

TNR Committee

September 1, 2021

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

Not Present: Kathleen Carpenter

Roll call

Colony Caregiver Discussion

More than 20 attendees were present to get a better understanding of the TNR program and to share their experiences, concerns and questions. Some are existing colony caregivers, others are acting in this capacity but were never contacted by the Township. And others were there representing the feral cat caregiver movement. Chairman Talty thanked everyone for coming out to spend time with the Committee and for their commitment to all “community cats” in Town. He thanked everyone who attended for helping us make this program grow. Chairman Talty explained the new focus on this Committee starting in January of this year, when the Mayor and Council appointed a new Committee to build upon what was done in the past. He explained that since the Committee formed, we have spent time educating ourselves on the TNR movement and what Brick needs to do better for our local colony caregivers. There is no line item to fund TNR activities, but with a year under our belts doing research, listening and investigating options, we hope to have funds allocated to this cause in the Township’s 2022 budget. Financial requests will be based on research and firm understanding of what we need to have in place to provide for our colony caregivers.

Feral cats are sometimes targets for people against the idea of outdoor cats. Police Officer Scott Smith assured the attendees that the Police Department will investigate if anyone suspects cats are being poisoned. Cat poisoning is not OK, he said, it is 100% illegal and will be fully investigated by Brick PD. He did point out that cats are resourceful, and that not all poisoning is intentional. Cats have a way of getting into things on their own. Officer Smith is one of the Township’s Humane Law Enforcement Officers. He explained that the Police prefer education before enforcement because people don’t always know that what they’re doing is harmful.

Discussion also was held on available resources. Caregivers and the Committee agree that the Township needs to contract with a veterinarian specific to TNR. The Committee will request that service be included in the Township’s annual Request for Professional Services proposals. Those are drafted and typically sent out in October for appointments at the Council’s annual reorganization meeting. Euthanization also needs to be included in those services.

Doreen from Animal Birth Control provided resource information for clinics that provide TNR services: East Coast, People 4 Animals and the Monmouth County SPCA. Committee member Jo Anne Lambusta is developing a resource list and will incorporate any information provided on TNR services in the area. Also, in accordance with the Township ordinance establishing a TNR Committee, cats are supposed to be micro-chipped so the colony caregiver can be contacted if the cat is in crisis. The Township has not provided funds for microchipping in many years, but the Committee hopes to be able to do that with 2022 funds. Doreen indicated the cost for the chip is \$5 as long as the cat is at the vet receiving other services.

Attendees wanted to better understand the advantage of registering as a colony. Officer Smith explained that registering as a colony is in compliance with the Township ordinance. Colony caregivers are also eligible for assisting with veterinary care. When there are problems with an approved cat colony, the Township's Animal Control Officer can mediate and assist in resolving any neighborhood problems. Approved colonies are under the supervision of the Program's Sponsor (A-Academy). Feral cats that are not part of an approved colony are handled by the Township Police Department's Human Officer. That's two very different approaches to feral cat complaints. The additional benefit to registering as a colony is that we can easily identify people not complying with the ordinance, Officer Smith said. This is important because some people claim to be colony caregivers approved by the Town, but are not. That claim deters people from making complaints because they assume the activity is sanctioned by the Town. Being a colony caregiver is not an excuse for bad behavior.

Attendees were unaware of the Police Department's Humane Officers, which is a relatively new state-mandated service. Committee member Councilwoman Andrea Zapcic suggested the Police Department's Public Information Officer create a video explaining the role they play and how they help the community.

Sponsor Update

A-Academy (the Township's Animal Control Officer) is the Program Sponsor who acts as the program's point person/coordinator for the Colony Caregivers. As the program's sponsor, A-Academy will supervise the caregivers and ensure the colony limits are maintained. Marcus reported no new updates from the July meeting.

Public Education Campaign

The Committee previously focused on the need to educate people on the TNR program. Since then, a flyer was prepared and handed out during the Summerfest concerts. Chairman Talty encouraged the attendees to review the approved flyers on the TNR web site and to suggest additional educational material we can develop flyers specific to TNR issues. Doreen from Animal Birth Control forwarded several helpful flyers that are posted on the TNR section of the Township web site.

A dedicated phone number was established for the Township's TNR program. That number will be included on all educational materials.

Issues or complaints

No new issues or complaints were discussed.

Fund-Raising

To date, \$1,330.00 was raised via Summerfest 50/50 raffle proceeds.

Next Meeting Date

The Committee agreed to 5 pm, Wednesday, October 6 in person at Town Hall. Colony caregivers are welcome to attend.

Public Comment

A colony caregiver asked if the Township can solicit local pet shops or large pet supply companies to provide food vouchers. Officer Smith suggested contacting Roger's Pet Supply.

A member of the public shared an *Asbury Park Press* article she clipped regarding Monmouth County's TNR program and its partnership with a private business that hosts a colony. That business built a shed for the cats in their colony. The public-private partnership is one worth emulating, she said. The Committee agreed to investigate possibilities here in Brick.