

Washoe County Regional Animal Services

Advisory Board

Friday, April 24, 2026 @ 9:00 a.m.
Washoe County Regional Animal Services classroom
2825 Longley Ln, Suite A, Reno NV
and available via Zoom

Members Present:

Trudy Brussard, Vice Chair
Julie McMahon
Joe Rodriguez

Members Present via Zoom:

Diaz Dixon
Jill Fisher

Members Absent:

Naomi Duerr, Chair
Clara Andriola

1. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and a quorum was present.

2. Salute to the Flag

Jill Vacchina-Dobbs led all those convened in the pledge of allegiance.

3. Public Comment

Tracy Dean of Community Cats addressed the board in person and distributed a handout to all members. She reminded the board that Community Cats is a local 501c3 non-profit independent charity that helps cats and cat caretakers in our community. In 2025 they helped 1,509 cats through TNR (trap/neuter/return) surgeries making up 42% of the total reported TNR surgeries within Washoe County. 900 of the cats receiving surgeries were female which could have birthed a total of 36,000 cats over their lifetimes. Accounting for mortality that would have given us 1,302 cats in 2026 producing 78,084 cats that would have been born into our community for groups like WCRAS, NHS, and Community Cats among others to take care of.

Vee McClure of Community Cats next addressed the board in person. She thanked the board for giving her some time to expand on what Tracy Dean was talking about today, which is not only the impact of TNR on free-roaming cats, but also population management within them. She shared some hypotheticals and some math to show the board the impact of just one year of TNR in this community. Nearly 80,000 births are prevented just by one year of their work. That means that with the strain and

resources these cats put on all local animal welfare groups when they enter the system, it is imperative not only for them all to work collaboratively but also partner at every opportunity. Beyond continuing to increase the number of cats Community Cats help year-round over a year, their 2026 goals include stronger partnerships with all participating organizations: Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS), SPCA, Options, NHS, as well as smaller local community non-profits. Community Cats of Reno is at the top of this funnel and in a vital position to help curb the population and the intake of cats and kittens into those organizations and that includes WCRAS. Studies show that targeted TNR and putting efforts and resources and money into TNR saves money and resources in the long run. It is the most impactful action that can be taken to help each organizations with costs because it stops it at the top of the funnel. And this is why partnering with organizations like Community Cats is so vitally important. The 78,000 number was a good description and illustration of that. And so Community Cats is asking everyone to continue to prioritize TNR. The best and most impactful action the partner organizations are going to take for effective population control is by offering no-cost TNR. It saves money in the long run by doing so. Community Cats is also asking and bringing up the fact that the ARPA grant has been crucial in these efforts. They were only able to get the most TNR surgeries the organization has ever done in their history because of the ARPA grant last year. So they're asking the board to explore renewing the ARPA grant or finding new avenues of funding TNR surgeries. A controlled population of community cats in Washoe County depends on it.

4. Board Minutes (FOR POSSIBLE ACTION)

Member Joe Rodriguez moved to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2026 meeting of the Washoe County Regional Animal Services Advisory Board with the following corrections. Member Julie McMahon seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously by the board with no opposition, with the corrections so noted.

A typo on page 26 will be corrected from "milk winter" to "mild winter"

5. Staff Reports and Program Updates (FOR DISCUSSION ONLY)

- a. Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) Director Shyanne Schull presented a report on quarter one of 2026. As a reminder for any attendees that didn't hear last time, WCRAS switched from a fiscal year to a quarter year reporting for simplicity purposes. First, she covered some of the key achievements from last quarter. They had quite a few achievements that were behind the scenes making up much of the work, and of course some of the challenges will be covered as well. The department accomplished several long-term projects that they have been working on behind the scenes that are going to be very beneficial for not only the department, but the community. Some of those projects came to a conclusion last quarter. They had a lighting project upgrade to the facility which they budgeted and planned for since last year. As the building is probably 20 years old this year there are upgrades and things to be expected that have to occur within the facility. The site saw a

significant upgrade to the old fluorescent style lights and a transition to new fixtures and LED lighting, which not only improved lighting in many areas, but also improved their efficiency for energy use. That project, though it did have some interruptions to operations, is finally concluded. There was also project movement on the CARES program, and for those that don't know what that program is, the department suspended it for approximately two years. That program was originally set up to help catch those individuals that needed medical care that could not afford it and that either staff came into contact with or one of the department's participating partners. That program quickly grew legs and was unable to be managed within the department and so it was suspended in order to go back to the drawing board and rebuild the project, to streamline the use and really narrowly focus what pets they can help, as well as how that program will be implemented within the department. Program Coordinator Quinn Sweet took the initiative to lift this project off the ground and it is now a voucher program and specific to WCRAS' partners at Options Veterinary Care. When one of WCRAS' officers or one of the caretakers or office personnel come into contact with an animal, they can initiate that referral to help an animal that needs to have veterinary care with an owner that qualifies through the program. The program is narrowly focused, but it's also set up to be beneficial for those that truly need assistance in the community and also can be joined with other programs such as the SPCA's programs, Todd's Fund, and other different programs that can help provide sort of a wraparound service for those animals that are most at risk. The last key achievement was actually a year-long project. This was an exciting opportunity that Director Schull had to participate with Best Friends Animal Society in a peer mentor program. The peer mentor program is designed to provide mentorship from a successful shelter to a small shelter or a shelter that is struggling in specific program areas. Director Schull was approached in 2024 about participating in the program. For all of 2025 she worked with a very small shelter that happens to be in her hometown, Wasco, California; a very under-resourced community that has all of two people that run the entire animal control operation. The program goals are to help that shelter reach 90% live release. It's largely left up to the two shelters to work through what the goals are and what they wanted to accomplish by the end of the year grant and Wasco Shelter wanted to develop a foster program so WCRAS worked with them to obtain supplies and to build an application, to build a framework for a dog and cat foster program. Director Schull shared that, in addition to the foster program that they were successful in implementing, they helped Wasco Shelter obtain a personal pet ID engraving machine similar to theirs so that they can give tags to their community members and get pets reunited much more quickly, hopefully before they have to come to the shelter or have to have a long stay at the shelter. Some of the reasons that WCRAS was chosen to be a mentor shelter are that they are successful in reunification of animals in our community and have over a 90% live release rate for the last 10+ years. They are looked at as a model shelter in the industry and can offer a lot of advice, tools and tips to other shelters who are

struggling in some of those problematic areas.

Along with successes, the department also experiences challenges. They have had staffing shortages and are struggling to provide coverage and answer all the calls for service in a reasonable response due to the shortages that they've had. As mentioned at the last meeting, the Business Technologist II was leaving and moving to California to take another job. The department is in the process of trying to fill that position, but it created a significant strain on the support that our department was accustomed to relying on from that BTII position. They have three field staff that are either completely out on medical leave or on modified duty, which created a significant strain on service delivery call response and coverage, particularly when the department is responsible for covering all of Washoe County from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year. The department is looking forward to a brighter quarter report next time, hopefully with full coverage and full staff. The last vacancy that they experienced was for a dispatcher and Director Schull was happy to report that that position has been filled, and that person starts in May.

Next Director Schull discussed animals that were impounded, broken out by dogs, cats, and other. The department saw just over 1,000 dogs coming to the shelter last quarter and 482 cats. That is down 131 dogs over the same quarter last year, and down 7 cats over the same quarter last year. She was happy to report the decrease in the number of animals that are coming into the shelter, and whatever those reasons are, she'd like to attribute them to effective spay and neuter, as Community Cats talked about already, as well as many other proactive programs in the community that are diverting animals from coming to the shelter, and most importantly, hopefully preventing births of animals that are going to be homeless. There were also 53 other animals (the reptiles, livestock, and various other small animals) which was also a significant decrease in numbers, down from 89 in the same quarter last year. For animal intake broken out by type, most animals that were taken in were because they were lost or stray, of which there were 1,308. There were 199 confiscate animals, animals that were brought in because an owner was arrested, a person was hospitalized, things like that. There were 70 quarantine animals and 36 safeholds. She reminded the board that safeholds are a five-day courtesy hold for when a person is hospitalized unexpectedly or some type of catastrophe such as a house fire or something like that. The last type was 20 owner surrenders. The department doesn't take owner surrenders as a general service but they do get animals into the facility that are unable to be returned to the owner based on the animal's aggression and/or the animal may have been injured when it was encountered and the owner opted to sign it over.

Moving on to where animals go once they leave the department, WCRAS had 809 transfers to rescue partners last quarter, and a whopping 741 animals

that were reunited with their families, which is always celebrated, because that's an incredible number. 96 animals were euthanized for a variety of reasons, some for health, some for behavior. And then two animals died while in care at WCRAS. 44% of the animals that came into their care that were lost when they came in, were returned to their owner. She reminded the board that this was talked about at the last meeting and the department is referencing and benchmarking Shelter Animals Count, which is a national database that tracks statistics that are reported by many animal shelters across the country. To an average layperson, 44% doesn't necessarily resonate. But when you talk about 44% being an average return-to-owner percentage against the national average of 11%, that starts to speak volumes about the work that the department is doing and the success that they're able to report.

Taking a closer look at reunification, Animal Service Officers return animals 45% of the time in the field without bringing them in, which diverts a shelter stay. From a cost standpoint of intake, vaccination, exam, doing all the things that staff does the moment a dog walks in the door, it's \$100 just for that particular dog. That does not include any medical care expenses, cost of care for any other things that are necessary, or boarding care for any additional days the dog is at the shelter. 32% of the time animals that are brought into the shelter by members of the public are reclaimed after being impounded and 23% of the time animals that were brought in by Animal Services Officers and unable to be reunited in the field are later reclaimed at the shelter.

Of the transfer partners that transferred the most animals last quarter, 721 dogs and cats were transferred to the Nevada Humane Society (NHS) last quarter, with dog transfers right around 89% of available dogs and around 98% of available cats last quarter. A report showing the transfer percentages of animals transferred to NHS is available on the department's website. SPCA Northern Nevada is another valued partner who transferred 17 animals last quarter. Res-Que transferred 15 animals. Northern Nevada Poultry Transfer transferred 15 animals. Chihuahua Rescue of Truckee Meadows transferred 8 animals. And 33 animals were transferred to various other partners across the region.

As far as euthanasia and reasons for euthanasia, Director Schull reminded the board that the department has their own quality-of-life determining factor that is utilized for determining when an animal is either mentally or physically suffering and should be euthanized. There were 48 animals that were euthanized for quality-of-life reasons, 35 dogs for behavior that compromised their adoptability or safety, four dogs that were unsuccessful at finding a transfer partner that had the resources to accept them, six wildlife, two animals for rabies testing (one bat and one raccoon), and one declared vicious dog. She added that WCRAS' primary responsibility is to ensure the well-being and humane treatment of animals that come into their care as well

as to prevent known behavior that can pose a public safety risk from being released into our community. These decisions are difficult and they deeply impact staff. It is a sensitive process and not something that is taken lightly. They review each and every one of these animals before a decision is made, and in many cases, multiple people will be involved in the decision.

Moving on to field services, the top five call types of what officers responded to were 1,673 calls were for lost or stray animals, 603 calls for patrols which is a proactive call that officers respond to and try to look for either an animal at large in an area like a park, an animal that was a nuisance that's been complained about and it's a threat, a bite animal, or something like that. There were also 350 bite investigations, 342 welfare calls, 333 deceased animals, and then the other category has 776 calls which could be any number of things from assisting other agencies, to responding to a citizen complaint that they don't really have a lot of details about. 326 Notice of Civil Penalty's (NCP) for failure to license were issued. As mentioned in previous meetings, this is the easiest thing to comply with so it really demonstrates the need for community-wide education and awareness about the requirement and the benefit of licensing and also the public health safety factor of making sure that your dog, your cat, and your ferrets are vaccinated for rabies. There were also 66 NCP's for animals at large, 25 for barking dogs, 25 for failing to vaccinate for rabies, 22 for failing to restrain an animal, 11 for dangerous or vicious dog violations, six for failing to quarantine after a bite, and 29 for animal cruelty.

Vice Chair Brussard asked what the difference was between an animal at large and a stray? Director Schull replied that animal at large is if an animal is completely off property, running downtown, running at large. She then stated that restraint is if for example, you're at the park, it's not an off-leash park, and your dog is running off-leash, that would be failure to restrain.

For the outcomes of the cruelty investigations there were 119 investigations for failure to provide food/water/air/shelter, 66 investigations of intentional cruelty, 82 hot-car/neglect-type calls, 41 follow-ups, 32 abandoned animal investigations, 27 cases requiring the owner to obtain veterinary care, 22 unsanitary living conditions, and 15 improperly tethered investigations. This particular element of the work that the field staff do makes up the lion's share of complexity, focus, and paperwork. A whole lot of follow-ups, a whole lot of trying to collect statements, looking at video surveillance if there's an active cruelty situation, pulling videos from neighboring homes or businesses, a whole ton of work that goes into these calls and is really not captured and articulated in slides presented to the board. The numbers alone don't tell the whole story about all the work that's behind the scenes on each and every one of these calls.

Member Rodriguez asked how many of those actually reach the DA's office?

Director Schull answered that they are working on trying to have a more definitive way to report and track some of these cases. It's challenging because some of them take so long to adjudicate. Sometimes these cases go on for 6 to 8 months. But it is one of the things that the department's own internal staff would love to know and to have an idea of the outcomes so they are working on trying to figure out how to capture those and how to track them more clearly.

Director Schull then shared more behind the scenes work sort of leaning into the question that member Rodriguez just asked about some of those cases. In the quarter before last the department had one warrant. A ton of work that went into just getting that one warrant not including all the work that occurred after the warrant was served. Animals were seized then a case ensued and all of the processes that unfolds after that. It's quite a bit of work but luckily they didn't have any last quarter. Animal permits is another one of those areas that is an under-appreciated or unknown service area that staff spends quite a bit of time and work on in order to maintain, to inspect, to follow up on, and to process applications. There are 39 dangerous or vicious dog permits current in the community, 18 variance permits which is for someone who wishes to own more than the legal limit of five dogs or seven cats seven exotic animal permits, and 41 active commercial animal welfare permits.

She finished by mentioning that staff accomplished all of this work and more with 47 staff members when fully staffed, and they have not been fully staffed in some time. They are helped by 15 dedicated volunteers, a number will probably grow every quarter. And so the success of the department is not driven by size, it is driven by intentionality, it is by how the department operates and the efficiencies that they create, the partnerships that they form, and how team members lean on each other in the whole welfare industry because no one entity can do it all.

Next Quinn Sweet, Program Coordinator gave a quick overview of what's been going on in outreach this last quarter. The outreach program is made up of two full-time staff members, although they do receive support from other staff members who have other duties, but it's just two full-time people that work on all of the projects. The program includes maintaining public microchip scanning stations, supporting Res-Que's Pet Karma Box program, providing free spay/neuters and vaccinations for anybody staying at pet-friendly homeless shelters, providing free microchips and ID tags, handling all of WCRAS' social media, maintaining the lost and found texting program, monthly affordable vaccine clinics, free vaccine clinics, affordable community clinics out in the community, senior pet food distribution, as well as the volunteer program.

In quarter one they had nine community events which included vaccine clinics, senior pet food distributions, several school assemblies, and other

events. Notably, the biggest event in last quarter was a free vaccine clinic for seniors that was held down at the Washoe Senior Center. They had a huge number of people, 170 plus pets that were vaccinated in a four-hour period. Through all of these programs they assisted 788, 1,405 animals and via all of our social media work they were able to reach 160,000 people. The program continues to work to increase their reach, get education out there, and support the community in every way that they can.

She then briefly turned it over to a representative from SPCA who was there to talk a little bit about their partnership on the Hot Cars Kill: Community Awareness Campaign. Sydney Denham, Communications Manager at SPCA of Northern Nevada, explained that the campaign is a long-standing partnership and collaboration with Washoe County Regional Animal Services. In the three years that she's held the position, SPCA has worked very closely in making this information known in the community. It's very important to not only alleviate a lot of the work on Washoe County Regional Animal Services, but to make the community aware of how they can support WCRAS and SPCA and help not only other people and the community itself, but the pets first and foremost. The campaign puts up multiple billboards around Reno, they do multiple social media posts, and they do a combined press release together. It's a really great way to really work together and promote something that's super important. Program Coordinator Sweet added that WCRAS is continuing to partner on this campaign and will continue to educate the public and hopefully reduce the number of calls that WCRAS get for pets left in hot cars. As the board may remember last year the community had a pet die after it was left in a hot car, and everyone is hoping to never have that happen again.

She then talked about some of the other initiatives that the Outreach program is putting into place. As Director Schull mentioned, there's a lot of work to be done around educating people, around licensing and dogs especially, and so they've started putting together some programs and initiatives to help people get their dogs licensed. The first initiative that they just started rolling out is a free first-time dog license for anybody that adopts a dog from any of WCRAS' partner rescues. The adoption can be any time from now forward, or any time in the past. If a community member has never licensed their dog and they've adopted from a partnering rescue, they can come in and WCRAS will give them a free dog license. The hope is that it will help people become more compliant and aware of the fact that they need to license their dogs here in Washoe County. All they need to do is come into the building with their adoption paperwork and their rabies vaccine and they will get a free license. Another licensing promotion that they are doing is ahead of July 4th, which as many of you know is one of our busiest days of the year with fireworks and everything else. So ahead of July 4th, they want to encourage people to get their dogs licensed, get those tags on them, and make sure that WCRAS can get them home as quickly as possible. During the period between May 31st

and June 13th, we are going to be waiving all late fees for licensing. If somebody has lapsed in their license renewal process, normally they would be charged a small late fee. Those fees will be waived during this period between May 31st and June 13th. They will also be offering a code for a free designer tag, including a Reno Aces tag that they worked with the vendor to create, so people can get a really fancy tag for their dog for free. They will be doing free one-year licenses during that time so people can come in person and they will get a free license regardless of their license status before. They will also be partnering with the Reno Aces and going to an Aces baseball game on one of their pet-friendly days to promote this. They will be taking some of their tags and the tag engraving machine and will try to get as many tags on pets as possible.

Next Assistant-Director Tammy Jennings provided an overview of the clinic's activities. In the past quarter they performed 166 TNR surgeries and one Return-To-Field (RTF). They performed 24 surgeries for rescue partners, 23 dogs and one cat. They vaccinated 24 animals and performed four surgeries through the CARES program. They did have eight cruelty exams that they had to do during this quarter and unfortunately five necropsies as well. The clinic also did 20 radiograph series, nine in-house lab panels, and about 11 other procedures which included things like sedated grooming, abscess care, mastectomies, enucleations, those kinds of surgeries. One fun note she added was that, thanks to a grant from Petco, they received a new anesthesia machine, some new equipment for monitoring, and some other extra equipment too. She then shared a quick little happy tale about a little kitty named Valentino. Valentino came in with a severe upper respiratory infection and the team suspected that it had a Khaleesi virus as well. Valentino needed some higher-level medical care than they could do at the shelter and thankfully the department's rescue partner Feral At Heart was able to take little Valentino and get him proper medical care. Now Valentino is doing really great and is currently waiting for somebody to adopt him. They did an amazing job on the medical care for this little kid who's doing great right now.

Director Schull then provided a few things to watch out for. The next meeting will be on July 24th at 9am in the same location. WCRAS plans to bring forward an update on the ordinance revisions that they are currently working on at the present time and also their legislative priorities and where those are in the process. She had already provided a few general updates to this board that they did submit some requests to Washoe County to consider for BDR requests and that's currently in process and so they should know where they stand by the next meeting. Director Schull will be asking the Dispatch Supervisor to come and provide an update on the very important brains of the operation, the dispatch office, and the work that happens in there from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., 365 days a year, protecting the safety of our officers, sending them calls, taking calls from the community, and all the stuff that happens.

Vice-Chair Brussard asked for a little more clarification regarding the volunteer program. She noticed that they had volunteers under outreach and wondered if the volunteers helped at the shelter, with outreach, or both? She also wondered how WCRAS would get more volunteers? Director Schull responded that a full report on the volunteers is on the agenda for today and will provide a little more information on where that program stands.

Member Rodriguez asked for a snapshot of some of the legislative updates or some of the BDRs that the department is looking at. Director Schulle explained that they submitted two BDR requests to Washoe County for consideration. One is for emergency lights on the vehicles so that they can respond to calls and have expedited service, especially and particularly when they are getting called by REMSA or law enforcement to enter into a residence where a person is in need of healthcare or of emergency services but there are dogs that are blocking their ability to get in. The other is in regard to WCRAS' enforcement powers, which she has spoken with Member Rodriguez about. She shared that a couple of team members took the initiative to write and draft those BDRs which is why she's not familiar with the full language. Those are two things that they've requested, and the process is currently underway for Washoe County to consider all the BDRs from the various departments.

Member McMahon asked that for the bat and raccoon, she is assuming that the outcomes were not positive for rabies. Director Schull responded that she didn't have the outcome on those, but she could certainly provide that after the meeting. Member McMahon continued that, knowing that Washoe County does have a population that potentially is positive, it would be interesting to find out. It's a small number but it's still significant. Then with the hot car campaign this year, she asked if there was going to be access to, or a printable or a PDF version of, an 8x10 for example so that the board would, as community members, be able to distribute them? SPCA Director Jill Vacchina Dobbs explained that they will have a printable and downloadable version on the website. They will also have multiple volunteers to go out and distribute flyers in the community. Director Schull and Program Coordinator Sweet gave them a list of locations that they're seeing a lot of these calls happening at and unfortunately, they're at pet unfriendly stores. They are really going to take point on this and go into those locations, making sure to make it really clear that if people can't bring their pets in, they shouldn't risk bringing them at all.

- b. Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) Shelter Supervisor, Arthur Westbrook, provided a general update on WCRAS' canine behavior assessment program. In about 2023 the department had to really change the way they did things in the shelter. They had to start putting dogs through behavior assessments, things like that. They used Kelly Bowman's behavior

assessment, which a lot of their rescue partners use as well, which made the transition a lot easier. What the behavior assessment entails is sociability, having them meet other animals to make sure that they're friendly with those animals, putting them through basic handling, taking them out of the kennel, and taking them to our play yard. Having that play yard now has been super helpful and all of the behavior assessments now happen in that play yard. Once that happens the department gets behavior notes from every touch point as soon as the animal comes in. Through intake, in the field officers take behavior notes of how the animals are acting, and any time kennel staff interacts with an animal they have to put behavior notes. Now the behavior notes are five to six pages long when before they were maybe a paragraph. He went on to explain that really, he was just here to answer any questions that the board might have about the behavior process.

Member Dixon asked if there was a backlog on that? Are staff able to keep up with the assessments and what does that time frame look like? Supervisor Westbrook responded that currently they are keeping up with the behavior assessments. They have kind of figured it out over time so the backlog that used to exist doesn't exist anymore. Nevada Humane Society has a good behavior transfer manager now and the two groups work really well together so WCRAS is able to figure out a lot of those issues. The backlog is not there anymore, I would say. Member Dixon shared that it was great news to hear because that is a barrier that a lot of systems have in animal welfare. He offered major kudos for the team for working that out. Supervisor Dixon thanked Member Dixon and explained that they also send emails all the time to all the rescue groups and are in constant contact with all of our rescue groups. They have been extremely helpful as well in getting animals out of the shelter a lot quicker.

Julie McMahon shared that she just wanted to say that it's really nice to hear that even though both NHS and the County have their own way of assessing and deciding who gets pulled and doesn't based on certain criteria, and knowing that the in-kennel assessment can sometimes be very limiting, so she was glad to hear that the use of the play yard for these types of assessments has been so successful. She continued that, from being on the inside with the students and handling animals that were previously declined, and then having outside student engagement with students that sometimes have little or no behavioral or handling experience, that we are looking beyond that initial presentation for these guys. She wanted to say thank you to both sides for being able to go outside of that box. Supervisor Westbrook agreed that the play yard has been extremely helpful with that. All the notes that are captured, even from the first-year students that come and work with the department, from all the staff notes that are entered, there are times that he does talk to the new behavior transfer manager at NHS and he will come and re-look at those dogs and they do end up transferring them after all. He does feel that that relationship has gotten a lot better and that he and the

NHS behavior transfer manager are able to work a lot closer together to try to figure out outcomes for animals.

Vice-Chair Brussard expressed that she was trying to envision this play yard and wondered how many animals are you assessing in a day and then do the other animals get to come out and play when you're finished? How does this work? Supervisor Westbrook explained that they do the majority of their behavior assessments in the morning while staff is cleaning, and it's maybe three to four a day. Then they shift and staff are assigned their own dogs, probably three or four, that they need to take out every day. Once dogs are past their stray hold and they become the property of WCRAS, then they put them through a behavior assessment. From that behavior assessment, if they're safe to take out, for anybody to handle, then they create a list for other staff that have animal handling experience to take out those animals. They will also have a list of animals for maybe, say, somebody in the admin area that doesn't have as much animal experience, maybe an elderly dog for example. Those staff members are able to take those dog into their office or out to the play yard. There is a pretty structured schedule of how that happens so that every dog gets out that can get out.

Member McMahon followed up on the discussion by asked if they would be able to do a quick drive-by or tour of the play yard for members of the board who have not seen it to be able to get an idea of what they are talking about. Supervisor Westbrook indicated that he would be happy to facilitate that.

- c. Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) Program Coordinator, Quinn Sweet, provided a general update on the new volunteer program. She reminded the board that WCRAS had relaunched the volunteer program back in August after being on hiatus for many years. The program has really focused on things that people can jump in and get started on right away such as pet food rebagging for the pet food distribution program and laundry for the animal care team. These types of tasks are where all tier one volunteers start. The idea is to give them a period of time where they can get the feel for how the organization works before they move into more complex tasks. At tier 2 WCRAS does a formal background check whereas at tier 1 they only do a system background check to look in WCRAS's internal database to see if prospective volunteers have any history with WCRAS. They would be especially looking for anything when animal cruelty and neglect have been notified by our staff. Those people are not allowed to volunteer for WCRAS. Once in tier 2 WCRAS does a portal background check and that's when the volunteers are given a little more access. At this time a lot of the volunteers that have reached tier 2, and they are doing things like data entry. There is a huge amount of data entry, and the program has some volunteers that absolutely adore it and just want to do data entry all day. In tier 3 the volunteers can start to be included in emergency responses and being trained to act as mentors for our newer volunteers. The program only has a couple of

volunteers that have reached tier 3 at this point but is hoping to grow that number as they continue to grow the program. As of the end of quarter one the program had 15 active volunteers and since the program was re-launched there has been over 600 hours donated in volunteer time which has been immensely helpful for staff by providing that support for our animals and our facility.

WCRAS has been trying to intentionally build and grow the program and so the program was launched with the minimum needed to get volunteers into the building with the intention of really looking at where the program needed to grow, what the department needed a volunteer to do, and what the volunteers would want to do. Outreach has been working really closely with their partners at SPCA of Northern Nevada to understand their volunteer program since their program is really well built and has been in place for a long time. Their volunteer coordinator has been super helpful with sharing all their processes, their procedures, all of their forms, and how they set things up. They've taken WCRAS through several tours of how they do things, what they do, and how they've grown their program to be such an efficient program. WCRAS is working with the SPCA to make sure that when WCRAS is growing their program, they can avoid some of the pitfalls that SPCA may have found early on, and WCRAS can grow a successful program. One of the things that SPCA is higher-up volunteers mentoring newer volunteers and that's one of the things that WCRAS really wants to relate to their program.

Program Coordinator Sweet then showed a picture of one of the volunteers, Cindy. She's one of the most steadfast volunteers who started pretty early on. The photo shows Cindy doing some "click for quiet" training with some of the dogs, which is something that has been put in place fairly recently where volunteers can come through the shelter, using clickers and treats to help dogs feel calmer in their kennel and then present a little better. The idea is to train them to not bark, but instead to sit nicely right in front of the kennel so that they can be assessed a little better. It's been very effective so far and the volunteers really enjoy getting to do it. Other things the volunteers are doing include animal care and enrichment, putting together the cat litter boxes, helping restock supplies in the different rooms to make sure that everything is ready to go when a new pet comes. They also help with the operations and data, doing things like putting together microchip packets for the thousands of microchips given out every single year and every single person who gets a microchip gets one of those packets. There is also a lot of data entry. As you may know WCRAS is the rabies authority in Washoe County and so all of the rabies vaccines for cats and dogs in Washoe County are reported to the department. All those need to be tracked and so the volunteers do a lot of that data entry. Then there are all of the community events which they help out with, setting up booths and helping engrave pet ID tags. The volunteers are doing a wide variety of things already and the department is actively working to expand that even more.

One of the biggest things on the list for expanding the volunteer program is the Pet Detective Program. There are lots of people in our community who are very active on social media and who are aware of which pets are missing but maybe not which ones might be at the shelter. The Pet Detective Program is designed to utilize volunteers to do that legwork to help reunite pets a little bit faster, things like being able to say, "Hey, I found this Facebook post or this Next Door post about a dog that's lost and I think it's a match for this one" to make those connections. Another area that some of the volunteers have shown interest in is WCRAS' social media content, so creating content or even just updating the outcomes of all of the pets on the department's Facebook page. Every stray animal that comes into the shelter is posted with a photo onto our Facebook page. Then when they have an outcome, they get reunited or they get transferred somewhere, that outcome is posted and the photo is updated. Driving and logistics is another area where volunteers may be utilized, things like restocking karma boxes, checking the microchip scanning stations, and donation pickups. Currently volunteers are not allowed to drive, but the department has just submitted a proposal to BCC and they hope to get approval to allow volunteers with training to drive county vehicles. The board just heard from Kennel Supervisor Arthur Westbrook about the play yard. Now that WCRAS has started integrating staff into that process, the next step is to start integrating volunteers into that process as well so that they can start taking some of these dogs out to the play yard. They are also expanding the program into medical team support, to include things like surgery pack preparation, surgery laundry, and data entry to assist medical staff. Those are also things that are on our list to implement next. Lastly the program is hoping to start having volunteers help with vaccine clinic approvals. There are 120 appointments per clinic and before each of those appointments are approved and put into our system, the team has to do a bunch of research to determine if they need a license, is there a current rabies vaccine on file, do they actually need rabies if they said they do, do they need to get a call, things like that. So those are the next six tasks that volunteers will be invited to help with. The department actually has a very large spreadsheet that all the supervisors put together to list all the different tasks that they eventually want to integrate into the volunteer program, but these are the six priority tasks.

Moving forward the program will work on expanding the SOPs and trainings to make sure that the volunteers are adequately trained and supported for each of these tasks that they're going to be doing. They're also going to continue to work on growing the active volunteer base, launching some of the new roles such as the pet detective role, and will continue to work with their partners like the SPCA of Northern Nevada to find the best practices, identify where the program can grow and what staff can do to make the volunteer program even better.

One of the things that Program Coordinator Sweet wanted to mention is that they recently moved the volunteer application and orientation to an online format to hopefully expedite that process for anybody that wants to volunteer. They can fill out the online application, watch the online orientation, and then take a quiz. That automatically qualifies them to then come in for a short tour and then they can start their hours. It's a really efficient system to get people into the building rather than having the in-person orientation, which they were using before and made scheduling really difficult for a lot of people. That has only been in place for a couple of weeks, but it's been really successful so far. She shared the QR code with the board that can be scanned and will take you to the application. All a potential volunteer would have to do is visit the website, click the application, and complete the online orientation and waiver form. Next they just schedule the in-person tour from the volunteer app, and then they can start volunteering.

Vice-Chair Brussard asked if the program allowed volunteers that are high-school age? Program Coordinator Sweet explained that they do allow volunteers who are aged 16 and up with parental consent. Vice-Chair Brussard responded that she knows that kids are on social media constantly and so they could see this, but they also probably are seeing 4,000 other things, so she was wondering how they could get attention to the program. Program Coordinator Sweet explained that they have been advertising it via word of mouth, during events, and then they just posted on our Facebook page about the volunteer program and how people can join. Assistant Director Tammy Jennings then explained that WCRAS has relationships with a lot of leadership classes at various High Schools throughout the county. They come in for tours and contact the department for their leadership hours that they have to do. They also have relationships with different groups, like scout groups, girl scout groups, scouting groups, that kind of thing already and so are building on all that. Then they have a lot of staff members with kids that promote it throughout their schools. Her own son promotes it up at UNR. So they do have a lot of outreach in that area as well.

Member McMahon asked about the “click for quiet” training program. She was assuming that when volunteers start to go around and do this with animals that they're receiving some kind of training, either with Kelley Bollen or one of the team members. Program Coordinator Sweet reassured her that “click for quiet” training is a tier two activity because it does require that additional training. Amber Rodriguez, the Animal Care Lead, has put together the training which includes a presentation component and then a hands-on component where they go through and practice all of the skills with Amber.

6. Nevada Humane Society Operational Update Report [Non-Action Item]

Jerleen Bryant, CEO, and Trent Bingham, Director of Operations, provided an update to the board on the Nevada Humane Society Reno campus' second quarter 2024. She started by giving a shout out to this community because not

every community has the resources to help the animals like you do. Washoe County Regional Animal Services, SPCA of Northern Nevada, Community Cats, Options Veterinary Care, a variety of other organizations, and certainly the donors that support many of the organizations because NHS couldn't do what they do without the donors in the community that allow that life-saving work to happen. She shared that she's been in this field for quite a while and is on many workshop calls and think tank calls with other shelter leaders around the country and goes to national conferences and there is a wide spectrum of communities and shelters across the country and their abilities to help animals. Washoe County is not unique. There are some really wonderful communities across the country that are able to provide that help and there's certainly a lot that can't.

She then introduced a new initiative that NHS is undertaking. For many years, they have been supporting colony caretakers through a variety of ways including taking in many neonatal kittens, almost 1,300 kittens last year that came in and were under 2 pounds, providing TNR efforts, supplemental food assistance, and a variety of other resources. But while doing this work, they have not been operating from a place of data-driven decision-making, but from a place where they see a need, and they want to do what they can to provide the help that they are able to provide. The only way that they can really effectively help colony cats, community cats, and our caretakers, is if they have the data to support them. And so, she introduced the Nevada Humane Society Community Cat Heat Map that is in early stages, but she still wanted to share the information. She showed a map that was cropped to Washoe County, but indicated that the data also includes Carson City because they have the animal control contract in that area. She explained that the map includes the data that NHS currently has for all known cat colonies. It breaks out ear tipped from non-ear tipped cats. And in phase two of this data collection project, they will collect address information for neonatal kittens that NHS takes in to correlate with the known colonies and with unknown hot spots so that we can target tracking efforts through collaboration with other TNR groups like Community Cats of Reno. They are committed to making this information available to the partners who are also doing boots-on-the-ground work. The ultimate goal for this initiative is to be able to identify colony locations and how many of the cats at each location are spayed or neutered in order to focus their efforts and share the information with those other organizations that are working to decrease the number of free roaming cats in communities. NHS has a very robust spay and neuter program that includes all shelter pets and owned pets in the community. Last year, between owned pets and shelter pets, NHS performed over 12,000 spay and neuter surgeries. The initiative's goals are also to identify kitten hotspots and then any areas needing additional help. The desired outcomes are additional spay and leader support or interventions leading to reduced shelter intake making this a shelter diversion program and identifying areas in the community where there are hot spots or high numbers of unaltered cats. NHS is hopeful to have this information shared with them from other groups and community members. They will be reaching out to community partners to start this conversation with them and hopefully they will be willing to share this information and then NHS can share how they will share the results of that

information with them. She then asked the board members to help by reaching out to their constituents who may be caring for free roaming cats, or know where some are, and asking them to email NHS at communitycats@nevadahumanesociety.org with information on where the cats are, how many they are, and anything else they have.

CEO Bryant then moved on to explain that Nevada Humane Society is primarily funded through philanthropic support, i.e. donors. Some of these donors are able to give small amounts. Maybe they're able to give it recurring. Some give larger amounts. But NHS receives almost eight million dollars a year in donor support. They take in approximately 10,000 animals a year and assist an additional 20,000+ animals in the community that are owned. They also receive almost one million dollars in contract revenue coming from their animal control services contract in Carson City, just over a million dollars in adoption and surrender fees, and a tiny little bit from their retail store which is designed to offer post-adoption support to our adopters and provide the ability for them to purchase all the things they need prior to going home with their pet and settling in. She shared that NHS has approximately 120 staff across both campuses, expenses are continuing to go up, philanthropic support is not keeping up with the rise in expenses, and so they're struggling. The philanthropy department is working hard to connect with donors, share the stories, and share all of the ways that donors can support them, but it is certainly a challenge.

Next she talked about what the generous donors already make possible. NHS' help desk is a resource for all of northern Nevada, and sometimes beyond. NHS is the safety net for nearly 3,500 animals a year that come to us from the community as owner-surrendered animals. They provide extensive medical and behavioral interventions for the good of these animals and the cost is significant. She pointed out that it's not typical for a non-profit to be contractually obligated to take in all of those surrenders without receiving funding for it and it is a unique situation where Nevada Humane Society fundraises to cover this contractual obligation. In quarter one there were 912 surrender applications submitted and the median time between that first touch point and when they were able to schedule the appointment was four and a half days. In quarter one all of those requests for help yielded 679 animals surrendered. 60 animals transferred from Washoe County Regional Animal Services after their stray hold is complete and the animals are not reclaimed this was the third consecutive year that the transfer percentages have increased. In quarter one of 2026 NHS transferred 99% of available cats and 89% of available dogs from WCRAS. She reminded the board that according to the transfer agreement between the two organizations, NHS strives to transfer a minimum of 80% of unclaimed dogs and 85% of unclaimed cats as long as capacity allows for it. Total intakes include 700 surrenders from the public, just over 700 transfers from WCRAS, 64 neonatal kittens, and 252 others, giving a total of just over 1,700 animals coming through their doors. Although year-over-year intake has increased, this first quarter intake is actually down about 11% so it remains to be seen how that plays out through the rest of the year. Balancing that, there were 1,483 adoptions, down from 1,790 adoptions in in quarter one of 2025, which was slight down from 2024. CEO Bryant

then reminded the board that neonatal kittens are those little babies under two pounds, sometimes just ounces, and they come in again needing some pretty significant help. Last year NHS saw 1,288 of these little babies and this year they are seeing early signs of kitten season being more intense than previous years. This is possible because it never really got super cold this winter and female cats continue to reproduce. In quarter one they accepted or took in 64 neonates compared to 42 in quarter one of 2025 and 58 in quarter one of 2024.

Next, CEO Bryant shared how volunteers are essential to their organization. They do everything from dog walking and enrichment to cat care, housekeeping and enrichment, admin support, laundry, support for the pet pantry program, lobby and kennel ambassadors that are volunteers, and the list goes on and on. In quarter one over 4,500 hours were generously donated to the organization from volunteers, equating to almost 10 full-time positions. The foster providers in the community are the life-saving component of the volunteer program. More kittens coming in means an increased need for fosters, so she spoke directly to the board saying that if they knew anyone who has a little extra time, or want a little information about what foster means, they can go to their website or call their organization, and they'd be happy to share that information. The needs vary and the time commitment varies as well. Sometimes it's just a few days. Maybe just to keep that little neonatal baby until it's ready to be spayed or neutered, may to keep it for three or four weeks or more. It is completely up to each foster home. In quarter one, there were 460 placements, although that may not mean 460 animals. It may mean 430 animals because 30 of them needed multiple placements in multiple different foster homes.

She finished by discussing the Pet Pantry Program, calling it a life-saving program and a very essential shelter diversion program for NHS. There is nothing more heartbreaking than someone who calls in and says they need to surrender the pet that they have had in their family for years because they can't feed it, so they do what they can to provide that food. It is a full circle program for NHS because the majority of that pet food is donated from those in the community who are in a position to help. NHS then repackages it and redistributes it back out into the community to those who need the help. And I just think that is an amazing, beautiful way to provide support to our community from those in our community that can help. In 2025 NHS distributed 210,000 pounds of food. In quarter one of 2026 31,000 pounds of food were distributed.

Vice-Chair Brussard asked whether the hot spots for kittens correlated with stray dogs or puppies. CEO Bryant explained that the initiative is specific to free-roaming cats, specifically cats that are not sterilized and are reproducing. She added that she hasn't even reached out to WCRAS yet but would like to gather any information that they have as far as cats that are being turned in as stray cats and where those are coming from. She added that puppies happen, but much, much, much less than people finding kittens. They're under their front porch, they're under the bush of the park, they're behind the grocery store, and it's a constant stream during kitten season of these babies coming in through the front doors to be surrendered. Some

are turned in to Washoe County Regional Animal Services because they are technically strays, but if they are under two pounds they are directly transferred over to NHS for help.

Member Joe Rodriguez mentioned that he goes to the CARES campus, for example, and there are a lot of the un-housed community with animals, and those animals can become unofficial mental supports for their owners. He stated that a lot of Nevada shifts their un-housed population to Washoe County because it has the resources. However, those numbers are growing exponentially, and he wondered if the state was helping with funding for those animals. CEO Bryant shared that they provide pet food, basic veterinary care, spay and neuter services, some deworming, some exams, and things like that for those particular animals. They participate every year in Feeding Pets For The Homeless, where they provide vaccines, spay/neuter, and exams for those animals. Director Schull then jumped in to answer from the standpoint of Washoe County. She pointed out that WCRAS has had a close partnership with the Cares campus and Our Place for many years and have been providing vaccinations, spay/neuter surgeries and resources, and kits for animals to be humanly housed with leashes or litter boxes in a crate and blankets, and pet food to help support the residents that have pets that are utilizing some of our humane housing resources that allow pets. Those resources are completely subsidized through Washoe County and will continue to be provided through WCRAS. That program has been ongoing for quite a while and handles appointments every single week for those clients.

Member McMahon told CEO Bryant "Good job with the surrender dates" because there was a time not too long ago that there were weeks or even months of backlogs for those animals and families so she thought that said a lot to the progression that NHS has made over time. She also remarked on the earlier challenges regarding transfers between the NHS and WCRAS and the subsequent ability to come together for a resolution and said she knew it was a long hard road with lots of back-and-forth discussions. She has noticed decreased capacity and also shorter after hold periods where they were staying sometimes up to two weeks longer past their five-day stray hold. CEO Bryant expressed her thanks and stated that it's meaningful to her team because next month she will have been at the Nevada Humane Society for three years. When she took over the position in May of 2023 for any emails or voicemails that were coming into the help desk, it was approximately a week before they would get a call back. NHS was understaffed, there was a lack of organization, and a lack of standardized processes. She expressed that because there's a lot of moving parts it doesn't happen overnight, but right away they started chipping away at that and decreasing and it has just gotten better and better and better. She also pointed out that when NHS transfers animals from WCRAS, the majority of those animals are transferred on the day they become available. Member McMahon stated that it's noticeable and the TMCC veterinary students that she teaches are actually complaining that there aren't as many animals at the shelter.

Member McMahon then mentioned that, at some point, NHS had also instituted

utilizing pet nutrition as part of the community program. She wondered whether that was still part of it or have they changed back to primarily community donations? CEO Bryant asked for clarification regarding whether Member McMahon was talking about the pet pantry or what NHS feeds their shelter pets? Member McMahon clarified that she was referring to what was fed to the shelter animals. CEO Bryant explained that historically they were feeding the shelter animals donated food, but that is not the best thing to do for animals for a variety of reasons and the organization's vets definitely were not happy with the animals getting different food practically every day. Very quickly after joining NHS she reached out to Hill's Pet Nutrition and they have a wonderful shelter nutrition program where they offer shelters food at a greatly discounted price, if you partner with them. NHS very quickly shifted to feeding their shelter animals a consistent diet of Hill's Pet Nutrition. Then the food that was being donated to them, instead of splitting it between our shelter pets and the community, was fully repurposed to be redistributed back out into our community for the pet pantry program.

Member McMahon lastly asked whether there was social media going on about obtaining regional data about colony hotspots and how the community can share that information, similar to the hot car question. Whether there a community flyer? Whether there was something that is being spread other than tasking individuals? CEO Bryant explained that they haven't shared this initiative with any other groups yet. This was a sneak peek to the Animal Services Advisory Board. The information is still being developed and flushed out, but soon they should be at a place where they can start doing that.

7. Washoe County Regional Animal Services Advisory Board Member and/or Staff Announcements, Requests for Information, and Selection of Topics for Future Agendas [Non-Action Item]

Member Rodriguez asked Director Schull if she were able to provide information on how much of the work, and taxpayer money, that goes into helping people at Cares campus and Our Place was for transients, or people coming from out of the area. Director Schull responded that she would reach out to WCRAS' partners and see what type of data she was able to collect, and what could be disclosed, to at least share statistics about WCRAS' portion of the program.

Vice-Chair Brussard shared that Chairperson Duerr had wanted to make sure that the Liberty Dogs tour was scheduled very soon. She also wanted to make sure WCRAS gets some of the Nevada State Legislators to come tour the shelter and do a ride-along with an officer, as was mentioned in the previous board meeting, in order to have a little more influence with them when needed since they would be familiar with what goes on at WCRAS. Lastly, Chairperson Duerr also wanted to see Washoe County provide an actual managing board for WCRAS instead of just an advisory board. She understands that it is something that might take years to put together but thinks it would greatly help the administration be more effective with

what they need and then how to get it.

Director Schull responded to the inquiry regarding Liberty Dogs explaining that she has been in contact with staff and they are working on a July or August time frame for the tour with this board. She will communicate with the board once more information is available.

Member McMahon shared that she had the privilege of working with the county medical team on two TNR days this last quarter. For people that don't truly understand, she explained that often times there's 20 to 30 cats per event, and when you get them, you don't know if they're male or female, in heat, pregnant, if pregnant how far along they are, and we're at the mercy of not touching them before they're sedated. Coming from private practice and a very small stint at shelter medicine 15 years ago, she has a wonderful appreciation for the efficiency that it takes for all medical teams, not just Washoe County, Options Vet, NHS, and the SPCA to be able to take care of that many cats in a small period of time.

8. Public Comment [Non-Action Item]

There was no public comment offered at this time.

9. Adjournment [Non-Action Item]

Vice-Chair Brussard declared the Animal Services Advisory Board meeting of April 29, 2024 adjourned at 12:03 p.m.