

**ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 5TH FLOOR MANATEE ROOM
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida
AUGUST 12, 2026**

Present were:

Dena Sabou , Chairperson
Melissa Carman
David Daniels
Wendy Gonzales
Kerri Hughes
Ly Bibiana Salmon Wetzel
Carol Whitmore

Absent was:

Katy Demick, Vice-Chairperson
Kim Bruenner

Two seats are vacant.

Also present were:

Johnanna Beville, Program Analyst
George Kruse, Board of County Commissioner
Ellie Levine, Volunteer Coordinator
Dr. Syna Johnson, Chief Veterinarian Shelter Operations
Michael Strollo, Communications Coordinator
Vicki Tessmer, Board Record Supervisor, Clerk of the Circuit Court
Caitlin Dixon, Board Records Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court

1.  Chairperson Sabou called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

AGENDA/SIGN-IN SHEET

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

 Chairperson Sabou led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **ROLL CALL**

 A quorum was declared.

4. **SIGN- IN REMINDER**

 Reminded members to sign in at the entrance.

5. **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

 A motion was made by Member Whitmore, seconded by Member Carman, and carried 7-0, with Members Demick and Bruenner absent, to approve the minutes of June 17, 2026.

Member Whitmore requested to have the meeting minutes emailed to the members prior to the meeting, so they have time to review.

A motion was made by Member Whitmore, seconded by Member Carman, and carried 7-0, with Members Demick and Bruenner absent, to have the minutes from the previous meeting emailed to the members prior to the next meeting.

Johnanna Beville, Program Analyst, reminded members that they do not have the authority to direct staff or assign tasks. The members can request action, and the staff will take those requests to the administration. AS20260812DOC002

6. **ASAB STAFF LIAISON**

Ms. Beville distributed the meeting calendar through January 2027, distributed and reviewed Form 8B Memorandum of Voting Conflict, attendance requirements and procedures for Members who anticipate being absent.

Discussion ensued regarding the amount of information for today's meeting, agenda being a timeline, and Members receiving agenda packages prior to the meeting. AS20260812DOC003

7. **CLARIFICATION OF ASAB SCOPE AND ROLE**

 Ms. Beville reviewed the ASAB's Clarifying Scope and Authority to serve as a structured channel for community input and advise the Board of County Commissioners (Board) on animal services and welfare matters while remaining firmly under the Board's direction.

Ms. Beville responded to questions and noted that the public is provided with today's agenda, just not the material for the items since members need to review it before it is released to the public.

A motion was made by Member Whitmore, seconded by Member Daniels, and carried 7-0, with Members Demick and Bruenner absent to request the agenda packages be posted online after the meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the number of items that can be added to the agenda and the difference between requested versus recommended.

Ms. Beville urged the Members to continue reviewing the scope of authority handout, procedural/policy recommendations related to animal services (within the Board's advisory scope), and general County policy.

 Chairperson Sabou discussed the submitted agenda items and explained many of the items did not qualify, because the item involved directives to staff.

Ms. Beville outlined the scope under which the requested agenda items for today and questioned if the Advisory Board is interested in attending a Member only tour of the Bishop Adoption Building before it opens.

George Kruse, Board of County Commissioners, addressed the legality of having a group tour due to Sunshine Law.

A motion was made by Member Wetzel, seconded by Member Whitmore, and carried 7-0, with Members Demick and Bruenner absent, for Dr. Johnson to arrange for members to go individually for 15 minutes and walk the Bishop Adoption Building.

 Discussion ensued regarding the efficiency and role of the ASAB, distinction between recommended actions and directing staff, assigning an ASAB spokesperson to address the Board, forwarding recommendations to the Board, appropriate motion verbiage, use of department resources, surrenders account for approximately 10-15 percent of animal intake, hurricane protocol, example of agendas used by other advisory boards, Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR for cats) routinely conducted, focusing on solution-based ideas.

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8. **COMMISSIONER UPDATES**

 George Kruse, County Commissioner, updated the Advisory Board regarding the Board's request for staff to review the updated feasibility study. It is difficult to solicit bids without knowing the specific needs and scope of work. The request to replace the temporary shade structures with permanent ones was not approved by the Board.

9. **AGENDA ITEM REQUEST PROCESS**

 Ms. Beville noted a link will be emailed to each member to submit potential agenda items and the submission deadline will be 10 business days before the next meeting. Each member may submit a maximum of three items; however, submission of an item does not guarantee that it will be placed on the agenda.

 Discussion ensued regarding some agenda request items fall under different departments, the potential for animal welfare to eventually expand, and the possibility of establishing an additional Advisory Board focused on wildlife and farm animals.

10. **REQUESTED AGENDA ITEMS**

Item was discussed during agenda item 7.

11. **APPROVED AGENDA ITEMS**

 Chairperson Sabou reviewed the requested agenda items.

Animal Services Budget

 Ms. Beville provided a handout of the budget for FY26, and explained the FY27 budget has not been approved by Board.

Discussion ensued regarding the copy of the budget and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), members becoming familiar with budget, and volunteer recruitment data.

 Ellie Levine, Volunteer Coordinator, reported volunteer hours are distributed to volunteers on a monthly basis. Volunteers logged a total of 2,181 hours in July, compared to 1,732 hours in June, and a total of 129 volunteers logged hours in July, compared to 140 in June. Volunteers logged 443 hours at Cat Town in July compared to 378 hours in June. There were 34 Cat Town volunteers in July compared to 37 in June. At Bishop, volunteers logged 948 hours in July, compared to 743 hours in June. There were 94 dog volunteers in July, compared to 84 in June. About 700 hours were logged in July related to training, fostering, offsite events, transporting animals, compared to 611 hours in June. This information is available to the public.

 A motion was made by Member Wetzel seconded by Member Gonzales, and carried 7-0, with Members Demick and Bruenner absent, to request staff to provide information about the budget to acquire a better understanding.

University Of Florida (UF) Site Visit

 Chairperson Sabou shared that she attended a meeting at Bishop with the UF Shelter Medicine Program. The meeting was very thorough, and she did not feel Bishop was being micromanaged. Also, UF would not be making a recommendation regarding a brick-and-mortar facility, as it is outside of the program's purview.

Discussion ensued regarding UF report has no deadline, obtaining a copy of the report, report will be public.



Monthly Shelter Performance and Volunteer Reports

Dr. Johnson explained that intake and outtake metrics are currently available to the public. Due to limited staffing, owner surrenders are not currently tracked separately. Manatee County adopted a no-kill resolution approximately 10 years ago, requiring the County to maintain a save rate of 90 percent or higher. The 10 percent includes medical euthanasia. Part of the condition to receive the Bishop property was keeping the 90 percent or higher save rate. The County has an open admission policy, meaning they cannot turn away animals regardless of their condition or adoptability.

Discussion ensued regarding the significant number of owner surrenders, Chameleon software, collecting additional data, tracking owner surrenders, and appropriate use of requested data.

 Michael Strollo, Communications Coordinator, provided the 2025 save rate, which was 95.8 percent, compared to the national average save rate of 82 percent.

Discussion continued regarding strategic use of limited resources, making impact with resources available, compassionate community, providing positive information to the public, solution focused approach.

RECESS/ RECONVENE: 3:23 p.m. – 3:29 p.m. All members present with Members Bruenner and Demick absent.



Shade Structures and Noise- Absorbing Materials

Chairperson Sabou commented on how disheartening it was to see people speak out against the permanent shade structures.

Dr. Johnson mentioned a gutter system would help with runoff directly at the kennel doors.

 Discussion ensued regarding solutions to standing water.

A motion was made by Member Whitmore, seconded by Chairperson Sabou, and carried 7-0, with Members Demick and Bruenner absent, to ask the Board to reconsider the denial of permanent shade structures and noise-absorbing materials by the Board from July 28, 2026, meeting, agenda item 19.



Lena Road - Future Animal Shelter

A motion was made by Member Whitmore, seconded by Chairperson Sabou, and carried 6-1, with Member Daniels voting nay, and Members Demick and Bruenner absent to recommend to the Board to preserve the Lena Road property for a future animal shelter.

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12. **RECOMMENDATION ITEMS TO BOCC**



Motions were made during previous items.

13. **NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

There was no new or old business.

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT**



Shirley O'Brien addressed concerns regarding the prefabricated kennels were not meant to be long term.



Martha Jacobs expressed support for denial regarding permanent shade structures and noise-absorbing materials and the need for a licensed veterinarian serving on the ASAB who is not employed by the County.



Laura Lidell shared suggestions on things to improve at Bishop Animal Shelter.



Julie Madison commented on the need to appropriately fund the county based on the number of residents. Not enough animal control officers for county. Animal facilities need to be safe and functional. There are intake issues occurring across the country.



Liz van der Laag requested clarification on who is accountable for transitioning the shelter from prefabricated buildings to a permanent shelter.

There being no further public comments, Chairperson Sabou closed public comments.

15. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on September 9, 2026, 1:00 p.m., in the Manatee County Administrative Building, 1112 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton on the 5th Floor Manatee Room.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Chairperson Sabou adjourned the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

Minutes Approved:

Dena Sabon
9/9/2026

