking to as many people as possible and posting the application prominently on the website. Maybe even an ad in the paper. Perhaps business happenings in the newspaper.

Donna relayed how the Shelter in Ocean Shores, WA is set up as a comparison to ours. They struggle for money, as most do, but they have a Board and they have a good community base, but here, a lot of the attitude is a “cheapening” of animal lives, so many people believe that a shelter just isn’t necessary or worth it. We agreed that the attitude is changing, but it’s very slow, and having a more “animal-forward” community would certainly help the problem tremendously.

II. Building upgrades. Recently an upgrade in the form of ice guards was added to the Barkin’ Basement building, which we rent but do not own. Good idea, and useful...but John and Donna both expressed concern about how the County might view the use of BMHA money for an improvement on a building we do not own. John suggested we probably should have gotten everything in writing and gotten a second quote for the upgrade. The upgrade was approved by the landlord, who agreed verbally to pay for half, and the installer donated materials, so it cost us \$150.00. It would likely have been approved, but we should have had the paperwork to show we did due diligence.

Bob pointed out that the rental contract requires us to perform maintenance, and Donna noted that this was an upgrade, not maintenance. Bob then said it was a matter of safety for our employee and our customers, but Donna said it was an addition, not an existing something that needed to be maintained. Bob said he didn’t see the need for a second opinion since we had a chance to get it done for a good price. Dana asked what then should have been done? Donna replied that if shelter money is spent on an addition, not maintenance, then we need to follow the correct protocol. Bob said he didn’t follow that logic at all and did not agree. John R. agreed with Donna, in that it is a bona fide addition, not something existing that needed maintenance, so at the very least, we should at least get Board approval in writing (by email, for example). Nobody disagreed with the safety issue, but we definitely should have had it in writing so we have the physical record, since we need to show accountability. Bob said the county probably doesn’t even have any interest in it, but Donna and John said that we just need to make sure we have everything covered in the future. Bob said he didn’t expect any additional major expenses in the future with the building. John R. noted it’s critical, though, to have it in writing, since there are a lot of people in the community who are ready to pounce on anything we do.

Bob then brought up the cat spay/neuter program, noting that few cats had been taken down recently. Donna said it was primarily because there was an outbreak of ringworm in the shelter. Bob said that doesn’t keep us from taking public cats down. Donna noted there just aren’t enough cats right now to make it worthwhile. John R. said he could make a bigger deal out of it, advertising on campus, for example. Bob noted we’re getting a new vet in town, and suggested we discuss a partnership with the new vet, giving us a discount in exchange for the business.

III. Fundraising.

A) Walk for a Dog is losing people steadily. Probably flyers need to be distributed again. Donna noted this is a great way to raise money since people will walk their dogs anyway, and it has corporate sponsorship. Also, they do challenges, including individual challenges that can raise thousands. Dana said this could happen more during the Summer.

B) smile.amazon.com raised us \$343.00 last quarter, so we need to really promote it.

C) Dana said that Facebook is making some changes so we can have a donate button right on our posts, so they can donate through Facebook and it's constantly there. John noted that people feel pretty comfortable donating and Facebook doesn't charge for the donations---the recipients get 100%

D) GoFundMe doesn't do well, since people are leery of donating due to scams and fraud.

E) Could bring back direct donating through the web service provider, but it costs a lot more due to encryption, and it already costs >\$100.00/year (John said \$153.00; it's actually \$115.00).

F) Special days to advertise on the website. Donna would like to advertise special animal-related days on the website to promote donations. This could include events and tours; for example, there's a national rabies vaccination day, or a national spay and neuter day, maybe have Jeff Henry come out and talk about the importance of these things and then give people a tour. National dog biscuit day, where people learn how to make dog biscuits and get a guided tour. This would help to allay suspicion and show people there's nothing to hide there. Bob noted that before we did any tours, the place needs to be cleaned up, outside and in.

These things wouldn't happen a lot, maybe 3 or 4 a year?

Dana said that having special events does make the organization more visible to the public, and there are people moving here that don't know about us---Dana says on average she's getting at least 5 people a week who haven't come in before.

G) Donna would like to bring back Doggie Dash: a 3K run-walk, starting at shelter, up 4th street and back, and participants get pledges. The top pledge-earners got their pick of prizes. Used to be in September when students were coming back, so Donna would like to bring it back in May, coinciding with Oregon Humane's Doggie Dash in May. Each participant also got a T-shirt. Middle of May would be good. It sort of died the last couple of years. They ordered a horde of T-shirts and spent a ton of money. Make sure if we do that we don't put a date! Donna can go online and look at these costs. Best to order a certain number of each size. Bob suggested making them very general so any extras could still be sold and not associated with the event. Donna suggested also putting the Walk for a Dog stuff on the Doggie Dash application and pledge form.

Maybe we could find corporate sponsors to help defray the costs, as they did in the past in exchange for their advertising printed on the shirts. Safeway used to donate bagels; and McDonald's has donated juice mix, and Pepsi would donate water (and soda, and they'll make banners for you too).

But the big thing is to get Board members and CONSISTENT volunteers. Dana noted we send out a lot of apps but they never come back. Can't people give 1 hour a week, consistently? Especially at the Barkin' Basement, where we can't seem to get anybody to come in and help.

IV. Other Business: Bob brought up a problem with the shed area. Bob said the area has a bunch of cars parked there and several dog-walkers have nearly had accidents by running into them. John B. sometimes has 5 rigs back there, and he parks them there so people won't know he's there. John R. said he would address the issue with John B. immediately, as it is a safety issue.

Meeting adjourned 5:28 PM.