



SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

ANIMAL CARE COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



Wednesday, January 28, 2026, 11:30 a.m.
Learning & Training Center Room 100
OC Animal Care
1630 Victory Road,
Tustin, CA 92782

I. Call to Order - The meeting of the OC Animal Care Community Outreach Committee called to order at 11:30 a.m. in the Learning and Training Room located at 1630 Victory Road, Tustin, CA 92782.

II. Roll Call of Members

- Vacant, Chair, 4th District
- Elizabeth Cowan, Vice Chair, 5th District PRESENT
- Dr. Leslie Malo, Committee Member, 1st District PRESENT
- Vacant, Committee Member, 2nd District
- Kim Kane, Committee Member, 3rd District PRESENT

III. Minutes

Committee Members Comments

- Approve the Summary of Minutes of the meeting held on October 22, 2025.
- Motion to approve minutes: Motioned by Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo, seconded by Committee Member Kim Kane
 - All in Favor: Vote was unanimous

IV. Regular Business

1. Public Education Program Report

- a. Jonathan Volzke shared information on the Let's Paws flyers distributed this quarter that included subject matter on pet safety tips during the holidays, including what food is harmful to animals and how to minimize fireworks-related pet trauma.
- b. Jonathan discussed the social media statistics for OC Animal Care this quarter. Jonathan noted audience increases across OC Animal Care's social media platforms.
 - OC Animal Care added 113 new followers on Facebook, which increases the number of followers to 32,000.
 - OC Animal Care Instagram added 1,000 new followers, hitting 21,000 followers. The channel received more than 972,000 views in the fourth quarter.
- c. Jonathan discussed the OC Animal Care Adoption Promotions that occurred this quarter including *Too Cute to Spook* for October, *Falling Fur You* and *Pets for Vets* for November, and *Adopt Actually* in December, in addition to the *Santa Paws* quarterly adoption event.
- d. Jonathan stated the Karen Cooper Foundation based in La Jolla brought five bags of dog toys to OC Animal Care.

- e. Jonathan announced that Huntington Beach invited OC Animal Care to bring adoptable dogs to the second City Council meeting of each month to promote pet adoption and OC Animal Care. He noted two of three dogs presented were placed after the meetings.

Committee Member Comments

- o Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked if anyone saw a dog at the Huntington Beach City Council meeting and tried to claim it was their pet.
- o Jonathan answered that one of the three dogs was placed in Huntington Beach and that the outreach team works with shelter staff to identify appropriate dogs for the meetings.
- o Committee Member Kim Kane asked if the program could expand to other municipalities.
- o Jonathan responded that the outreach team would be interested in expanding the program.
- f. Alexandra Su shared community event partnerships in the fourth quarter. She highlighted some of the events, including the Anaheim Mobile Family Resources event, and adoption events at Subaru Orange Coast, the Pet Adoption Expo With 1st District Supervisor Janet Nguyen, and a Pet Smart Store event in Santa Ana. OC Animal Care hosted Katy Cares and participated in roughly 20 community events, including:
 - o The Cypress Community Festival
 - o The Senior Summit Resource Fair, sponsored by 5th District Supervisor Katrina Foley
 - o Dog Days at Tustin Library
 - o The Rossmoor Community Resources Forum
- g. Alexandra reported that the Pet Food Pantry had 95 volunteers this quarter and handed out 71,865 pounds of food [sic.; correct amount 77,725 pounds] to feed 3,353 animals to make the fourth quarter the largest yet. The pantry was supported by various donors, including Petco, Irvine Animal Care, and individuals.
- h. Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan noted two events were sponsored by Supervisors and asked whether other Board offices contact OC Animal Care to participate in events.
- i. Director Schmidt responded that other Board offices do include OC Animal Care in their event planning.
- j. Director Schmidt added that OC Animal Care has a partnership with *Tails That Teach*, which donates responsible pet ownership books and activity books for OC Animal Care staff to share with children at events. The books are available in English and Spanish.
- k. Alexandra noted the books were more popular than candy at the trunk-or-treat event at Orangewood Children and Family Center.
- l. Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked if the materials are available in any other language.
- m. Director Schmidt answered that the books are currently only available in English and Spanish but noted Orange County has five threshold languages, so OC Animal Care hopes additional languages will be added.
- n. Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked if OC Animal Care asked for additional languages, and Director Schmidt said the request was made.
 - o It was moved by Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo, seconded by Committee Member Kim Kane.
 - a. Ayes: 3, Nays: 0. Motion passed.

2. Foster Program Report

- a. Alexandra Su reported the foster program in the fourth quarter tends to slow down with kittens exiting the program, and fewer underage kittens coming in because fewer cats give birth in the lower temperatures. Alexandra reported 536 animals were placed in the OC Animal Care Foster Programs in the fourth quarter, supported by 632 homes. She explained the number of homes is higher than the number of animals because sometimes one foster animal supported by more than one foster family.
- b. Alexandra said the Foster-to-Adopt Program continues to be a valuable option for potential adopters, with 86 dogs supported by 99 homes in the fourth quarter. She shared staff was able to successfully find adoption homes for 53 dogs. She said the 14-day trial period provides enough time for family to get to know the animal and make a responsible decision whether the dog is the right fit. Even if the family returns the dog, OC Animal Care uses a questionnaire to garner additional information about the dog for next potential adopter.
- c. Alexandra shared a Foster-to-Adopt Success story about Micah and Bronx, who came to OC Animal Care separately but bonded in a playgroup. A foster took Micah home, where the dog struggled. The foster asked OC Animal Care if Micah had a buddy, and took Bronx home, too. The foster adopted both dogs.
- d. Alexandra said the Large Dog Foster Program is more traditional foster arrangement. In the fourth quarter 11 dogs participated. One transferred into Foster-to-Adopt.

Committee Member Comments

- Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan clarified that the dog, Nala, started in traditional fostering, but another community member took her as a Foster-to-Adopt. Alexandra confirmed that, and that the new foster was getting automated emails and other support.
- It was moved by Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo, seconded by Committee Member Kim Kane.
 - a. Ayes: 3, Nays: 0. Motion passed.

3. Volunteer Program Report

- a. Alexandra Su reported that 275 program members volunteered at OC Animal Care this quarter, logging more than 8,000 onsite volunteer hours exercising animals, training dogs and performing other tasks. She expressed sincere thanks to the volunteers on behalf of OC Animal Care. Volunteers also helped at the Petco off site cat adoption location, where volunteers clean and care for OC Animal Care kittens. She broke down the volunteer time:
 - 6,605 hours of dog walking/enrichment
 - 609 hours of cat assistance, enrichment
 - Over 1,200 other hours volunteered with assorted shelter activities, such as sorting donations and pantry items, providing rabbit enrichment, and helping in the clinic.
- b. She said OC Animal Care leadership continues to connect with volunteers. This quarter, volunteers were invited to coffee with Shelter Services Manager Sam Blankenship. OC Animal Care also hosted volunteer roundtable as well and noted Director Schmidt and Operations Manager Jamie Link attended that event, along with Sam.

- c. Alexandra reported the Volunteer of Month was Tyler in October, Robin in November, and Justin in December.
- d. Director Schmidt asked Shelter Services Manager Sam Blankenship to explain new programs and procedures for rabbit enrichment. Sam shared a new system was implemented to better document enrichment time with our rabbits. Additionally, rabbit specific volunteers and staff work together to provide enrichment through a variety of expanded options.

Committee Member Comments

- o Committee Member Dr. Leslie Mayo asked if OC Animal Care reached out to high schools to recruit volunteers. He offered to connect OC Animal Care with AHT schools.
- o Director Schmidt noted OC Animal Care’s minimum age is 18 for volunteers who work with animals. She said some high school seniors volunteer, and high-school clubs have supported the Pet Pantry. Students, primarily in college, also intern with OC Animal Care in clinic, fostering, and communications.
- o Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked whether volunteer hours dropped in the fourth quarter because of holidays.
- o Director Schmidt said volunteer attendance can be a little more sporadic, but that volunteers coordinate with each other on a private Facebook group to cover each other’s shifts. She said the biggest volunteer drop is with those who volunteer with cats and kittens, because of limited demand. Those numbers pick up next quarter.
- o It was moved by Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo, seconded by Committee Member Kim Kane.
 - a. Ayes: 3, Nays: 0. Motion passed.

4. Adoption Program Report

- a. Alexandra Su reported Greater Good Charities reached out to OC Animal Care because partners in the Pacific Northwest expressed there was demand for animals. Greater Good Charities transported 48 kittens and five dogs to adoption facilities in the Pacific Northwest. Alexandra credited staff and volunteers for preparing the crates and animals for transport.
- b. Alexandra also said more than 700 animals were placed with non-profit rescue groups and other partners this quarter. OC Animal Care sent out over 250 communications to partners and rescue groups specific to special needs animals.
- c. Alexandra said OC Animal Care is continuing its Medical Pets Program, but all animals needing advanced medical care in the fourth quarter were helped by OC Animal Care rescue partners.
- d. Alexandra shared a success story with a new rescue partner. OC Animal Care finds new adoption partners by word of mouth or through our postings and social media. One dog, Snoopy, was surrendered to OC Animal Care, but was struggling to adapt to the shelter environment. OC Animal Care notified our rescue partners, and a new group came forward. After vetting that group, Snoopy was placed and ultimately found his forever home. Alexandra said the new rescue group continues to step up and pull animals from our shelter.

Committee Members Comments

- Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked whether OC Animal Care tracks the disposition of animals once they are transferred out to partners.
- Alexandra said OC Animal Care is not usually notified of placements after an animal transfers out.
- It was moved by Committee Member Dr. Malo, seconded by Committee Member Kim Kane.
 - Ayes: 3, Nays: 0. Motion passed.

V. Director’s Comments

- Director Schmidt introduced Jonathan Volzke, OC Animal Care’s new PIO and Community Liaison, and Communications Manager, Denise Woodside. She also noted OC Animal Care revamped a recruitment to accept Animal Control Officer lateral hires from other agencies. That allowed OC Animal Care to recruit three experienced ACO officers who would be on the streets much faster than a traditional training class.
- She also announced that the shelter team was fully staffed.
- Director Schmidt said OC Animal Care was working with Shelter Playground Alliance (SPA), to provide a playgroup, dog behavior, and de-escalation training for staff. The training will help decompress dogs before meet-and-greets with potential adopters, allowing them to show their true selves.
- Director Schmidt gave kudos to Alexandra and Public Education Officer Michael Hoopes for their work developing the Dog’s Day Out Pilot Program, scheduled to launch in March. She noted the tremendous amount of work necessary to launch a program.
- Director Schmidt said that GoodPup, which previously provided virtual training for new dog adopters, was absorbed by a company that would no longer offer the program used by shelters. Irvine Animal Center also used GoodPup; now Irvine and OC Animal Care are moving to a virtual program through Wags and Wiggles.
- Director Schmidt said she was at a Cal Animals forum and heard the results of a study that found shelters with veterinarians on staff have a lower length-of-stay for animals. The study showed the average length of stay is under 22 days if a veterinarian is on staff and an average of 49 days without one. She said the study shows that all components of OC Animal Care help reduce length-of-stay, including our veterinarian staff and the work of Sam Blankenship and Nicole Williams in the kennels.

Committee Members Comments

- Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo said the ACO lateral transfers were an advantage. He asked if OC Animal Care received personnel information about transfer applicants.
- Director Schmidt said OC Animal Care was limited to asking experience-related questions and field-related situational questions.
- Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo asked Director Schmidt if she had a feeling why transfers might leave one agency and join OC Animal Care.
- Director Schmidt said it was not unlike other careers, when transfers might be from this area, or that salaries are better here.
- Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan said she was pleased the kennel positions were filled. She asked if applications were continually accepted.
- Director Schmidt explained that a job is open for applications for a specific period, applicants are screened, and a list is created after interviews. That list is good for a year, which can be used for a new hire.
- Committee Member Kim Kane asked whether someone interested in working at OC Animal Care can get notified of openings.

- Director Schmidt said the website Government Jobs, which is not a County site, can notify job seekers of openings.
- Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked about the effectiveness of the new organic groundcover in the play areas.
- Director Schmidt said they were affected by the severe rain but did better than surrounding areas. She said all of the agility equipment was installed and invited committee members to see the areas. She noted all play areas now had new equipment for the first time since 2018. Three blends of groundcover were used, and a survey was underway to see which staff and volunteers thought worked best.
- Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked if the agency OC Animal Care worked with on the groundcover was still supportive.
- Director Schmidt said they were still very supportive. OC Animal Care toured other facilities that used organic groundcover. OC Waste and Recycling, which created the groundcover from local green waste, was a great partner and the savings allowed OC Animal Care to use the resources elsewhere.

VI. Public Comments

1. Public Speaker #1 Michael M

Public Speaker Michael M said he looks forward to hearing about the implementation of the new programs, which he said was very exciting. He suggested contacting community colleges to recruit new volunteers. He also said tracking transfers between shelters and partners does not occur nationwide. He said OC Animal Care appears to transitioned to managed intake, which he said he did not see as inherently good or bad, but he requested more public discussion about it.

2. Public Speaker #2 Margo B

Public Speaker Margo B said she recently volunteered to foster four bottle-fed kittens, which was hard work but very rewarding. She said she thought OC Animal Care provided all of the supplies she would need but said that was not the case in her experience. She suggested OC Animal Care ensure that fosters are aware of what they would need to supply.

- Alexandra Su said the Foster Team and Communications Team created a video on what is supplied. Fosters are given what OC Animal Care has on-hand. She said OC Animal Care can have thousands of kittens that need fostering, so it is not financially feasible to provide all of the canned food they might need but can provide additional help if a foster requests it.
- Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan asked if OC Animal Care provides formula, litter and other supplies.
- Alexandra said neo-natal food is provided. OC Animal Care supplies a bag of non-clumping litter and fosters can use shredded newspaper and similar materials for litter. She also clarified that OC Animal Care supplies bottles and special nipples for the neo-natal kittens.
- Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan said she recognized caring for neo-natal kittens is emotional and difficult, and thanked Margo B for fostering.

VII. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo thanked public speaker Michael M for suggesting OC Animal Care contact community colleges for interns.
2. Committee Member Dr. Leslie Malo suggested OC Animal Care send letters soliciting sponsorships to corporations that might be looking for good publicity.

3. Committee Member Dr. Leslie Mayo shared a quote that “you make a living from what you do but make a life from what you give,” and credited OC Animal Care volunteers for what they give, and staff who helps attract volunteers.
4. Committee Member Kim Kane said she was pleased with OC Animal Care’s efforts.
5. Vice Chair Elizabeth Cowan thanked public speaker Michael M for statistics he shared regarding adoption rates.
6. Vice Chair Cowan welcomed new staff and said she was happy all kennel attendants were filled, and OC Animal Care was accepting lateral transfers for Animal Control Officers.

XI. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.