

Notes from Pit Bull Committee Meeting on 8/31/10 at Davenport Building, TLAC

Meghan Turner, Citizen Co-Chair, began the meeting at 6 pm, and introduced Lydia Zaidman, Citizen Co-Chair, and Amber Rowland, TLAC Staff Liaison for the Committee. All attendees introduced themselves. Agenda was reviewed, as well as new proposed mission, goals and strategy to move forward. It was suggested (and done) to add "Rescue" to "Promote Fostering, Adoption and Re-Homing" goal. All then agreed that mission, goals and strategy were appropriate to help guide the Committee's work.

Three main areas were identified for the committee's immediate focus: Over-identification/Misidentification of Pit Bulls; Lack of Rescue Options for Pit Bulls; and Breed Restrictive Housing. There was only time to address the first two during this meeting, but the third will be discussed at the next meeting. (Once issues are handled or action taken to sufficiently address the need, more issues can be proposed and strategies formulated, in accordance with established mission and goals.)

Over-Identification/Misidentification:

- Amber will check on possibility of Chameleon to include a "mixed breed" category (and perhaps various sub-categories of "mixed breed")
- There should be large-format displays and signs in the shelter to further educate about "mixed breed" dogs (and could include also "pick the pit bull mix" and "pick the lab mix" tests)
- There should be staff and volunteer training about breed identification, especially relating to pit bull type dogs.
 - Tara Stermer offered to provide the training, either in-person or on CD. Amber said that CD would be ideal for staff or volunteers whose responsibilities did not allow for an in-person training session.)
 - Additional input or ideas about the training can be sent to Tara at thepacktrack@gmail.com
 - Tara and Amber will report back at the next meeting about proposed content, format and implementation of the training
- There should be a web "info-mercial" about mixed breed identification (could be hosted on Love-A-Bull's website)
- There needs to be a script for matching staff that gives staff information and guidance to share with the public about adopting a mixed breed dog.
- There should be an active link from the TLAC website to Love-A-Bull's website (if "external" linking is permissible – Amber will check on city policy.)

Lack of Rescue Options for Pit Bulls:

- There are only a handful of mixed breed rescues that pull pits from the shelter (APA!, Blue Dog, Austin Dog Rescue, From the Heart), with Rusty Cage also potentially becoming a rescue partner.

- We need to investigate the potential for funds for pulling pit bull types from the shelter.
- We need to ask for Donation or No-Kill Implementation Plan funds to be allocated to pit bull type dogs (to be put toward rescue group and adopter incentives and vouchers)
- Incentives for adopters could include free training, food, and medical assistance. Love-A-Bull already provides all of these, but their ability is not limitless, and receiving support from other sources would be helpful to supplement their efforts.
- Brad Beam offered to be the point person to investigate possible earmarking of funds that could be tapped for pit bull type dogs.
- Meghan Turner will be presenting a proposal to the Animal Advisory Commission at their upcoming meeting to request money from the Donations Fund to go toward pit-specific needs (especially medical: heartworm and spay/neuter), that could be administered by Love-A-Bull.
- A “Foster Til Adoption” program was suggested, where TLAC could start a pilot program of 10 fosters who would take pit bulls, support increased marketing through video, etc., and fosters could attend adoption events such as the APA! trail site for increased visibility and interaction with potential adopters.
- Meghan Turner volunteered to investigate the “Foster Til Adoption” idea with Sarah Hammond, TLAC Foster Coordinator.
- There should also be outreach to try to attract volunteers from the community who could transport foster dogs to the trail site, if the fosters are unable to take the dogs.

Housekeeping:

The group decided to make the fourth Tuesday of each month the regular meeting date (barring holidays), at 6 pm at the Davenport Building. The next meeting will take place on Sept. 28th.

Announcements:

- Love-A-Bull’s events for National Pit Bull Awareness Day (dog parade and fun fest) will take place on November 7th, with special guests, Rescue Ink. They asked for help in spreading the word and volunteers to help increase participation and sponsorship. Flyers were distributed, and there is more info available at www.love-a-bull.org
- www.alldogsgo2debbies.com offered to do courtesy postings of dogs needing homes
- Amber and Tara requested photos of dogs identified as “pit bull” that may not be correctly identified, in helping to show difficulty of breed identification. They can be sent to Amber.Rowland@ci.austin.tx.us or thepacktrack@gmail.com

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.