

TNR Committee

March 31, 2021

Attendees: John Talty (Chair), Joanne Bergin, Marcus Perry (A-Academy), Scott Smith, Councilwoman Andrea Zapcic

Not Present: Kathleen Carpenter

Special Guests: Ross Licitra, Executive Director Monmouth County SPCA and Barbara Lovell-Napoli, SPCA

Roll call

Discussion with Special Guests from Monmouth County SPCA – Special guest Ross Licitra provided insight on his experience with the successful program underway at the Monmouth County SPCA. TNR is a necessary program, but there is no silver bullet to making it successful, he said. Feral cats are a human equation caused over years, and people who are feeding cats are humane people who don't always recognize the hardship in terms of the neighborhood experience. Feral cats are community cats competing for the same food source as other wildlife. Cats carry rabies which is a great health concern and therefore, a local TNR program is essential, he said. Rabies shots only last three years; therefore, the program requires diligence.

The Monmouth County program is different than what Brick is offering because they have a full-time veterinarian on staff and a center they use to provide care. Brick should work out all logistics with a local veterinarian. He also suggested contacting Ocean County and inquire about using them for veterinarian services. Brick Township has two approved veterinarians that provide a variety of services in an established rate schedule as approved by the Township Council at the January 2021 reorganization meeting. Those are: Cedars Veterinary Hospital, Brick, and Jersey Shore Veterinary Inc., Lakewood.

Mr. Licitra also suggested a solution to the Committee's need for a sponsor as outlined in the ordinance establishing a TNR Committee. Coordination needs to be provided by a licensed Animal Control Officer. By law, those are the only people that can remove a domesticated animal. Currently, 15 municipalities in Monmouth County have Memorandums of Agreement with the Monmouth County SPCA to manage their TNR programs. Monmouth SPCA charges \$75 to treat and release an animal and \$250 to take it to a shelter. The cost is split with the municipalities who have a MOA in place.

Mr. Licitra recommended A-Academy (as the Township's Animal Control Officer) as the program's point person/coordinator. As the program's sponsor, A-Academy will supervise the caregivers and ensure the colony limits are maintained.

He further suggested that colony caregivers be asked to sign a Memorandum of Agreement confirming that they are participating in Brick's TNR Program. Once all have signed a MOA, the Township can host a meeting where the rules and regulations are outlined. Colony caregivers should be required to complete an application and agree to feed cats appropriately.

There are hundreds of caregivers throughout the TNR system, and only a handful are non-complaint.

The Monmouth County Program has a budget of \$100,000 per year and receives \$25,000 in state funding annually. They have an active fund-raising program to help generate donations.

Update on Colony responses – All known colonies from a 2014 (43 in total) list were mailed a letter advising them of the TNR Committee and asking them to confirm their status as a colony and, if applicable, to provide the Township with a status report on the colony including data on the number and gender of all cats in the colony; the number of cats that died or otherwise ceased being a part of the colony during the year; the number of kittens born to colony cats in 2020 and their disposition; and the number of cats and kittens placed in permanent homes as companion cats. Of those, 12 people responded with data on their colony. No new responses were received from the February meeting.

Status of Sponsors – Letters were mailed to existing non-profits in the area that are committed to the care of feral cats including Rebecca's Rescues; Animal Birth Control based in Toms River; Furry Friends Mobile Vets; and K's Kitten Rescues. The letters were sent to these non-profits to gauge their interest in being a sponsor. Two sponsors would be ideal – one for the north side and one for the south side of town. Responses were received, but none agreed to serve as a sponsor.

The Committee agreed with Mr. Licitra's suggestion of talking with A-Academy about being the sponsor. Mrs. Bergin will meet with a representative from A-Academy and report back.

TNR Rider Account- In accordance with the Township ordinance regulating the TNR program, sponsor duties include seeking donations to support the program. Any funds collected shall be given to the Township's Chief Financial Officer and placed in a trust dedicated to the fulfillment of the TNR program. The Township has established a dedicated TNR Rider account for this committee with a balance of \$ \$8,026.71.

Challenges as outlined by Animal Control Officer- Marcus Perry from A-Academy reported that he has his hands full at this time with raccoons.

Game plan for 2021- Chairman Talty discussed how we get ready for the spring. The rescue groups are helping and this is a good time to start looking at kittens. Mr. Perry does engage with problem cat caregivers as needed, but generally finds people very interested in helping.

Scott Smith spoke with Rebecca from Rebecca's Rescue for suggestions on education for the public about this program. Members agreed that it's necessary to formulate messaging.

Meeting dates – The Committee agreed to meet next at 5 pm May 12 via Zoom. Invitations will be sent out electronically.

Public Comment – Doreen, a volunteer from Animal Birth Control, talked about that organization's history and efforts to provide care for feral cats. ABC is a non-profit organization started in 1969. They have been helping people with pets in need since that time and provide care to approximately 4,000 cats per year throughout Monmouth and Ocean Counties. She has trapped 657 (443 of them from Brick) since February 2012. She agreed that there needs to be a strategy for the program to be effective. She has template agreements that could be helpful and will share those with Chairman Talty.