

TNR Committee

October 6, 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

Chairman Talty welcomed everyone to the meeting. Quorum is present.

Colony Caregiver Discussion

Marcus Zale provided an overview of the colonies. At this point, we're working on ensuring an accurate number of colony caregivers. Doreen from Animal Birth Control said there is more than 30 registered colonies in town, but the Township's list is closer to 14. Doreen will work with Marcus to make sure all of the colonies are formally registered. They need some time to complete the task – 30 days is not enough time - but Marcus and Doreen will work on it.

Chairman Talty thanked Marcus for his hard work not only for the Committee but also as our Animal Control Officer.

JoAnne Lambusta suggested an educational flyer on the benefits of registering colonies. She wondered if there were people who had feral cats but are not providing treatment for all of them. Doreen said anyone doing that is not a colony caregiver and should not be recognized as such.

Catherine Dailey attended the meeting and provided information on her colony. She was one of the original registered colonies and as a show of success, has not had a live kitten birth in over a decade. She follows the intent of the program and traps, neuters and releases. All of the cats in her colony have been medically treated.

The TNR program creates standards and consistency so that cat colonies and neighbors know the rules. It's important to the colony caregivers that everyone follows the intent of the program.

Doreen also discussed the colony caregiver agreement. It spells out what colony caregivers agree to in that role. The cats suffer when their human caregivers do not follow the rules and provide proper care. The Township does not have a formal Colony Caregiver agreement that is required to be signed. Colony caregivers are expected to follow the guidelines in the ordinance.

Long-time colony caregivers including Doreen and Catherine explained that what they were doing 14 years ago is the same today. This Committee is not re-writing the rules, we're regrouping internally to make sure the program is running efficiently and effectively.

Doreen asked the committee to consider a caregiver agreement. Humane Officer Scott Smith said it should match the township's TNR ordinance as that is detailed and captures the necessary items.

The Committee will address this as an agenda item next meeting.

Public Information Campaign

The public information campaign is intended to reach a variety of people – from colony caregivers, to those who might be caring for feral cats and are considering becoming a colony caregiver, to those who may be having problems with feral cats. We're happy to reach to a variety of people with interests in cat colonies. Suggestions for flyers and informational materials are always welcome.

Resident Sam Foster asked about the Facebook page for Brick TNR. The existing page is not sanctioned by the Township. Members felt that social media may be the fastest way to share information and asked if they could manage a Facebook page as a private group outside of the Township's social media accounts. As a private group, it's a safe place to ask questions, members said. Also, private groups can exclude people who may not have the colonies' best interests at heart. Mrs. Bergin explained municipal entities cannot facilitate private pages because we are a public entity.

Scott Smith suggested the members start their own group on Facebook but not call it Brick TNR.

Councilwoman Zapcic suggested Brick Colony Caregivers as an appropriate name for a Facebook page, which if done by private individuals can be a closed group only open to colony caregivers. That's the best way to protect everyone's privacy, she said.

Based on the members' concerns for the safety of their cats, Officer Smith explained the role of the humane officer. People cannot harm cats simply because they don't like them or think they're a nuisance. They cannot use chemicals or harmful products as deterrents. Safe deterrents for cats are coffee grounds and cinnamon. Officer Smith suggested an informational flyer geared to people who are having a problem with a feral cat. Some safe approaches to deter them include Cayenne pepper, orange peels, or any kind of citrus peels.

Officer Smith said the Township is not only are we trying to inform the general members of the public, but also need to be communicating with registered colony caregivers as well as unregistered colony caregivers. Part of our information should highlight the Township's TNR Program, the ordinance that establishes the role of a colony caregivers, and the ordinance that bans ground feeding in Brick Township. We don't want people leaving food out without having

it part of a colony. Some people are afraid to ask for help. They've had bad experiences in the past

Colony caregivers want people who support them and have their backs when needed. Chairman Talty said we fully intend to stand beside you, and in front of you and behind you in whatever way is needed to be supportive.

The caregivers said they felt they never had support they needed, but feel hopeful we're going in the right direction. John Talty said it's not perfect but going forward we want the policies and procedures to be effective and consistent across the Township. This, ultimately, best services the feral cats in the program and the community-at-large. The Township wants this standardized to be in the best position to help.

TNR is controversial; there are passionate people for and against the ongoing care of feral cats. This program is a good case in point – it's a good program where the sterilization of the cat takes place, they get to live out their remaining feral life fed, cared for and healthy. That's the goal, Chairman Talty said.

Issues or complaints

Catherine Dailey asked about the TNR's 501 c 3 status. Mrs. Bergin explained that non-profit status was not initiated by the Township and is not tied to out fund-raising efforts.

Fund raising

No updates. However, from a budget perspective, we need to remember to have funds available to purchase traps. Marcus has a limited amount available.

Next meeting

Wednesday, November 17 at 5:30 pm

Public comment

Five colony caregivers attended the meeting.

Lillianne from Waterside Gardens – she calls Doreen for help when needed. She is not a registered colony caregiver.

Sam Foster used to belong to TNR years ago read it in Brick Patch glad to be meeting again because he wants to support the cats

John thanked everyone for speaking their minds and being open and supportive. In the next few months we will have more concrete things we can use on a regular basis.