



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Work Session Summary Minutes

O R E G O N

Public Spay/Neuter Program for Dogs

December 18, 2025. 10:30 AM

Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Salem
5th Floor, Suite 5232, Commissioners Board Room

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Colm Willis, and Kevin Cameron, Danielle Bethell

Board's Office: Trevor Lane, Alvin Klausen, and Matt Lawyer.

Community Services and Economic Development: Nicolette Neuhauser, Lauren Thielke, and Kelli Weese.

Commissioner Danielle Bethell called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

Shelter Operations Overview

- Current intake processes for lost and abandoned dogs in Marion County:
 - Intake from dog officers, general public, and law enforcement:
 - After hours or special situations like owner hospitalization or arrest.
 - Immediate triage on arrival:
 - Vaccinations:
 - Distemper, parvo, and Bordetella.
 - Not rabies initially.
 - Deworming, flea treatment, health check, and behavioral observation.
 - Stray hold protocols:
 - Minimum three days without identifiable owner information.
 - Five days if any ownership clue is present.
 - Active efforts to reunite dogs with owners:
 - Letters, calls, microchips, and community involvement.
 - Current return-to-owner rate is 50%, higher than national average.
 - Upon completion of stray hold, dogs become property of the shelter:
 - More behavior and medical exams done before adoption or transfer to rescue partners.
 - Enrichment and exercise program uses volunteers and behavioral staff.
 - In-house contracted veterinary staff integrate medical and foster care.
 - Fee structure for reclaiming dogs:
 - Impound fees.
 - Boarding fees.
 - Microchip.
 - Registration.
 - Required licensing.
 - Assistance fund available for homeless pet owners.

Spay/Neuter Program

- Identified increasing intake and length of stay due to:
 - Lack of accessible low-cost spay/neuter options.
 - Growth of unaltered dogs, especially in homeless communities.
- Three models for public assistance:
 - High-volume, one-day clinics with outside vets and mobile services:
 - Vaccinate and sterilize large numbers quickly and cost-effectively.
 - Need space and arrangements for aftercare and liability coverage.
 - Voucher program model:
 - Subsidizes surgeries via local clinics.
 - Long-term prevention, minimal liability, and program sustainability.
 - Expanded on-site veterinary services:
 - Adding public surgery days to complement existing shelter operations.
 - Addresses community need.
 - Is limited by clinic capacity and owner compliance.
- Disease prevention needs:
 - Especially Parvo outbreaks in public spaces like Wallace Marine Park.
 - Urgency for vaccination and outreach to high-risk populations.
- Consider working with local and national partners to supplement county funding.

Discussion

- Program risks and benefits of each model:
 - High-volume single-day clinics:
 - Serves quickly and helps with outbreak risk.
 - Needs logistical coordination, space, partnerships, and aftercare planning.
 - Lower per-animal cost but higher upfront event costs:
 - County must manage liability.
 - Greatest immediate impact on population control:
 - Especially in high-risk or underserved areas.
 - Voucher programs:
 - Sustainable, lower liability, less staff-intensive, and spread over time.
 - Easier to administer.
 - Success depends on owner follow-through and partner clinic capacity.
 - May be slower to impact outbreaks compared to clinics.
 - Community engagement and proactive ownership responsibility.
 - Expanded on-site services:
 - Gradual service expansion with existing facilities.
 - Moderate logistical needs.
 - Limited by clinic days and staff/vet availability.
 - Risk if animals are not promptly picked up post-surgery.
 - Supports overall access to spay/neuter.
 - Less reach than large events.
 - Incremental impact on community and outbreak control.
- Challenges in serving marginalized communities:
 - Fear of separation from pets among homeless.
 - Distrust of government agencies.
 - Barriers to accessing traditional spay/neuter or veterinary care.
- Cost structures and possible funding sources:
 - High-volume clinics (rapid response):

- Costs:
 - Facility/event space rental.
 - Medical equipment:
 - Spay packs and supplies.
 - Contracted vet services.
 - Aftercare/emergency support.
 - Staff/volunteer time.
- Funding sources:
 - County budget allocations:
 - Up to \$25,000 ceiling.
 - Potential contributions from community partners:
 - Local businesses, and Rotary.
 - National grants:
 - BISSELL Pet Foundation and others.
- Voucher programs (prevention):
 - Costs:
 - Subsidies for individual spay/neuter procedures at local clinics.
 - Limited staff/administrative support.
 - Initial start-up/tracking/marketing expenses.
 - Funding sources:
 - Dedicated county funds:
 - \$5,000 initial allocation.
 - Potential outside grants:
 - Banfield Foundation, Rachel Ray Foundation, and others.
 - Possible co-funding or match from partner organizations.
- Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARES) team and outreach for on-site care in encampments.
- Highlights of:
 - Compassionate responses.
 - Limited resources.
 - Animal welfare challenges on staff and constituents.
- Partner with neighboring counties facing similar public health concerns.
- Legal, liability, and notification issues related to communicable diseases in public dog parks.

Other

- Fast response to Parvo outbreaks, public awareness, and institution responsibility.
- County, city, state, and private stakeholders manage dogs' welfare in park areas.
- Emotional and community health aspects:
 - Human-animal bond's role in recovery and homelessness services.
- Vision of housing with on-site kennels for people experiencing homelessness.
- Advocacy, creative funding, and flexibility in program design as things shift.

Next Steps

- Immediate outreach to Polk County for spay/neuter and disease prevention efforts.
- Organize a census of dogs in targeted parks and encampments:
 - With photos and basic owner info
 - Leverage partner agencies for data gathering.
- Report funding source for first \$5,000 allocated to the 2026 voucher program:
 - Finalize where this will come from by January.

- Detailed design of voucher program:
 - Including qualifiers, budget structure, community marketing, and tracking.
- Plan and budget a high-volume, single day spay/neuter clinic:
 - Targeting late July.
 - Select partners, event site, equipment, and aftercare protocols.
 - Up to a \$25,000 county investment ceiling.
- Include prevention (voucher) and intervention (clinic) funding in FY 26-27 budget:
 - Clear justifications and prevention model.
- Schedule voucher program and clinic plan update to Board before execution.
- Prepare budget:
 - Cost range and ceiling for clinic.
 - Board approval and external fundraising.
- Coordinate with Polk County for shared planning and possible joint presentations:
 - Attend their meetings if requested.
- Housing and animal services integration plans for supportive housing initiatives.
- Ongoing reporting and feedback to Board on program progress and funding use.

Adjourned – time: 11:43 a.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White