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## Office of the City Auditor

# Audit of Animal Care and Adoption Center



Report Date: February 12, 2014

Office of the City Auditor  
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*"Promoting Accountability and Integrity in City Operations"*



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Office of the City Auditor  
Transmittal Letter



Date: February 12, 2014

To: James K. Spore, City Manager

Subject: Audit of Animal Care and Adoption Center

I am pleased to present the report of our audit of the Animal Care and Adoption Center. Our audit focused on ensuring the Center's policies and procedures were designed and implemented to achieve the Center's objectives.

Overall, based on our audit, the policies and procedures governing the Animal Care and Adoption Center were designed and implemented adequately, but management can enhance the processes and procedures to improve efficiency and morale by implementing our recommendations related to the operations and management of the Center.

Findings considered to be of insignificant risk have been discussed with management. The results of this audit will be provided to City Council.

The Office of the City Auditor reports to City Council through the City's Audit Committee and is organizationally independent of all other City Departments. This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit Committee, City Council, City Manager, and appropriate management. It is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties. However, this report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited.

We would like to thank the staff of the Police Department and Animal Control Division for their courteous and prompt assistance during our audit.

If you have any questions about this report, or any audit-related issue, I can be reached at 385.5872 or via email at [lremias@vbgov.com](mailto:lremias@vbgov.com).

Respectfully submitted,

Lyndon S. Remias, CPA, CIA  
City Auditor

- c: City Council Members  
Audit Committee Members  
J.A. Cervera, Chief of Police  
M.P. Ronan, Captain  
Juleen Ballance, Animal Shelter Manager



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## **Purpose**

The purpose of our audit was to ensure the Center's policies and procedures were designed and implemented to achieve the Center's objectives.

## **Scope & Objective**

The audit covered the policies and procedures in place at the Animal Care and Adoption Center during the period of our audit. We conducted our fieldwork from August 5, 2013 through November 15, 2013.

## **Methodology**

To accomplish our objectives, we performed the following procedures:

- Reviewed policies and procedures of Animal Care and Adoption Center regarding animal custody, medical records, volunteering and training and met with appropriate staff to discuss such.
- Participated in a ride along with the enforcement side of Animal Control. Through the ride along with the Animal Control Officer we were able to observe and document core duties. Note: Based on our observations we determined that controls were adequate and that the audit would focus strictly on the sheltering function.
- Conducted surveys of shelter volunteers and employees related to staffing, scheduling, training, management, marketing of available animals for adoption and areas for improvement.
- Conducted secret shopper reviews to test the level of customer service provided by employees.
- Compared the shelter's website to other cities.
- Analyzed PISTOL animal custody records for accuracy.
- Reviewed internal controls through inquiry and examination of documents and identified high-risk areas.
- Conducted trend analysis of successful placement of dogs and cats between the old and new shelters and compared to other Virginia cities.
- Made recommendations to improve processes, increase efficiency and strengthen the internal controls associated with shelter operations.



## **Standards**

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained during this audit provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The Office of the City Auditor reports to City Council through the Audit Committee and is organizationally independent of all City Departments. This report will be distributed to the City's Audit Committee, City Council, City Manager, and appropriate management within the City of Virginia Beach. This report will also be made available to the public.



## Background

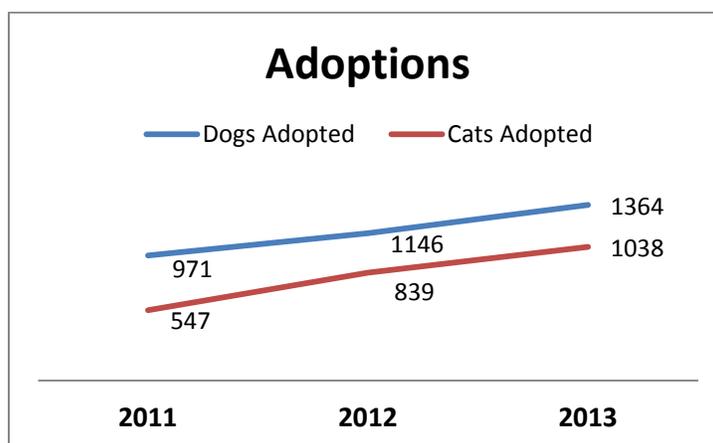


The mission of the Virginia Beach Animal Control unit is to balance the health, safety and welfare needs of the people and animals in our City. They educate the public about responsible companion animal ownership, aggressively investigate animal cruelty cases, provide compassion and humane care for unwanted, stray, abused, and abandoned animals in the City, give adoptable animals a second chance at a forever home, and humanely euthanize animals when necessary and

appropriate. The Animal Control Unit is comprised of two branches, enforcement and sheltering. Both are under the direction of the Commanding Officer of Special Operations. Each entity serves different functions though partner to provide holistic animal services for the community.

Our audit focused on the sheltering function provided by the Animal Care and Adoption Center (ACAC). ACAC combines multiple functions in a 37,400-square-foot state-of-the-art facility (opened in December 2011) for the care, housing and adoption of animals. Crucial to meeting these demands was integrating the essential needs of animals and the personnel who strive to help them into a shelter that is an attractive, friendly place to visit and house animals for adoption. The ACAC employs 21 FTEs including veterinary, caretaker, clerks and management positions. In calendar year 2012, both youth and adult volunteers numbered 341 providing over 24,000 hours of various functions such as dog walking, grooming, caretaking, foster parenting, adoption follow-up, newsletters and vet services.

ACAC took in 3,653 dogs and 3,575 cats during calendar year 2012. 1,915 dogs and cats were released back to their owners while 1,146 dogs and 839 cats were adopted, achieving an overall 86% adoption rate.





The ACAC is an open-admission shelter and it is their goal to maximize their adoption and live release rates toward 90% but still to make sure the animals in their care have a quality of life and to ensure the safety of the community in making the decision to euthanize the animal.

**Medical Recordkeeping**



Proper care and health of shelter animals involves accurate records of medical care provided to the animals. This attention to detail may save an animal’s life someday, so making sure that records are complete and accurate is especially important. The primary purpose of complete medical records is to be able to provide optimum animal patient care. The Police Intelligence System Totally On-Line (PISTOL) is the Police Department’s Records Management System (RMS). Custody as well as medical data for all animals brought to the shelter is recorded in PISTOL.

**Live Release Rates**

The Live Release Rate (LRR) is a percentage of animals that left the shelter through adoption transfer or return to owner. These are the positive outcomes for animals. The ACAC is the leader when it comes to Dog LRR.

January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012						
	Cats A,TO,RTO	Cats Total Outcomes	Cats LRR	Dogs A, TO, RTO	Dogs Total Outcomes	Dogs LRR
Virginia Beach	1281	3319	0.39	3116	3505	0.89
Arlington	782	1004	0.78	567	739	0.77
Chesapeake	298	1647	0.18	1211	1815	0.67
Fairfax	937	1303	0.72	1567	2024	0.77
Norfolk	1180	3169	0.37	1886	2809	0.67
Portsmouth	943	1199	0.79	1001	1199	0.83
Richmond	1295	2000	0.65	1608	2535	0.63

\*Adoption (A), Transferred Out (TO), Return to Owner (RTO)

**Note:** The annual LRR is calculated by dividing total live outcomes (adoptions, outgoing transfers, and return to owner/guardian) by total outcomes (total live outcomes plus euthanasia not including owner/guardian requested euthanasia or died/lost in shelter care). At the time of our audit calendar 2013 data was not available.



## **Findings and Recommendations**

### **Finding #1: Employee and Volunteer Feedback**

We conducted a survey seeking input from animal shelter employees related to shelter performance, staffing, physical environment, work environment, volunteering, organizational structure, and shelter management. A similar survey was sent to current volunteers and some former volunteers. Below is a summary of some key questions.

	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>
<b>Number of surveys sent</b>	25	500
<b>Number of respondents</b>	23	146
<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>	92%	29%

<b>Question</b>	<b>Employees in Agreement</b>	<b>Volunteers in Agreement</b>
<b>Shelter Performance</b> Provides adequate care for the animals	100%	72%
<b>Staffing</b> ACAC has adequate staffing to support the Center's goal	18.0%	26%
<b>Physical Environment</b> Animal cages, runs, and rooms are cleaned properly and with the frequency needed by the animals	91%	51%
<b>Work Environment</b> I get a great sense of satisfaction from doing my job/volunteering	100%	94%
<b>Organizational Structure</b> ACAC being under the Virginia Beach Police Department reporting structure is a positive for the shelter	95%	54%
<b>Shelter Management</b> Displays competence and leadership in assigned role at ACAC	99%	75%



Questions on Volunteering	Agree	Disagree
I get a great sense of satisfaction from volunteering	94.2%	5.8%
ACAC values my time volunteering	78.3%	21.7%
The process (registration, obtaining badge, training, etc.) for becoming a volunteer was efficient	77.7%	22.3%
I can easily communicate any problems to ACAC employees and management	62.4%	37.6%
I feel free to speak up on issues at the ACAC without fear of retribution or losing my volunteer privileges	59.8%	40.2%
I would be in favor of a volunteer sign-up schedule to help management know how many volunteers are working on a given day and the tasks they will be performing	80.5%	19.5%
Morale among ACAC is good and has a positive impact on my desire to volunteer there.	61.4%	38.6%
Negative comments about the ACAC made by other volunteers lowers my morale and desire to volunteer	29.7%	70.3%

The summary of results and comments from the employee survey can be found at **Appendix 1** and a summary of the results and comments from the volunteer survey can be found at **Appendix 2**.

## Recommendations

- 1.1 Management should review the results of the employee survey and the related comments and discuss the results with the employees and where necessary, take corrective action to address employee concerns.
- 1.2 Management should review the results of the volunteer survey and the related comments and discuss the results with the volunteers and where necessary, take corrective action to address volunteer concerns.



## Finding #2: Customer Service

During a two week period 13 Secret Shoppers visited the Animal Care and Adoption Center. Based on the results below there are opportunities for the Animal Care and Adoption Center to improve customer service which in turn will help encourage the adoption of more shelter animals.

	Question	Agree	Disagree
1	I was greeted by a staff/volunteer when I entered the facility.	69%	31%
2	I was asked if I was interested in adopting a pet.	23%	77%
3	The staff member/volunteer offered to assist me.	31%	69%
4	The staff member/volunteer offered to show me around the facility.	8%	92%
5	The staff member/volunteer offered suggestions based on my comments.	18%	82%
6	The staff member/volunteer was knowledgeable.	64%	31%
7	I felt comfortable asking questions.	50%	50%
8	The adoption procedures were explained.	42%	58%
9	The staff member/volunteer was courteous and professional.	58%	42%
10	The staff member/volunteer was friendly.	55%	45%
11	I had a pleasant experience visiting the ACAC.	43%	67%
12	Overall how would you rate the customer service you received on a scale of 1 to 5? (5 being the highest, 3 being average)	<b>2.31</b>	

The following comments provided by Secret Shoppers are reflective of the overall results above.

- “Neither friendly or unfriendly... just too "busy, busy, busy" to proactively help.”
- “Enthusiasm for encouraging adoption was not evident on the day of our visit. This is a nice facility with potential to make more of a difference for the animals and patrons.”



The entire Secret Shopper Survey with detailed comments is located at **Appendix 3**.

## **Recommendation**

- 2.1 Review the detailed results and comments from the Secret Shopper survey and develop an overall customer service training plan for staff and volunteers to help further promote and encourage the adoption of shelter animals.

## **Finding #3: Accuracy of PISTOL Data**

Animal Services Unit Standard Operating Procedures state that “it is the policy of the VBACAC to provide documentation of each animal entering the facility in order to adequately track its status, medical care, and final disposition.” If the animal’s documentation is not accurate in PISTOL, it could negatively impact the care provided to the animal.

In addition, The Animal Services Unit’s Standard Operating Procedures state that “*Dogs and cats are to be scanned for a microchip immediately upon impound unless temperament or health issues prevent such act.*” Documentation of the scan and information attained is to be recorded on the animal custody record.

We analyzed records entered into PISTOL from the time period of January 1, 2012 to October 13, 2013. During that time frame there were approximately 23,102 records entered into PISTOL. Based on our analysis we determined that some animal records (2%) in PISTOL are not accurate.

Our review and analysis of PISTOL data revealed the following:

	<b>Type of Exception found in PISTOL</b>	<b># of records with at least one error</b>
1	Duplicate case numbers for same animal	90
2	Bordetella (BORD) vaccine provided to animals other than dogs	29
3	Distemper (DIST) shot intended for dogs / Feline Distemper (DISF) shot intended for cats recorded as given to wildlife	16
4	Microchip scan was not performed	241
5	No indication of whether a microchip scan was performed	97
6	Microchip scan performed on wildlife	100



## **Recommendations**

- 3.1 Management should develop/enhance procedures to ensure data from the Animal Custody record is properly keyed into PISTOL. This should include running and reviewing exception reports, developing a quality assurance review process, and enhancing application controls within PISTOL to prevent keying errors.
  
- 3.2 Management ensures microchip scans are properly performed and properly documented in PISTOL.



## Finding #4: Facility Inspection

The Division of Animal & Food Industry Services – State Office of Veterinary Services completed an unannounced animal facility inspection on September 25, 2013. There were no significant or critical findings noted. The three comprehensive areas reviewed included the following areas:

### Operations

- |                               |                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Custody record availability | - Custody record completeness | - Animal identification |
| - Holding Period              | - Reasonable Access           | - Animal Disposition    |
| - Animal Sterilization        | - Sterilization Agreement     | - Euthanasia Method     |
| - Euthanasia Competency       |                               |                         |

### Animal Care

- |                    |                     |  |
|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| - Adequate Food    | - Adequate Space    | - Adequate Care, treatment, and Transportation |
| - Adequate Water   | - Adequate Exercise |  |
| - Adequate Shelter | - Veterinary Care   |  |

### Pound Regulations

- |                           |                     |                  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| - Drinking Water          | - Cage Construction | - Food Storage   |
| - Temperature/Ventilation | - Cage Size         | - Disposal       |
| - Surface Quality         | - Sanitation        | - Isolation Area |
| - Suitability             | - Food Preparation  |                  |

Because this inspection occurred during the time of our audit, the Office of the City Auditor did not perform a separate review of all of these areas and relied on the work performed by the State Office of Veterinary Services.

Although no findings were noted by the Office of Veterinary Services, current employees offered several suggestions to further improve higher quality of care, enrichment and adopter education. One employee succinctly stated:

*“While I think VBAC is doing a great job with the animals and being a very pro-adoption shelter, I also feel like there could be more steps taken to give the animals an even higher quality of care, enrichment and adopter education. I think it should become more of a requirement to have dogs outside at least once a day (not currently a requirement for caretakers) and a requirement for each animal to have a daily enrichment item (there can be days where an animal does not get any special enrichment). I also think that more adoption counseling would help with screening adopters as well as lowering our “return to shelter” numbers.”*



## **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Management should continue to provide a high level of quality care and seek ways to further increase that level of care.

### **Finding #5: Staffing Levels**

The National Animal Control Association (NACA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) recommend a minimum of 15 minutes of care time per day just for feeding and cleaning each animal housed in the shelter (9 minutes for cleaning and 6 minutes for feeding). Based on our analysis of the current staffing level and a capacity of 267 animals we determined that the ACAC is currently understaffed to meet the minimum care time of 15 minutes per animal.

<b>Caretakers</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Need</b>	<b>Difference</b>
FTEs	10	11	1
PTEs	0	2	2

The Office of the City Auditor feels that with the increase volume of animal transactions year over year the Shelter will benefit from an increase in the number of clerks on staff. With the increase staffing, the number of errors related to PISTOL data entry will decrease. This will also increase customer service and provide customers with a more knowledgeable and enjoyable visit.

<b>Clerks</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Need</b>	<b>Difference</b>
FTEs	4	4	0
PTEs	0	2	2

In addition, data from the employee survey shows that 82% indicated that there is not enough staffing and 57% indicated there are not enough volunteers to provide daily care for the animals.

<b>Employee Survey Question</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
ACAC has adequate staffing to support the Center's goal	18.0%	82.0%
ACAC has adequate daily volunteer support to provide care for the animals	43%	57%



Volunteers were asked the same question regarding staffing and data from the volunteer survey show that 74% indicated that there is not enough staffing and 53% indicated there are not enough volunteers to provide daily care for the animals.

Volunteer Survey Question	Agree	Disagree
ACAC has adequate staffing to support the Center's goal	26.0%	74.0%
ACAC has adequate daily volunteer support to provide care for the animals	47%	53%

Some comments provided from the employee and volunteer surveys were as follows:

- Employee provided comment “The work is spread amongst everyone; however, there is so much to be done that everyone is spread pretty thin. It gets frustrating. Our volunteer staff is very good about seeing what needs to be done and doing it as needed. With them being here as much as they are, the animals get to go outside for a nice walk a couple of times a day and are given a lot of one-on-one attention from many different people, staff and volunteer. The work load is heavy!”
- Volunteer provided comment “Depending on volunteer staff is not a reliable management tool. The City Council needs to allocate funds to raise salaries to a livable wage and adequately staff the facility.”

## **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Management should continue to seek additional funding to increase the staffing levels at ACAC.



## Finding #6: Termination of Volunteers

As stated in the Virginia Beach Animal Care and Adoption Volunteer Handbook “the VB ACAC has the right to terminate any volunteer at any time for any reasons not prohibited by law.”

While the ACAC has the right to terminate volunteers in several localities throughout the United States there has been some precedent for applying *Section 1983 42 USC § 1983 - Civil action for deprivation of rights* to challenge the termination or banning of volunteers from animal shelters. In his article, “Section 1983 to the Rescue”, Sheldon Eisenberg, an attorney who has successfully represented animal rescuers and protection organizations, wrote *“There can be no dispute that complaining about abuses or violations of law at shelters is a constitutionally protected right. A rescuer not only has the first Amendment right to speak out against abuses and violations of law committed by a governmental entity, he or she also has a constitutionally protected right to demand that the government correct the wrongs identified. This includes the right to threaten to sue or actually file suit against the shelter.”*

During the audit, we were made aware by several past and current volunteers who felt they, or others, were unjustly banned from volunteering at the ACAC for speaking out on ACAC issues. The Police Department denies these allegations and have stated the few volunteers that have been terminated were based on just cause.

The volunteer survey results show only 59.8% of respondents feel free to speak up on issues without fear of retribution or losing their volunteer privileges.

Question	Agree	Disagree
I feel free to speak up on issues at the ACAC without fear of retribution or losing my volunteer privileges	59.8%	40.2%

## Recommendations

- 6.1 To mitigate any risk of violation of any laws the ACAC management should ensure volunteers are not banned or feel threatened to be banned for speaking out on any abuses or violations of law at the shelter.
- 6.2 Decisions that have resulted in the banning of volunteers should be revisited and reviewed with the Office of the City Attorney to ensure no violations of law have occurred.



## **Conclusion**

Overall, based on the results of our audit, we determined that the policies and procedures are designed and implemented to achieve the Center's objectives. However, as stated in our findings there are several opportunities for improvement to further enhance operations.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the staff of the Police Department and the Animal Control Division for their courteous and prompt assistance during our review. We would also like to thank the many volunteers who took the time to provide us with their thoughts and comments concerning the ACAC.

## Employee Survey Results

### Work Experience

Q1- How many years have you been working at the center (new and old)?

Length of Service	Percentage	Number of Employees
Less than 1 year	30.40%	7
1-2 years	30.40%	7
2-10 years	26.10%	6
11-20 years	13%	3
Greater than 20 years	0%	0

### Position

Q2- Which of the following categories best describes your position?

Position	Percentage	Count
Caretaker	34.8%	8
Veterinarian Suite	13.0%	3
Clerk	17.4%	4
Supervisor	21.7%	5
Office Administration	4.3%	1

## Shelter Performance

Q3- Please rate the overall performance of the Animal Care and Adoption Center on each of the following criteria.

Criteria	Agree	Disagree
<b>Provides adequate training to all employees</b>	91%	9%
<b>Provides adequate living quarters for animals</b>	96%	5%
<b>Provides adequate care for the animals</b>	100%	0%
<b>Provides adequate enrichment for the animals</b>	100%	0%
<b>Promotes adoption and responsible pet ownership in an engaging way</b>	95%	4%
<b>Utilizes innovative ideas for adoption of animals</b>	96%	5%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- Over the past several years we have made great strides as an institution for housing animals and being concerned about their welfare and happiness. They get a lot of love and attention here from a multitude of people.
- Each staff member performs their duties to the highest standards to ensure the missions of the Shelter are met.

#### Disagree

- While I think VBAC is doing a great job with the animals and being a very pro-adoption shelter, I also feel like there could be more steps taken to give the animals an even higher quality of care, enrichment, and adopter education. I think it should become more of a requirement to have dogs outside at least once a day (not currently a requirement for caretakers), and a requirement for each animal to have a daily enrichment item (there can be days where an animal does not get any special enrichment). I also think that more adoption counseling would help with screening adopters as well as lowering our "return to shelter" numbers.
- Most living quarters are OK. But for cats in intake areas, the cages are too small.

## Staffing

Q4- Indicate your level of agreement with the following attributes

Attributes	Agree	Disagree
<b>ACAC has adequate staffing to support the Center's goal</b>	18.0%	82.0%
<b>ACAC has adequate daily volunteer support to provide care for the animals</b>	43%	57%
<b>ACAC has compassionate, caring staff who are knowledgeable about the animals</b>	100%	0%
<b>ACAC staff members have a strong work ethic and are willing to do what is necessary to properly operate the shelter and care for the animals</b>	100%	0%

### Comments:

- The work is spread amongst everyone; however, there is so much to be done that everyone is spread pretty thin. It gets frustrating. Our volunteer staff is very good about seeing what needs to be done and doing it as needed. With them being here as much as they are, the animals get to go outside for a nice walk a couple of times a day and are given a lot of one-on-one attention from many different people, staff and volunteer. The work load is heavy!
- I strongly feel like staff numbers should be increased. The size and number of animals per day to care for is very high and staff numbers are low. It would only increase the ability to rise our level of care, adoptions and enrichment for the animals in our care.
- There are not enough clerks or caretakers to adequately run the shelter on a day to day basis. We are all stretched very thin. We could use at least one more full time or two part time clerks and probably another four caretakers part time. We would be much more successful if we were to have additional staff members in place. As far as volunteers go, we have a ton that are signed up, but not that are in routinely. We have a core group that are in regularly and greatly add to the success of the shelter. There are certain people who work in the shelter as a clerk that are not dedicated to the mission of the shelter. We were not hired to be rude to people and sit and play on our smartphones all day. There is also not an equal share of the workload. I feel that every time these issues have been brought to a supervisor, they are not addressed and are met with a dead end. It affects the ability of the shelter to perform at a top level. I am not privy to everything that goes on at levels above me, but I don't see this issue being worked on or rectified in any way.

## Physical Environment

Q5- Please rate the overall performance of the ACAC physical environment based on your experience

Attributes	Agree	Disagree
<b>The working conditions are comfortable (lighting, temperature, smell, etc.)</b>	96%	4%
<b>The equipment and supplies provided are sufficient to perform my volunteer duties</b>	100%	0%
<b>The arrangement of the work area supports effective performance</b>	100%	0%
<b>Animal cages, runs, and rooms are cleaned properly and with the frequency needed by the animals</b>	91%	9%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- The new shelter facility provides a comfortable environment for animals and staff. Staff amenities include a break room away from animals and shower facilities. Wherever possible, animal areas are arranged to ensure ease of use for staff (intake areas are located in the rear of the facility, where the majority of animals are received and supply storage is conveniently located for staff and volunteer use). The new facility's "pod" design generally keeps noise from barking to a tolerable level. The shelter does work with Occupational Health Services to ensure each staff member is provided with the appropriate PPE (gowns, gloves, hearing protection).

#### Disagree

- Certain areas of the shelter can be very humid and hot depending on the day. This causes the animals to be more likely to get stressed and/or sick. If we had more staff, we could clean the cages, runs, rooms more thoroughly. With the staffing shortage, most days we have to clean quickly to be able to do the rest of the job duties (helping adopters, reclaiming animals, etc.)

## Work Environment

Q6- Indicate your level of agreement with the following attributes

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
I get a great sense of satisfaction from doing my job	100%	0%
Management values my work	100%	0%
I can easily communicate any problems to management	87%	13%
Interactions with the customers are mostly positive	100%	0%
My assigned daily tasks are usually manageable	83%	17%
Stress levels are manageable	87%	13%
There are co-workers that create conflict in the workplace that impact overall morale	35%	65%
There are volunteers that create conflict in the workplace that impact overall morale	83%	17%
Negative comments made by volunteers against the shelter impact my overall morale	76%	24%
The work volunteers perform help reduce my workload	64%	41%
I understood the demands of the job before I accepted this position	100%	0%
The Center has high standards for employee selection	95%	5%

### Comments:

- There are a few negative employees that do create an unhealthy atmosphere and are clearly not happy doing their job.
- I feel that some of the issues that I present to management are not listened to and addressed. I may be wrong but that is how I feel. Daily tasks are not distributed equally amongst the clerks for the most part. I am able to manage my tasks daily, even given much more to do than others, but I feel if the same was given to the others it wouldn't be completed. This is a very high stress job!!! But I love it!!! Certain co-workers seem to not contribute to the overall mission of the shelter, which therefore defeats the mission. There are certain volunteers who seem to feel like they are employees here who are entitled to make supervisor decisions. Certain volunteers also like to make disparaging comments to and about staff members to others and on social media. But there are other volunteers who help out immensely in reducing my workload!
- We have great volunteers who go above and beyond on helping us out and there are some who don't do things right or add more work for us.
- When I was hired I was told that at times the work load would be very demanding. I found this to be the case but many times Juleen will stop what she is doing and help us. She frequently asks if we are ok or feel overwhelmed. When I am frustrated or have a problem, she listens and says, "I am on it". Juleen is "by the book" which makes working

in the facility easier, we know what is expected of us and she is consistent in making sure we follow the rules and protocols. She is the best leader I have ever had.

### Organizational Structure

Q7- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements concerning organizational structure

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
ACAC being under the Virginia Beach Police Department reporting structure is a positive for the shelter	95%	5%
I would like to continue to see the ACAC report to the Virginia Beach Police Department	95%	5%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- It is my belief that the Police Department holds itself, and each of its units, to the highest degree of accountability. I do not believe the Shelter would thrive within the purview of any other existing City department. It should also be noted the Shelter is part of Animal Control, which also encompasses the Animal Enforcement Unit. The work of the Shelter and Enforcement teams are symbiotic, one cannot exist without the other. As the Enforcement team is charged with the enforcement of the City and State statutes that pertain to animals, Animal Control clearly belongs under the Police Department.

## Shelter Management

Q8 to Q12 – Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Shelter Management

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>Displays competence and leadership in assigned role at ACAC</b>	99%	1%
<b>Demonstrates genuine interest in and compassion for the welfare of the animals at the shelter</b>	99%	1%
<b>Promotes effective two-way communication</b>	95%	5%
<b>Willing to listen to opinions of volunteers</b>	96%	4%

### Comments:

- I think our overall flow and shelter management is good and that we all have a similar goal to help as many animals as we can and create a safe, high quality shelter, which cares for every animal that comes through its door.
- Great supervisors. We have a good team of staff and plenty of good volunteers. A lot of animals find homes.
- The VBACAC provides top notch care to every animal that enters the facility. All staff work tirelessly to provide adequately for each animal and ensure a position disposition. Staff members often go above and beyond what is expected of them in terms of locating owner information, checking lost pet flyers and lost pet advertisements on social media. Quality customer service is paramount at the VBACAC. All staff members are dedicated to serving the community. VBACAC staff members are innovative and compassionate.
- (We are) successful in adopting and successful in keeping animals healthy and happy even though we are often overcrowded and have limited staff taking care of the animals. All animals are spayed or neutered and micro-chipped before they leave the building.

## Question 14- What improvements, if any, do you feel need to be made within the Animal Care and Adoption Center?

### Comments:

- The shelter is still evolving from an animal control facility to animal adoption center. We need to implement procedures and programs that are more supportive to the adoption mission. Some examples: more paid staff; better structured volunteer program; the authority to refuse to adopt an animal to unqualified citizens.
- It would be nice for the hard headed volunteers to listen instead of making things difficult. Have a class for volunteers that included us instructing them and letting them know why certain parts of their job help us out and also why listening to us when we say “no” is a good thing to do. Better air conditioning and ventilation so that less of a chance for illness and so caretakers don’t get overheated. More staff- be it full time or even just have the extra help part time with the possibility of being called in if a full time person calls out.
- The volunteer program is in need of revision. The program grew exponentially with the move to the new shelter. This has resulted in volunteers not being provided with enough guidance. To be efficient, the volunteers must be provided with more structure; ideally, each volunteer would have a scheduled volunteer time and assignment.
- Communication is a struggle in all areas and can always be improved.
- Prioritize animal care (cleaning/feeding) before visitor interactions or hire more caretakers so both can be done at the same time.
- We absolutely need more staff and less dependency on volunteers to help with daily duties such as cleaning and adoptions as well as daily care of the animals. Volunteers and fosters are very much appreciated, but are given way too much say so and cause a lot of problems because they think they can dictate to staff, managers, vet staff/ and the veterinarian what they think should be done. If they don't like what's done or think staff are wrong, they exploit us on Facebook and bad mouth us to anyone willing to listen. When that doesn't work, they take things into their own hands and do whatever they want. Volunteers and fosters should be limited in what they can and can’t do.

## Volunteer Survey Results

### Duration of Volunteering

Q1- How many years have you been volunteering at the center (new and old)?

Length of Volunteer Service	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year	34.2%	50
1 - 2 years	30.1%	44
2 - 10 years	27.4%	40
Former volunteer - Badge no longer active	8.2%	12
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>

### Volunteer Hours per Month

Q2- Which of the following categories best describes your volunteer status?

Hours per month	Response Percent	Response Count
Volunteer less than 8 hours a month	27.4%	50
Volunteer between 8 to 20 hours a month	27.4%	44
Volunteer more than 20 hours a month	23.3%	38
Former volunteer- Badge no longer active	10.3%	2
Other	11.6%	17

## Planned Volunteer Hours for Next Year

Q3- Will your volunteer hours increase, decrease or remain the same in the next year?

Planned volunteer hours	Response Percent	Response Count
The number of hours I plan to volunteer will increase	31.5%	46
The number of hours I plan to volunteer will decrease	8.9%	13
The number of hours I plan to volunteer will remain	43.2%	63
Former Volunteer - Badge no longer active	7.5%	11
I no longer plan to volunteer at the ACAC	8.9%	13

### Comments:

#### Increase hours:

- I am beginning work with rescue groups because of management's cooperation with the rescue groups I work with.

#### Decrease hours:

- Staff has become too complacent and I don't think they have the animals care in mind.
- I never again plan to be as active as I was before- not until some serious changes are made in that place, consistent protocols are followed, management learns how to be professional and staff members are held to a standard.
- They put a lot of demands on volunteers to do caretaker's work which is why I volunteer fewer hours.

#### Quit/No longer active:

- I wanted to walk dogs, not be doing other duties like cleaning up cages, laundry and other administrative duties.
- I chose not to renew my badge due to the hostile environment exhibited toward some volunteers on part of some in management.
- I did not have a good experience with staff members. It was not a conducive environment for a new volunteer who has questions.
- I will be moving or have moved out of town.

## Volunteer Tasks

Q4- Which best captures the volunteer tasks where you spend majority of your time. Please check no more than three tasks (even though you may rotate specific assignments from one volunteer shift to another)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Work with canines at ACAC (feeding, walking, cleaning runs, cleaning outside pens, tag turner, enrichment, etc.)	70.5%	103
Perform volunteering mostly off-site (fostering, Pet Smart Program, off-site adoption programs, other tasks performed mostly outside of ACAC)	27.4%	40
Work with the public to help adopt an animal (adoption counselor, etc.)	26.7%	39
Work with felines at ACAC (feeding, cleaning cages/rooms, caretaking, etc.)	21.9%	32
Perform housekeeping tasks (laundry, dish cleaning, etc.)	18.5%	27
Perform administrative tasks (call making/taking, customer support, clerk support, coordinating volunteer program, photographing animals and entering into the pet portal database, helping with shelter newsletter, etc.)	16.4%	24
Assists with various activities in the Vet Suite	8.9%	13
Work with animals other than felines and canines	6.2%	9
Work with the public to help reclaim an animal	3%	5

## Shelter Performance

Q5- Please rate the overall performance of the Animal Care and Adoption Center on each of the following criteria

Criteria	Agree	Disagree
<b>Provides adequate training opportunities for the care of all animals</b>	78.0%	22.0%
<b>Provides adequate living quarters for animals</b>	86.4%	13.6%
<b>Provides adequate care for the animals</b>	71.9%	28.1%
<b>Provides adequate enrichment for the animals</b>	71.5%	28.5%
<b>Promotes adoption and responsible pet ownership in an engaging way</b>	75.4%	24.6%
<b>Utilizes innovative ideas for adoption of animals</b>	78.5%	21.5%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- VBAC is currently the best facility in the Tidewater area. I have been told by many, including a Norfolk and Suffolk Animal Control Officer, that VBAC is a much envied facility compared to the other Tidewater facilities.
- This organization tries exceptionally hard to educate the public, provide good matches of animals with homes and tries really hard to keep volunteers engaged so they may continue to provide humane care to all the animals at the facility.
- The shelter and staff have come a long way since I first started volunteering at the old shelter. I now often see number of adoptions in one day equal what the numbers were at the old shelter in one week. The addition of a full time vet staff has really paid off.
- I go to animal shelters all over the southeast United States. ACAC, by far, makes the comfort, care and enrichment of their animals a priority...more so than any other shelter I've been in.

#### Disagree

- Many times during the week days, cages are full of poop and urine. I stopped coming in because I never had much time to walk the dogs since I'm always cleaning the cage. This is the caretakers' job, not the volunteers'.
- As a volunteer I feel that if I or other specific volunteers are not there at the shelter, then the animals do not receive adequate care. I don't think I should feel guilty or worried if I cannot get to the shelter on a given day. I feel this way to the point that I am skipping the volunteer appreciation day because I am worried about the lack of volunteers who will be there to provide basic care to the animals.

## Staffing

Q6- Indicate your level of agreement  
with the following attributes

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>ACAC has adequate staffing to support the Center's goal</b>	26.0%	74.0%
<b>ACAC has adequate daily volunteer support to provide care for the animals</b>	47.1%	52.9%
<b>ACAC has compassionate, caring staff who are knowledgeable about the animals</b>	70.5%	29.5%
<b>ACAC staff members have a strong work ethic and are willing to do what is necessary to properly operate the shelter and care for the animals</b>	62.9%	37.1%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- The staff is working very hard, many putting in extra hours. I see a number of visitors a day that get great info from the desk staff and volunteers that are working in the kennels. I am sure that more staff could be used- there is always more to do.
- I think some of the volunteers should be employed considering the passion they have for their time there.
- There are some staff members who are very compassionate and have a strong work ethic.
- Some staff members go above and beyond.

#### Disagree

- Depending on volunteer staff is not a reliable management tool. The City Council needs to allocate funds to raise salaries to a livable wage and adequately staff the facility.
- From my point of view as a dog walker, there is not nearly enough help, staff or volunteer, to give the dogs walks and adequate exercise every day.
- ACAC appears short staffed often. On busy days when volunteers are not there in full force, the public can have difficulty getting staff to assist them. I am not sure if that is because the center is truly short staffed or if it is because staff members are not being properly trained and utilized or if they simply aren't giving 100% to their jobs.
- I have been there many times on the weekends to find only 2 or 3 staff there because of someone being out sick or gone to an offsite adoption. I volunteer on the weekends and it is the norm to see kennels not cleaned until late in day because of lack of staff. The City should at least hire part time staff. The shelter should never have to expect to rely on volunteers as much as they currently do.
- Need more caretakers and a HOUSEKEEPING staff to help keep the shelter clean, dog bowls and toys washed and laundry washed and dried, folded and put away.

## Physical Environment

Q7- Please rate the overall performance of the ACAC  
physical environment based on your experience

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>The working conditions are comfortable (lighting, temperature, smell, etc.)</b>	86.1%	13.9%
<b>The equipment and supplies provided are sufficient to perform my volunteer duties</b>	74.6%	25.4%
<b>The arrangement of the work area supports effective performance</b>	81.1%	18.9%
<b>Animal cages, runs, and rooms are cleaned properly and with the frequency needed by the animals</b>	51.1%	48.9%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- The building is beautiful. The lighting is great and the temperature is fine most of the time.
- The supplies are usually sufficient but only the volunteers who have access can get to the back to replenish supplies if needed.
- The arrangement of the kennel supports effective performance if standards were set and enforced.

#### Disagree

- The purpose of the volunteer program was not to do the job of the caretakers but unfortunately many volunteers have taken on caretaker duties in order for the animals to have a clean environment.
- Caretakers are stretched so thin with so many duties, that cages occasionally have to wait on volunteers to be cleaned.

## Volunteering

Q8- Indicate your level of agreement  
with the following attributes

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
I get a great sense of satisfaction from volunteering	94.2%	5.8%
ACAC values my time volunteering	78.3%	21.7%
The process (registration, obtaining badge, training, etc) for becoming a volunteer was efficient	77.7%	22.3%
I can easily communicate any problems to ACAC employees and management	62.4%	37.6%
I feel free to speak up on issues at the ACAC without fear of retribution or losing my volunteer privileges	59.8%	40.2%
I would be in favor of a volunteer sign-up schedule to help management know how many volunteers are working on a given day and the tasks they will be performing	80.5%	19.5%
Morale among ACAC is good and has a positive impact on my desire to volunteer there.	61.4%	38.6%
Negative comments about the ACAC made by other volunteers lowers my morale and desire to volunteer	29.7%	70.3%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- I love volunteering. LOVE it! I used to put it before anything. I couldn't wait. Helping the helpless is what keeps me going.
- This is the best run shelter that I've ever visited. I'm proud to be part of this fantastic team.
- I appreciate the opportunity to make a difference helping out the staff to find homes for all the animals that are there through no fault of their own.
- Sign-up schedule is a good idea, however many volunteers prefer a flex schedule. For example, I am there every Saturday now but there are times I may or may not be there on Sundays as well.

## Disagree

- I refuse to let the comments of a disgruntled few affect my attitude! The staff and the animals need people dedicated to the shelter mission, NOT people with egos to stroke.
- Most of the people who make negative comments do not spend much time actually volunteering at the shelter. They are not well informed. The more time I have spent there, the more I understand what an enormous job it is and the level of dedication of staff.
- At one time I thought I could speak to staff or management about my feeling and thoughts, both good and bad. However... I was talked down to. I was belittled for my feelings and was told that I didn't seem to have the same goals as (management) did for the shelter and that if I continued to disagree and question things (then) I shouldn't be volunteering with ACAC any longer. So, no, I do not feel that I can say anything to management or staff for fear of my volunteer "privileges" or badges being revoked.

## Fostering

Q9- If you serve as a foster parent for the ACAC,  
please indicate your level of agreement  
with the following statements.

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>Adequate information was provided to me about the process of fostering animals through the ACAC.</b>	80.5%	19.5%
<b>As an approved foster, I am contacted regularly about fostering animals.</b>	75.0%	25.0%
<b>I have adequate support from the shelter for fostering such as regular access to the shelter vet or vet tech when I have medical issues with an animal I am fostering.</b>	69.0%	31.0%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- ACAC is wonderful in assisting us in any way they can.
- When I first started to foster, it was at the old shelter and access to vet care was very poor. Now with a full time vet staff access is great. I can email the vet and vet tech and will always get an answer back.
- We are notified about fostering animals via email which is better than how it used to be which was a phone call or email from the vet staff.
- I receive regular emails regarding dogs or cats that need a foster home.

#### Disagree

- I have fostered several animals via the ACAC and I felt no support for the animal once they left that building. Of course, I would pursue medical care, but they are unorganized and if i wasn't persistent, it would never get done. I rarely get emails about animals needing fosters, yet they are always killing animals. The equation is not balanced. Also, most foster calls are put out for kittens-that's it.
- I fostered and was never given access to the Vet because the Vet was too busy with the animals in the shelter to assist. I had to take the animals to an offsite Vet. I had to make constant requests for the animals' monthly flea and heartworm meds and sometimes these were delayed for over a month.

## Adoption Events

Q10- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements concerning adoption events

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>Offsite adoption events are planned with adequate notice provided to volunteers who may like to participate.</b>	73.4%	26.6%
<b>There is adequate marketing / PR to promote these events and help them be as successful as possible.</b>	58.8%	41.2%
<b>The Off-Site Adoption Events ACAC plans and participates in are well organized and location of events is visible.</b>	70.6%	29.4%
<b>The events are well attended by the public and generally result in a good number of animal adoptions.</b>	69.7%	30.3%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- ACAC has great adoption events, which seem to bring in adopters in greater numbers.
- The supervisor should be commended for his hard work in this area.

#### Disagree

- Offsite events may be planned in advance but the word is not put out to volunteers until a few days (or less) before the event in most cases. Mostly the events are attended by the same volunteers who have learned what to do and will take the dogs that are able to be adopted out to the event.
- The more volunteers you have at an outside adoption event, the more dogs and cats we could get adopted.
- We often sent volunteers home because the shelter didn't bring enough animals. The goal should ALWAYS be to bring many adoptable pets as we can.
- Adoption events, whether at the shelter or off-site, are many times not promoted until a few days or a week before and usually via Facebook. These short-notice or not-promoted events usually end up with no adoptions. Events should be promoted weeks before with flyers posted at vet offices and pet supply stores.
- With connections that the city has, there is no reason why PR can't go out to the public via TV, radio, newspaper, etc.

## Organizational Structure

Q11- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements concerning organizational structure

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>ACAC being under the Virginia Beach Police Department reporting structure is a positive for the shelter</b>	53.5%	46.5%
<b>I would like to continue to see the ACAC report to the Virginia Beach Police Department</b>	56.0%	44.0%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- This is a valuable quality of Animal Control. The background check is very important when working with animals and children to limit any possible predator from hurting a volunteer or another animal.
- I think this is imperative! Supporting the Enforcement division is important to volunteers and the public understanding the laws regarding pet ownership in our city.
- The police presence is needed for cases of animal abuse and neglect. To remove ACAC to another City department may diminish the Police Department's sense of ownership of the program leading to less support.

#### Disagree

- While the Police have a vital role in our community, animal sheltering is not a Police issue. Progressive communities have removed animal sheltering from Police and other non-related departments.
- ACAC should not be set up to where it reports to itself. Who oversees the shelter? Who is accountable? Why when a dog was left out in the freezing cold to die overnight when a shelter worker didn't bring the dog back in, did NOTHING happen?
- The Police department operates the ACAC as a relatively high kill shelter in a time when the future of sheltering revolves around saving the lives of the animals. Animal Control does just what it says...controls the animal population, but they don't save as many lives as they could. Their overall philosophy is, "Let's adopt the animals we can and humanely euthanize the rest." They should be working to adopt the "No Kill" philosophy; which is when each animal comes through the door, management asks, "What can I do NOT TO HAVE TO EUTHANIZE this animal?" Under the Police Department I'm afraid ACAC will never reach "No Kill" status of saving 90% of the animals that come through their doors.

## Shelter Management

Q12 to Q15 - If you serve as a volunteer, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Shelter Management.

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>Displays competence and leadership in assigned role at ACAC</b>	75.8%	24.2%
<b>Demonstrates genuine interest in and compassion for the welfare of the animals at the shelter</b>	77.0%	23.0%
<b>Promotes effective two-way communication</b>	72.9%	27.1%
<b>Appreciates the volunteer work that I do</b>	82.5%	17.5%
<b>Willing to listen to opinions of volunteers</b>	72.0%	28.0%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- Shelter Management is very open to suggestions and very approachable. I like them all.

#### Disagree

- Volunteers are not encouraged to make suggestions or question the running of the shelter in any way. Many of the volunteers have years of experience yet their opinions are stifled by the staff. Many volunteers have been forced out because they voiced their opinions.

## Shelter Veterinarian

Q16- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the Shelter Veterinarian

Attribute	Agree	Disagree
<b>Applies and adheres to policies and practices consistently</b>	95.3%	4.7%
<b>Promotes effective two-way communication</b>	83.9%	16.1%
<b>Appreciates the work I do</b>	96.6%	3.4%
<b>Willing to listen and consider opinions of volunteers</b>	89.7%	10.3%
<b>Demonstrates genuine interest in and compassion for the welfare of the animals at the shelter</b>	95.8%	4.2%

### Comments:

#### Agree

- The Vet works extremely well with volunteers and appreciates the many hours volunteers spend with the animals. She is very compassionate and is dedicated to saving the lives of the animals whenever possible. We are extremely fortunate to have her.
- The Vet is extremely knowledgeable, competent and compassionate. She truly cares about the animals and goes above and beyond in trying to save those who can be saved. She is also practical in the fact that sometimes an animal is suffering and will suffer no matter what is done and that euthanasia is therefore the compassionate thing to do. I totally trust her judgment.
- The Vet is very helpful and works with us in rescue to get as many animals healthy and out as possible. Her commitment to the animals is very apparent.

#### Disagree

- The Vet is a shelter vet. She has sent dogs home numerous times that have ended up with infections due to the lack of cleanliness in the vet suite and the fact that people just walk in and out like surgery is not being performed. There is no sterile technique. Dogs that have been said to need hospice or be put to sleep have ended up being fine when seen by another vet. Mostly I'm sad that she seems very unorganized. The vaccinations that have to be done by her or her tech are NEVER done on time. This makes the dogs sit and wait. When they can't be marketed because they have not gotten their shots, the shelter fills up and dogs die. This causes a domino effect that can be avoided easily if the shots are just given in the first few days the dogs come in like they are supposed to be. I know shelter vet care is limited, but shots are not one of the things that should be difficult.

## Question 17- What are some things that the Animal Care and Adoption Center do very well?

### Comments:

- The hiring of Dr. Melissa McKendry, Supervisor Jessica Hewes, and Animal Behaviorist Consultant Scott Casino has changed the lives of the animals housed in ACAC and has contributed to the overall health, welfare, and adoptability of the animals. We are extremely fortunate to have them in the shelter.
- I think overall the shelter does very well with the limited resources available to it. Animals always appear to be healthy and well-nourished. Animals needing special care and attention are given what they need.
- I think the time and consideration the people at VBACAC give the animals, potential adopters and adopters is awesome. I especially love having a Vet and Vet Tech on staff and having the animals taken care of as soon as a problem is noted and that all the pets are spayed, neutered, blood work tested, shots and micro chipped before adoptions. I also love how they work with rescue groups!!
- They allow the dogs a good amount of time to be adopted once they make it to the adoption floor. The front desk staff is very helpful and friendly. VBACAC puts on a very pleasant image allowing the potential adopters to feel comfortable coming into the building. The building itself and the décor is very nice.
- They provide a knowledgeable and caring environment. They do a good job of promoting adoptions and offering classes to educate volunteers.
- The shelter is a lovely safe haven for so many animals. Most of the people there work so hard to keep it running well. I think that any shortfalls of the shelter are because they are so understaffed. They rely on the volunteers to do too much- if somebody can't come in many things don't get done.
- I feel that the ACAC does a very good job of taking care of the animals and providing them with housing that makes the public feel better about the shelter. Most people I have talked to are very impressed with the overall quality of the shelter. It seems to convey that the shelter truly cares for the animals and makes people more willing to adopt.
- In addition to the new building, ACAC does have a caring and hardworking supervisor (Ms. Hewes), a good vet, volunteers and other committed stakeholders.
- They have several very loyal and compassionate employees. They have a wonderful new shelter. They have many very valuable volunteers.
- The building is fantastic. They have great ideas for adoption events. They hold meetings to let volunteers know what's going on. They are out in the school systems teaching children about our animals.
- They show genuine care and concern for the animals and how the volunteers interact with the staff and animals. They promote knowledge of the various animals and other critters there and want us to ask and learn as much as possible to be better at taking care of the animals and getting them adopted.
- They let the animals out of their cages to play and socialize. They have toys, treats and activities for them. They have the cat rooms that the cats can be loose in all the time. The shelter is bright with warm colors that the public likes when they walk in.

## Question 18- What improvements, if any, do you feel need to be made within the Animal Care and Adoption Center?

### Comments:

- Animal sheltering should not be a function of the Police department. The shelter needs to be a stand-alone department reporting to City Council or to the City Manager's office. Animal sheltering is changing across the country and the old mentality of an era of dog catchers is disappearing.
- The shelter needs more staff and additional positions such as housekeeper to take care of laundry, dishes and trash to allow better use of caretakers' time.
- They need more staff!! Some animals go three days before getting out of their cages. It's horrible!
- I would like to see a way to spend time with animals outside the current shelter operating hours. In my current situation, I could actually restart my volunteering now if I could somehow have access to the building at sporadic times of the whole day.
- The shelter needs better communication to adopters about the impact that returning a pet has on the pet.
- I wish the shelter would better communicate with certain volunteers when animals are in danger of euthanasia due to behavioral issues. A trusted group of volunteers could be developed to network those animals to rescue groups. The same is true for overcrowding in the feline population.
- Make the volunteers feel appreciated as opposed to feeling as if we should be grateful to be there helping.
- Cleaning staff needs to work to keep feces and urine out of cages and not be caught talking and laughing and standing around when volunteers are working hard cleaning.
- The shelter needs to be mindful of enrichment for dogs, cats, and small animals. Some of the bunnies and cats have been at the shelter for MONTHS and they've spent all of that time in cages--with no enrichment.
- Hire an experienced, compassionate director who is not on the Police force.
- Hire more caretakers and PAY THEM MORE!!!! If the City doesn't value these people, how are they supposed to have a work ethic?
- Allow volunteer access to the dogs 30 minutes before opening time to help walk them.
- (Improve) access to resources. Sometimes when cleaning cages, it is difficult to find bedding and supplies. Sometimes there are volunteers to help but lack of supplies in a given area can make it difficult to perform the task. It has greatly improved but there are times when this is still an issue.
- ACAC needs to make it an important protocol to allow animals outside at least once per day. The dogs remain in their cages for too many hours or days in a row!
- As with the majority of organizations while they may have unlimited potential, they are only going to be as effective and successful as their top managers' vision allows. I think ACAC could emerge as a model shelter in Virginia if shelter leaders were able to look long-term and embrace current and emerging trends in sheltering.
- The shelter needs more staffing, like housekeeping, to ensure all the hand sanitizer, paper towel, disinfectant spray bottles, etc. are filled each evening or morning.
- The shelter needs to work harder to get the dogs out for exercise every day. Suggestion is to divide the outside pen so more dogs can out at the same time.
- I think later weekend hours would result in more adoptions.

- The shelter needs to provide more detailed information on adoption kennels. People want to adopt animals they feel connected to- biographies and likes/dislikes on kennel doors would be beneficial in maximizing adoptions.
- The shelter needs to hire housekeeping to keep adoption areas and counters clean.
- There should be more signage for the public for where the kennels are, resulting in less people congregating at the front desk.

## Question 19- What question do you wish we had asked? And, how would you answer it?

### Comments:

- Would you like to see the shelter have extended hours? Yes, it would provide a more flexible schedule, other than only the weekends since I and others work until 5 pm and work in Norfolk and would only have 45 minutes if I came directly from work on certain nights.
- How can the volunteer hours be better spent? If we all knew when we were needed most in the shelter it would be easier to plan when I would go. Some days there are many volunteers, but, on sale days I've had to run the caged cat room alone more than once.
- How can we involve children and youth more? Give training, sensitivity, education and care for animals in schools and welcoming children into shelter enrichment center. Educate them on the little things they can do to help.
- If you could make any change in the physical building or in the operation of the shelter, what would it be? I would have dog pens that have access to an outdoor area. This was the situation in the old shelter and I think it was a positive for the dogs because they could get fresh air daily. How are the dogs at the current shelter supposed to know that the middle cage is their poop room? And how can they even get into that middle cage unless the pass door is open--they can't open the pass door themselves and it can't be opened from both adjoining kennels at the same time. (But, of course, it's a green building, so it's probably not possible in the new shelter. Too bad.)
- If you are not an active volunteer, would you come back if the shelter had different management? Yes.
- How can we improve our adoption rate? Spay and neuter as many animals as possible so they adoptable and are available to go straight home with their adopters.
- Why have you stopped coming? Now that you are fully trained -- why have you stopped volunteering?
- Are you in Favor of Trap, Neuter, Release programs? YES, YES AND YES. Why does everyone think cats are disposable animals?

## Secret Shopper Visits to the Animal Control and Adoption Center

### Date and Time of Secret Shoppers visits

10/18/2013	10/19/2013	10/20/2013	10/21/2013	10/23/2013	10/24/2013	10/25/2013	10/30/2013	
2:15	2:00	10:10	11:15	12:55	2:15	3:00	3:00	
			11:40				3:45	4:00
			12:45					
			1:30					

### Secret Shopper Survey Results

	Question	Agree	Disagree
1	I was greeted by a staff/volunteer when I entered the facility.	69%	31%
2	I was asked if I was interested in adopting a pet.	23%	77%
3	The staff member/volunteer offered to assist me.	31%	69%
4	The staff member/volunteer offered to show me around the facility.	8%	92%
5	The staff member/volunteer offered suggestions based on my comments.	18%	82%
6	The staff member/volunteer was knowledgeable.	64%	31%
7	I felt comfortable asking questions.	50%	50%
8	The adoption procedures were explained.	42%	58%
9	The staff member/volunteer was courteous and professional.	58%	42%
10	The staff member/volunteer was friendly.	55%	45%
11	I had a pleasant experience visiting the ACAC.	43%	67%
12	Overall how would you rate the customer service you received on a scale of 1 to 5? (5 being the highest, 3 being average)	<b>2.31</b>	

# Secret Shopper Visits to Animal Control and Adoption Center

## Comments to Secret Shopper Survey Questions

### 1. I was greeted by a staff/volunteer when I entered the facility

- I was greeted by two individuals with a simple "hello." I began asking questions on what to do to see the animals and was told to just "walk in."
- I walked into the facility and the two staff members behind the counter looked up at me and then looked back down at the computers. I was the only one in line and I stood 3 feet from the counter for approximately 2 minutes then one of the girls asked if she could help me.
- When I left, no one acknowledged me.

### 2. I was asked if I was interested in adopting a pet

- One of the three people at the desk did ask what I was there for but it was I who brought up the adoption issue.
- I was never asked if I was interested in adopting a pet. I would suggest prior to leaving they ask people, "Are there any animals that you would like to see one-on-one?"
- When I returned to the reception area, I was not asked if I saw a dog that I might be interested in nor was I asked whether I was interested in adoption until I initiated my questions.
- They were not interested in why I was there.

### 3. The staff member/volunteer offered to assist me

- The lady I talked to said if I wanted to hold one of the cats in the cages, then to get one of them to open the cage for me.
- No one offered to show me around and I was lost trying to find my way around. After asking to look at the animals, I was only pointed to the door where the animals are kept.
- There was basically no customer service. After standing in the lobby not knowing the procedure, one of the three workers at the front desk finally acknowledged me. I was directed to go through the double doors behind the lobby desk to see the dogs. Beyond the double doors, I was unaccompanied the whole time. I would have expected at least one of the three workers to accompany me if I had any immediate questions. I walked around the lobby to look at cats and still no assistance from the staff.
- None of the employees were helpful. I had to ask another customer where to go. I passed several other employees in the back and none of them spoke to me.
- I was only told to go through the doors and to the left to see the dogs.

## Secret Shopper Visits to Animal Control and Adoption Center

### 4. The staff member/volunteer offered to show me around the facility

- Being that the facility was large, I didn't know how many rooms there were to look in.
- The volunteer gave me general directions regarding the layout of the facility.
- After asking to look at the animals, I was pointed to the door where the animals are kept.
- They only pointed to where the dogs were.
- We were given general direction to the area for the dogs and told that we should not go into the big dog area first as they have something that could be spread to the smaller dogs. Whatever this was called, this is how it was explained to me and at the point it should have been clear my knowledge was limited. (Should someone have gone with us to make sure that we clearly understood the areas?) We went back to the area for the dogs and only looked thru the glass at the dogs.

### 5. The staff member/volunteer offered suggestions based on my comments

- There were only direct answers, usually pointing toward forms or brochures.
- Staff members did not seem to want to help.
- They did not offer suggestions. I did ask if there were any small dogs and she pointed to the kennel cough room and said "that is it."

### 6. The staff member/volunteer was knowledgeable

- On my way out I spoke with a nice woman who was a volunteer. I asked her about vaccinations and was told all the animals are vaccinated. I asked, "What if I have animals and they don't get along?" I was told that I could bring my animals there (2 dogs 2 cats - not very feasible) and see but that if I took an animal home, that it was non-refundable fee but they might work with me if it was within 24 hours. However, she didn't know for sure and didn't try to find out if that was true.
- I am sure that the staff member/volunteer was knowledgeable; however, getting information was like pulling teeth. Even when asked (i.e., do you have a brochure or something about the adoption process I can take with me or a list of approved donation items), specific information was not readily provided. I was told the information was available on the website. A second employee/volunteer was much more helpful, but I think they were new as they had to ask others.
- The lady did answer my question.

## Secret Shopper Visits to Animal Control and Adoption Center

### 7. I felt comfortable asking questions

- Everybody looked too "busy" to take questions without looking bothered.
- Nobody was around to ask questions.
- Didn't see anyone to ask questions.

### 8. The adoption procedures were explained

- I proceeded to say that I was checking into adopting a pet and what was the process. She handed me a brochure and told me that everything is in the brochure. I asked about the cost of adoption and she stated that information is on the back of the brochure.

### 9. The staff member/volunteer was courteous and professional

- The staff member was courteous and professional (volunteer); however, I asked about the kennel cough dogs and could I bring this virus home with me and give it to my dogs, she didn't know but didn't check to find out.

### 10. The staff member/volunteer was friendly

- Neither friendly or unfriendly... just too "busy, busy, busy" to proactively help.
- She was friendly and did the best she could with my questions but did not ask a paid staff to assist me with my questions.

### 11. I had a pleasant experience visiting the ACAC

- I am disappointed in this experience. I saw so many people. I looked lost (because I was) and besides 2 "hellos" and 1 question about being in the kennel room, no one else acknowledged me or tried to ask me anything.
- Enthusiasm for encouraging adoption was not evident on the day of our visit. This is a nice facility with potential to make more of a difference for the animals and patrons.
- Overall, it was a positive visit with the right amount of interaction from the staff/volunteer. I would definitely bring my daughter and husband to the facility to see the animals and possibly adopt.
- When I left I hung around the lobby for a few minutes, the receptionist never spoke to me and did not say goodbye. I left with NO information. It appears they could care less if anyone adopts a pet!



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## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 4, 2014  
**TO:** Mr. Lyndon Remias, City Auditor  
**FROM:** James A. Cervera, Police Chief *AC for SAC*  
**SUBJECT:** 2013 City Audit Animal Care and Adoption Center

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This purpose of this memorandum is to provide your office with a response to the recently completed internal audit of the Animal Care and Adoption Center (ACAC).

After reviewing the report with staff, we are happy to share the following details with you.

- 1.1 Management should review the results of the employee survey and the related comments and discuss the results with the employees and where necessary, take corrective action to address employee concerns.
  - Management will review the results of the employee survey including related comments and will schedule a meeting to discuss the results with employees. Follow-up meetings and conversations will take place as needed. Identified areas of improvement from the survey will be addressed and action will be taken to make changes where possible.
- 1.2 Management should review the results of the volunteer survey and the related comments and discuss the results with the volunteers and where necessary, take corrective action to address volunteer concerns.
  - Management will review the results of the volunteer survey including related comments and will schedule a meeting to discuss the results with volunteers. Follow-up meetings and conversations will take place as needed. Identified areas of improvement from the survey will be addressed and action will be taken to make changes where possible.

2.1 Review the detailed results and comments from the Secret Shopper survey and develop an overall customer service training plan for staff and volunteers to help further promote and encourage the adoption of shelter animals.

- Management will review the results of the secret shopper survey and use the information gleaned to target customer service areas of improvement. Using these targeted areas, training opportunities will be sought and/or developed and provided to volunteers and staff with the overall goal to encourage shelter adoptions and improved customer experiences.

3.1 Management should develop/enhance procedures to ensure data from the Animal Custody record is properly keyed into PISTOL. This should include running and reviewing exception reports, developing a quality assurance review process, and enhancing application controls within PISTOL to prevent keying errors.

- Management will work with systems analysts to identify options and opportunities within the PISTOL program to prevent erroneous key strikes. Error reports are currently and have been in use. Management will work with system analysts to continue to strengthen and enhance error reports and take corrective action when necessary. Management will work with staff members on continual training to ensure the highest level of performance in data entry.

3.2 Management ensures microchip scans are properly performed and properly documented in PISTOL.

- Microchip scanning is currently and has been performed on each dog and cat impounded in the facility. Often animals that are new to the facility demonstrate temperaments and/or behaviors which compromise the safety of staff and are indicative of high stress levels in the impounded animal. In these cases, microchip scanning is delayed to protect both the employee and the animal. Many times scanning of the animal can be safely performed once the animal becomes more accustomed to its new environment and at that time scanning is accomplished. Documentation of any microchips found is entered into PISTOL, owner information is researched, and contact with owner is attempted. Key strike errors within PISTOL indicating wildlife was scanned will be reviewed and management will work with staff to minimize such errors in data entry. Microchip scanning procedures and data entry procedures will be reviewed periodically with staff to ensure the highest level of performance.

4.1 Management should continue to provide a high level of quality care and seek ways to further increase levels of care.

- As members of a learning organization, management will continue to seek out industry best practices and standards in order to continue to progressively evolve. We continue to be proud of the level of care provided to the animals

served and will continue to provide the highest level of care practical and possible while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

5.1 Management should continue to seek additional funding to increase the staffing levels at ACAC.

- Management conducts a workload assessment annually and uses such data in seeking approval for additional staffing within the City's budget process. For the last two budget years, additional staffing has been requested by management and approved through the budget processes. Management has requested additional staffing for FY 14/15 and will continue with this practice annually until adequate staffing has been accomplished. Management will also be mindful of their fiscal responsibility and will continue to seek out additional and creative sources of assistance to accomplish goals.

6.1 To mitigate any risk of violation of any laws the ACAC management should ensure volunteers are not banned or feel threatened to be banned for speaking out on any abuses or violations of law at the shelter.

- Management will continue ensure that no abuses and/or violations of law or city policy occur at the shelter and any such allegations are thoroughly investigated through established Police Department and Human Resources best practices. Additionally, management will continue to ensure that no volunteer is banned for speaking out on any abuses or violations of law at the shelter. Management will work with volunteers and staff to identify areas where communication can be improved and increase avenues for reporting concerns.

6.2 Decisions that have resulted in the banning of volunteers should be revisited and reviewed with the Office of the City Attorney to ensure no violations of law have occurred.

- Shelter management, in conjunction with Police Department leaders have consulted with staff from the Office of the City Attorney and Human Resources to ensure that no violations of law or city policy have occurred pertaining to the management or the dismissal of any volunteer(s). Decisions on volunteer involvement and program management will be made with the highest level of integrity. Codes of conduct with staff and volunteers will be upheld as a matter of priority to ensure the organization's core values are demonstrated and projected by every individual representing the organization.

As a learning organization, the ACAC's leadership team is continually seeking opportunities to improve our internal processes and overall operations striving to always provide the best customer service possible. Based on the results of the audit we requested, your office determined the practices, policies and procedures presently in place were implemented to achieve our mission's objectives. Moreover, as detailed in the report, there are many improvement opportunities staff will explore to enhance

operations, customer service, volunteer and employee morale. We remain committed to helping improve the system, making our Animal Care and Adoption Center the best municipal operation possible.

On behalf of all our staff, I thank you for this audit review opportunity.