

Minutes from the
Louisiana Animal Welfare Commission (LAWC) Meeting
Baton Rouge, LA
June 21, 2008

Members present: Gary Balsamo (exp), Dr. Sam Burke, Hilton Cole (exp), Mary Lee Oliphant (exp), Natalie Robottom (prop), Pinckney Wood (exp).

The Commission discussed the present status of Commission appointments. Only one appointment, that of Dr. Burke, is current. All other appointments have expired. Members stated the importance of the Governor addressing these appointments. Ms. Robottom, Director of the Governor's Office of Community Programs, stated that the Governor's office is very busy working to fill many expired terms on boards and commissions of all types throughout the state. She said that the Governor will address the Commission sometime in the near future.

Hilton Cole discussed some issues facing animal control agencies in the state. Baton Rouge is instituting a program for spaying and neutering the pets of low income families. Hilton also made mention of problems with pit bulls in his parish. The number of this "breed" of dog is out of control, especially in areas of the community that are not well served or do not have access to veterinary care. Mr. Hilton stated that there is also very low compliance with vaccination requirements in these areas.

Mr. Cole also stated that the budget of his animal control agency is increasing by over \$1 million, which exemplifies the progressiveness of his parish. He is also responsible for raising additional funds (\$1.8 million) for a state of the art animal adoption facility in the parish. He mentioned several possible strategies for fund raising.

Mr. Cole, Ms. Mary Lee Oliphant and Mr. Wood discussed a "humane" organization that states on its website that it will conduct inspections of animal control facilities in the state. This agency may have an "agenda" that is not in line with most rational officials, animal control agencies, veterinary practitioners, or humane organizations in the state. For this reason the Commission must advise all animal control organizations, as soon as SB 783 becomes law, that LAWC has been designated by the legislature to be the official "inspecting agency" of animal control facilities in the state. The bill has been passed and is awaiting the Governor's signature. Mr. Cole stated that he is in possession of the current facility standards that the Commission will apply in these animal control audits. Mr. Balsamo stated that the Commission should enlist the support of the Parish Sanitarians in each parish. He suggested that the Louisiana Office of Public Health Sanitarians should conduct the sanitary portion of the audits. Mr. Balsamo stated that these sanitarians are already often called to respond to problems at the facilities, therefore it would follow that, since they are the sanitary experts, they should conduct the sanitary inspections. Mr. Balsamo stated that, in his opinion, this may not significantly increase the Sanitarians' workloads, and will likely only involve a half days work in each parish. In Mr. Balsamo's opinion, the Commission should approach the director of the Environmental Services Section at OPH, as soon as the bill becomes law, to foster

