

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020**  
**Animal Welfare Commission of the City of South Bend, Indiana**

July 1, 2020

Dear Mayor Mueller and Common Council Members of the City of South Bend,

Greetings from the Animal Welfare Commission.

Under Section 5-97 of the **Municipal Code of the City of South Bend, Indiana**, the responsibilities of the Animal Welfare Commission are (in part) as follows:

**DIVISION 2**

**Sec. 5-97. - Duties and responsibilities of the Animal Welfare Commission.**

The Animal Welfare Commission shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- (1) To receive and review recommendations made by the Animal Resource Center Manager;
  - (2) To recommend proposed policies, principles, standards and regulations for the control and humane treatment of all animal regulated by this chapter;
  - (3) To review and make advisory recommendations aimed at improving regulations and enforcement of the regulations codified into this chapter to the Common Council;
  - (4) To submit to the Mayor and the Common Council no later than March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year a written report of its activities and recommendations;
  - (5) To hear appeals within ten (10) working days (excluding holidays and weekends) of any appeal being filed on the determination of:
    - a. An animal being deemed a "potentially dangerous animal"; and/or
    - b. A person or persons alleged to have "provoked" an animal resulting in a violation of this chapter.
  - (6) Such determinations shall be reduced to writing with the original of the same being maintained by the City and copies being sent to the person or persons filing an appeal, with copies also being maintained in the Division of Animal Welfare. Electronic notification of such determinations shall be sent to all Animal Welfare Officers and the South Bend Police Department.
- (Ord. No. 10309-14, § I, 5-28-14; Ord. No. 10660-19 § IX, 7-22-19)

Although Sec. 5-96(b) states that "The Commission shall meet at least once each month, or upon special call by the Chair or upon the written request to the Chair by any three (3) members." the pandemic impacted all citizens, city functions, and entities in 2020. Bill 16-20 Animal Welfare Suspension was passed in April of 2020 to allow suspension of meetings that were non-essential due to the pandemic. Therefore, the Commission met only three times for regular meetings and held only three in-person hearings in 2020.

The Commission would like to highlight a few notable changes at the end of 2020 that overlapped into January of 2021. On January 8, 2021, Animal Resource Center Manager Jenn Gobel left her position of four years to pursue other endeavors. Animal Resource Center Manager Gobel caused a major change in her tenure: after decades of poor live release rates in the city shelter, Gobel (and shelter staff) brought the South Bend Animal Resource Center to a 90% live release rate. A minimum of 90% is the live release rate that must be consistently obtained to be considered a compassionate no kill shelter. The Commission recognizes her outstanding work in the field of animal welfare and public safety, especially by obtaining

this important and much sought-after milestone. We sincerely thank Jenn Gobel for her services to the City of South Bend.

We also welcomed new Animal Resource Center Manager Lindsey Cuellar, who began on January 19, 2021. The Commission looks forward to working with Ms. Cuellar whose background may facilitate more educational programming. Ms. Cuellar is off to a fine start and we look forward to seeing what ideas she brings forward for SBARC.

As the Commission proceeds back to the regular order of business, we also submit this Annual Report past the due date and extend our apologies for the tardiness of this submission.

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020**

1. INTAKES/OUTCOMES (based on SBARC reports to AWC)
2. ENFORCEMENT (based on SBARC reports to AWC)
3. PROGRAMS (based on SBARC reports to AWC)
4. SHELTER LIMITATIONS
5. REVISION TO CHAPTER 5 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA
6. COMMISSION HEARINGS
7. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. INTAKES/ OUTCOMES (based on SBARC reports to AWC)

Through December of 2020, the South Bend Animal Resource Center (SBARC) had an intake of 2,242 animals. That is an average of 187 animals per month that came through the doors of SBARC during a year that restricted some surrenders due to the pandemic. The national trend in 2020 during the pandemic was to see intake percentages decrease as adoptions increased, although that was not the case in South Bend. (Note: In 2021, the opposite is true. Shelters are filling beyond capacity across the nation and adoptions are decreasing).

Out of the 2,242 animals taken in, 372 were returned to their owners, 1,101 were transferred to rescue, and 319 (an average of 27 per month) animals were adopted out. Adoptions declined from 2019 in our area. Excluding bite cases, owner requested euthanasia, and Indiana State Department of Health cases, 228 animals were euthanized. (Please see SBARC metrics for details on ill/injured animals). No animals were euthanized in 2020 for time and space. (In comparison, the number of animals euthanized for time and space alone in 2014 was 270).

By the Numbers: (These numbers include ALL species and wildlife).

Total Intake:	2,242 animals, of which, 1,094 were dogs and 973 were cats.
Return to Owner:	372
Adoptions:	319
Rescue:	1,101
Euthanasia:	228 (zero for Time/Space)

## 2. ENFORCEMENT (based on SBARC reports to AWC)

Animal Welfare Officers (AWOs) in South Bend respond to calls, and as necessary, issue citations and Animal Welfare Alerts (AWAs). In 2020, there were 2,048 citations written and 2,991 AWAs. Enforcement ensures compliance with the ordinance for the safety of our citizens, and for the humane treatment of the pet population within city limits. SBARC Animal Welfare Officers in particular, have used these enforcement tools to relieve the suffering of animals, and to also educate pet owners regarding the expectations for positive pet ownership, which involves the health and safety of their (and others') pets.

Unfortunately, there are those who abuse, neglect, injure and otherwise harm animals no matter how much enforcement and education SBARC staff provide. SBARC is bringing cases in front of the Commission for hearings for those who will not abide by the Municipal Code of the City of South Bend as it pertains to animals, and severe cases that are criminal in nature are submitted for prosecution by the St. Joseph County Prosecutors Office.

The Commission would again like to request the support and involvement of the Mayor's Office, and the City Council, to assist in building relationships with the South Bend Police Department and the St. Joseph County Prosecutor, to combat behavior against animals, especially regarding criminal abuse of an animal, and dog fighting (see IN 35-46-3). The South Bend Animal Resource Center needs these partnerships to effectively end and see prosecuted the abuse cases and dog fighting in our area. Dog fighting is an insidious crime that is not just about the cruelty, torture, and wanton killing of the animals involved, but is part of a wide-ranging network of crimes that include theft, illegal gambling, drugs, violence, and firearm crimes. South Bend would be a safer community for both animals and people if dog fighting and animal cruelty were strongly focused on.

## 3. PROGRAMMING (based on SBARC reports to AWC)

SBARC programming, like all else, was impacted in 2020 due to pandemic constraints. In August, SBARC did proceed with the "Clear the Shelter" event and held events as allowed by health department recommendations.

SBARC is utilizing social media platforms to highlight adoptable animals, animals found as strays, and events. GEO Pets, ("Get. 'Em. Out.") are longer-term pets with sponsored adoptions and are featured prominently.

SBARC staff has successfully increased the number of partnerships with rescues throughout the wider region to ensure that adoptable animals can be removed from the shelter and find homes.

SBARC's participation during South Bend City events which normally highlight adoptable animals and allow shelter staff and volunteers to build relationships with community members was curtailed during 2020 due to the pandemic. These interactions always help to inform members of the public about their shelter and its programming, while showcasing adoptable animals. These events also foster positive relationships with citizens, many who have believed for years that the city shelter didn't care for the animals it took in.

#### 4. SHELTER LIMITATIONS

It is the opinion of the Animal Welfare Commission that one of the largest obstacles to SBARC realizing their full potential and attaining/maintaining a ninety percent live release rate, *which is a must for any modern community*, is the lack of physical space in the building to accommodate the sheer number of pets that pass through their doors on a yearly basis.

The shelter only has 20 dog kennels in their adoption area and 15 for the dogs in the stray hold area, (there are 4 in isolation and 2 in the treatment room as well). The cat situation is as bad with only 18 small kennels and a communal cat room that can hold approximately 12 cats. When you consider that SBARC dealt with 2,242 animals this past year, with these space limitations for the animals, you should be able to extrapolate just how difficult the job is for shelter staff to move pets quickly, not to mention the risk to the animals to have a successful live outcome placement. The first No Kill shelter in existence happened overnight in June of 2001 **simply by deciding to be compassionate**. Many shelters followed, and it is now commonplace across the nation for limited intake shelters and is growing in the open-admission shelters as cities change outdated models. It is imperative that South Bend stay a compassionate city shelter that has a 90% or above live release rate.

According to Maddie's Fund, a no-kill shelter is defined as:

**"Maddie's Fund and most in the no-kill movement define a no-kill shelter, a no-kill city, a no-kill community or a no-kill nation as a place where all healthy and *treatable* animals are saved and where only unhealthy & *untreatable* animals are euthanized. Maddie's Fund uses the definitions in the Asilomar Accords to define these terms."** [Emphasis added]

It is held that to achieve a no-kill designation, a shelter must have a consistent live release rate above 90%. SBARC offers euthanasia as a service to pet owners, and there will be cases where a truly humane euthanasia needs to occur in any municipal shelter. But in its truest sense, humane euthanasia needs to be reserved for those cases in which it is absolutely necessary, i.e. when an animal is so ill or injured (or behaviorally presents a health and safety risk) that they are not going to become healthy in the future, even if provided the care that a reasonable pet owner would provide. *The minimum goal is for at least nine out of every ten animals that enter the shelter to leave the shelter alive.*

Unwarranted "euthanasia" of animals also takes a very human toll. Recent studies have shown how animal shelter staffers, volunteers, and veterinarians can "burn out" due to the emotional impacts of euthanasia-related stress and depression.

There are many scenarios for there being stray animals in the city. Some get loose from owners, some are victims of neglect, and some animals are intentionally abandoned out of fear of the shelter or a basic lack of compassion. Pet overpopulation is another aspect of shelters being filled, and a prime reason why a focus on spay-neuter is important to South Bend. One thing SBARC never has is a lack of animals in need.

The Animal Welfare Commission believes another limitation for SBARC is staffing. Animal shelter employees on a whole are generally in a position where the work itself is physically and emotionally demanding, staffing levels are not at an optimum capacity, and the compensation levels are less than lucrative. South Bend Animal Care and Control non-managerial staff consists of two part-time staff members who coordinate volunteers and clean, three staffers who cover adoption coordination, medical coordination, and the office, and four Animal Welfare Officers who cover calls across the entire city under every category of issue. Under the current, and immediately former, shelter managers, SBARC has positively worked to lower euthanasia that former shelter managers did not come close to attaining. The 90% live release rate obtained is due to much hard work and dedication of this small staff.

## 5. REVISION TO CHAPTER 5 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

Under Division 2, Section 5-97(3) The Commission began reviewing an update to Chapter 5 of the Municipal Code of the City of South Bend, Indiana in 2019. The ordinance was last updated in May of 2014, but there are provisions that need to be addressed and/or were written in such a manner that the City Legal Department feels they are too vague to enforce. We **completed the revision** of Chapter 5 that will allow enforcement to function as it should to keep the welfare of the pets and our community safe in December of 2020. We hope to have the backing of the Mayor's office and City Council to pass the updated version as soon as possible.

## 6. COMMISSION HEARINGS

The Animal Welfare Commission continues to meet for specific case hearings brought by SBARC and the South Bend City Legal Department regarding violations of the Municipal Code. Most cases presented to the Commission are those involving bites, abuse, and neglect, or for those persons considered habitual animal offenders. In 2020, we lost 7 months of regular meetings and hearings by being unable to meet due to the pandemic. The hearing process has been revised in the proposed update to Chapter 5, streamlining the process so more cases can be heard in an effective and timely manner. (While we only heard 3 cases in 2020, we have held 6 hearings so far in 2021).

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that SBARC needs an addition to the existing facility. The lack of kennel space for both dogs and cats needs to be remedied as it is counterproductive to producing live outcomes and is an additional stressor on staff. We would ask the Mayor and City Council to approve and budget for an expansion to the physical facility.

Any current programs, educational activities or efforts to promote adoptions, spay and neuter programs, anti-cruelty initiatives, enforcement of animal control laws and regulations, cruelty investigations, humane community cat management, and training opportunities are crucial and need to grow. We encourage SBARC to continue offering and expanding upon all current programs to increase live outcome rates, public education, and community awareness. We would ask the Mayor and City Council to increase the budget for SBARC, to allow for more innovative programming.

Many of the animals brought to the shelter as strays need some type of medical attention beyond vaccinations. We would like the Mayor and City Council to increase and budget for medical expenses so that all animals can be medically treated, thus leaving the shelter alive and altered. We also firmly support that dogs and cats brought to the shelter need to be spayed or neutered and microchipped before they leave SBARC. Long-term, it would be an economical benefit to the SBARC and the community if SBARC had a dedicated veterinarian and its own medical/surgical suite.

We hope that SBARC will grow an organized foster program in 2021. Foster families for pets can alleviate stressors for both shelter staff and pets. When pets are in foster homes, there is more room in the physical shelter facility on high intake days, and overall, less demand on staff time. A foster home network also provides pets with a less stressful environment where they can be truly assessed, exercised, and taught basic manners. Most importantly, a robust foster network reduces the euthanasia rate.

We would like SBARC to photograph all animals on intake and place those into a “Found” album on Facebook and on the website. Those photographs, coupled with the arrival dates and locations that the animals were found/picked-up, would be a useful easy resource for the shelter and the public alike. Return to Owner statistics have historically been low and pet owners need to be able to find lost pets quickly and easily. SBARC is using social media to announce lost pets now, but we believe a comprehensive album with photographs, updated daily, would give the public a solid, timely resource.

We would like to see timely updates to the web site for SBARC and a more prominent donation button. Building a donor database and fundraising is important to any animal shelter, as is customized content.

As a Commission, we hope the future goals of the Mayor’s office and the City of South Bend Common Council include increased levels of support and financing for compassionate animal welfare at the South Bend Animal Resource Center. Citizens who are not pet owners also benefit from a vibrant community that treats its animals well. Animal health and welfare is directly related to human health and welfare in South Bend. Historically, animal welfare in our city has been a low priority that is reflected in every aspect from police training and assistance to budgetary support. The very model of municipal open admission shelters has been one of “control” for mainly health reasons, and that is a long-outdated model. While health and human safety is always a concern in our city, it is not the only factor: a successful modern community has animal welfare at the forefront and flips that model to one of kindness along with public health. The community can feel secure in knowing that the shelter is working for and with them instead of having the stigma of being a killing ground, and community members can feel pride and a sense of ownership when having compassionate animal welfare. The CDC has even weighed in with “Healthy Pets, Healthy People” including:

“There are many health benefits of owning a pet. They can increase opportunities to exercise, get outside, and socialize. Regular walking or playing with pets can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels. Pets can help manage loneliness and depression by giving us companionship. Most households in the United States have at least one pet.”

Many people choose housing and locations to live based on how animal-friendly the communities are. There are annual lists of pet-friendly cities and lists of things for people to check for in any given city. South Bend needs to be a forward-thinking city and including animal issues and welfare is part of that process. Ideally, the best governments help to care for those who cannot take care of themselves: Children, the elderly, and animals as well.

Respectfully submitted,

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Pamela S. Wesolowski, Vice Chair  
On behalf of the City of South Bend Animal Welfare Commission

Dr. Mariah Covey, Chair  
Pamela S. Wesolowski, Vice Chair  
Barbara Leavell, Secretary  
Karen Haun, Commission Member  
Rebecca Strand, Commission Member