



**TO:** Chair Jessica Vega Pederson

**CC:** Commissioners Sharon Meieran, Susheela Jayapal, Diane Rosenbaum, Lori Stegmann, and COO Serena Cruz

**FROM:** Lee Girard, DCS Interim Director; Erin Grahek, Animal Services Director

**SUBJECT:** MCAS Review - Phase 1 Update

**DATE:** April 14, 2023

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Dear Chair Vega Pederson et al.,

We would like to apprise you of the status of your multi-stage review of Multnomah County Animal Services and its operations, and submit deliverables for phase 1a, 1b, and 1c of the review for your consideration.

### [Phase 1a: Review of MCAS Recommendations From 2016 To Present](#)

*Phase 1a was completed by Ron Sarazin of Olympic Performance, Inc., an independent contractor with institutional knowledge of MCAS operations and history.*

Phase 1a focused on a detailed review of all previous audits, reports and recommendations conducted over the past six years, followed by a careful accounting of the recommendations made, a status update on each, and information about the choices made to respond and implement previous recommendations.

The material includes the 2016 Animal Services Audit, the 2018 Follow-up Audit, 2018 grant-funded consultation services from Dogs Playing for Life, recommendations from a 2020 Animal Services Collaborative Working Group “Transformative Journey Project”, and recommendations from ongoing consultation with the University of Wisconsin Shelter Medicine Program.

Specific recommendations from the 2016 & 2018 Audit reports and the Dogs Playing For Life consultation were reviewed and assessed for completion, partial completion, and whether additional review is needed for items previously considered complete.

Significant areas remaining to be addressed include increasing staffing and volunteer levels, developing a positive organizational culture, safety equipment and protocols, data integrity checks, behavior and euthanasia documentation, staff training and procedures, coordinated enrichment activities and recording, and facilities improvements for security dogs, small animals, and outdoor dog areas.

Below you will find a tally of recommendations from the 2016 audit, 2018 audit follow up, and 2018 Dogs Playing for Life consultation, sorted by status. It is important to note that many of the recommendations marked as partially complete or incomplete have seen progress towards implementation, or may be in process but with an alternative approach.

Review	Complete	Complete with additional review desired	Partially complete	Incomplete	Total Items
2016 & 2018 Audit	3	6	11	2	22
Dogs Playing for Life	3	2	18	17	40

**From the 2016 and 2018 audit reports**, resolved issues include climate control at MCAS, separation for each species, and increased space and compartmentalized housing for cats.

Issues that were previously resolved but where additional review is currently desired include use of and training for database mandatory fields, publicly accessible reports and data, information provided at the time of adoption, staff operating procedures, and training documentation.

Partially complete issues include manual check protocols for animal records, behavioral documentation, workplace safety training, personnel rule training, shelter overflow housing, safety site visit report concerns, new staff training, enrichment documentation, increased staffing for national cleaning and feeding standards, a daily rounds program, and planning documents.

Incomplete issues include checking euthanasia drug logs against the shelter database records, and implementing a comprehensive shelter enrichment program for all animals in care.

**From the Dogs Playing for Life consultation**, resolved issues include removing padlocks on non-public dog kennels during open hours, prioritizing dogs that are struggling behaviorally, and an intake exam handling recording system.

Issues that are considered complete with additional review desired include utilization and documentation of walk boards for daily enrichment records. An alternative tracking method is planned.

Partially complete recommendations include prioritizing time for staff to participate in enrichment activities, specific enrichment-related staff positions, daily walk-throughs to ensure every eligible dog is walked, pathway planning and enrichment for all animals, daily play-groups and other out-of-kennel enrichment opportunities, daily task lists, kennel cleaning order, a check point system for behavior, kennel exit and entry protocols, implementing an every-dog-every-day model (EDED), utilizing walking and training equipment, scheduling blocks of time for dog handling and in-kennel enrichment, playgroup training, safety signage, critical dog handling safety equipment purchasing and training, documenting critical concerning interactions with dogs, documenting handling by ACO officers before dogs arrive at the shelter, utilizing the Dogs Playing For Life enrichment programming, and finding creative alternatives to housing dogs at the shelter for longer than 90 days.

Incomplete recommendations include reframing perspectives about mandatory Every Dog, Every Day enrichment, separating out large-breed dogs in statistical reporting, adding coverings to play yards, adding visual barriers to the backs of kennels, adding natural light-sources (skylights) to the security kennels, emphasizing enrichment for dogs in intake kennels, incentives for staff or volunteers to promote calm behavior and reduce barrier reactivity, implementing a “give a dog a bone” program for dogs in security kennels, implementing a reading to dogs program, creating a hand-off protocol and signage for challenging dogs, maintaining consistent enrichment records and reducing documentation noise by only recording significant events, identifying which behaviors need to be strengthened or decreased for adoptability and safety, redirecting self-rewarding behaviors, using gentle-leader harnesses, using clicker training with fractious dogs, and refraining from relying on relationships in order to progress desired behaviors.

**From the Collaborative Improvement Working Group review**, some limited past progress was made to develop the organizational culture of MCAS as a learning organization, and develop a sense of safety, trust, and belonging among leadership and staff members. However, the group has not been active, and much of the development was lost in turnover and in pandemic and post-pandemic related change. The intent of this group will be carried out through the MCAS Director’s and Operations Manager’s continued work to improve staff engagement in policy development.

Recommendations from the **University of Wisconsin Shelter Medicine Program consultation** include reducing length of stay for all shelter animals, streamlining operations for efficiency of care, increasing staffing to increase capacity of care, and removing barriers to reunification and adoption. UWis has future recommendations for changes to MCAS Field Services, and considerations for a new shelter.

### [Phase 1b: Summary of Budgetary & Staffing Recommendations](#)

*Phase 1b was completed by Animal Services Director Erin Grahek, consulting with Dr. Sandra Newbury, Oregon Humane Society, and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters.*

Phase 1b includes a summary of budgetary recommendations surfaced during the review of previous recommendations, and details regarding how those recommendations have informed the Department's 2024 budget submissions to request additional staffing.

Specifically, past audits recommended a comprehensive study of total staffing needs, and for MCAS to advocate to the Board of County Commissioners for increased staffing as necessary to help protect the health of the animals in shelter care, including:

1. Increasing staffing for cleaning and feeding to meet National Animal Care & Control Association guidelines,
2. Ensuring adequate staffing to provide the shelter's animals with daily enrichment and consistently prompt behavioral health care.

Based on recommendations to provide adequate cleaning and feeding in addition to enrichment for our facility, MCAS calculated the direct care time needed per animal as 20 - 35 minutes per day varying by species. The current state/ideal state comparison led to a recommended staffing range of 15.6-25.9 FTE per day in the direct care (Animal Care Tech 1 and 2) classifications. A standard practice among regional animal welfare partners and in the animal welfare industry is to supplement paid staff positions with volunteers providing some of these basic services. The current staffing plan assigns about 8 staff +/- 1 on any given day, for the animal care team. **The additional 6 ACT 1 and 2 positions requested in the 2024 budget provide 3 more per day, for a total of 11 on most days.**

MCAS is evaluating volunteer hours for enrichment, walking, auxiliary support, and other direct care assignments, and will set targets to supplement available staffing with volunteer roles as necessary in order to meet the 15.6 - 25.9 FTE recommendation based on changing shelter population trends.

## [Phase 1c: Shelter Operations Environmental Scan](#)

- [Summary](#)
- [Operations and Management Policies](#)
- [Operations and Management Wkl](#)

*Phase 1c was completed by Animal Services Operations Director Marian Cannell.*

Phase 1c includes a summary of an environmental scan of shelter operations, and operational or policy changes that were made or are recommended as a result. **The environmental scan process is ongoing, and is not considered complete or resolved.**

The initial scan concluded that MCAS has been operating in a perpetual “state of transition” since operational modifications made during the COVID-19 pandemic and due to high employee attrition, which has led to profound disparities between official organizational policies, philosophies, expectations, and the shelter’s current abilities, resources, and realities. This state has undermined internal and external trust, and the capabilities of MCAS to fulfill its mission in the community.

Recommendations to correct or mitigate these issues include creating, reviewing, and revising critical policies and procedures in place for the organization, and realigning the purpose of each work unit with a central mission statement. While this phase targets the above, the process will be ongoing throughout the life of the organization and in response to the changes within the community.

The initial environmental scan is focused primarily on overall **operations**. Other categories to review include data analysis, optics and marketing, facilities, and strategies for how MCAS should develop as an organization.

Within the focus of operations, MCAS’ high priority items revolve around creating uniformity and consistency in both the policy creation, as well as delivery and expectations for rolling out any new or updated information. In addition, the creation of an internal website for staff is a high priority task that will ensure consistency in where the MCAS work instructions, policies, forms, general

information and handouts can be accessed. Additional high priority tasks currently either *completed and awaiting approval* include organizational policies around adoption, pathway, and placement. New uniform definitions for common industry terms, and owned animal identification policies are also drafted and awaiting approval.

High priority tasks *in progress* include reviewing and revising the shelter intake policies, euthanasia selection and approval process, finder-to-adopt policy, BOLO protocols, and adoption counseling policies.

Other high priority tasks *in need of review* include policies for client information requests, owner surrendered animals, field expectations, “pets in crisis” emergency boarding, vaccination procedures, and animal abuse and neglect identification.

High priority tasks *not yet addressed* include policies for communication, animal drop off, note-entering procedures for animals and people, animal pathway and placement, severe weather operations, incident reporting and tracking, community cat intake, field case management, suspension of ownership, and blood-borne pathogens.

## Next Steps - Phase 1d: Summary / Recommendations / Work Plan

***This document and the upcoming board briefing constitutes Phase 1d of the review, and includes*** a report on the work conducted during phases 1a through 1c, including a summary of the policy and operational changes that have been enacted based on previous recommendations and the contemporary environmental scan, recommendations or policy/operational changes from the environmental scan that are in the process of being implemented, and recommendations that have not been enacted, with a work plan, that includes timelines and deliverables, for addressing these outstanding issues.

During Phase 2 and Phase 3 of this review process, MCAS leadership shall continue to research, review, update, and vet new and existing policies, practices and procedures in order to implement the recommendations identified within Phase 1 of this review as well as industry best practices. During Phase 3, MCAS leadership shall develop a more detailed implementation plan outlining the timelines and actions for continuing this work beyond the period of this review.



Thank you for your ongoing support and consideration. As always, our department and personnel are at your disposal for additional questions or information.

Sincerely,

Lee Girard, DCS Interim Director  
Erin Grahek, Animal Services Director