

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

ASCMV board lobbies to operate spay-and-neuter van

by Frank Bryce

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At the July 9 Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley board of directors meeting, the subject of the under-utilized mobile surgical van now assigned to the Doña Ana County Community Development Department was a topic of discussion.

This \$140,000 vehicle, equipped to provide spay and neuter services to under-served areas throughout Doña Ana County, has served almost exclusively as a mobile office for once a month Doña Ana County Animal Control events for several years. Previously, the van also was used very occasionally for necropsies of animals involved in animal cruelty cases.

The need for such a valuable spay-and-neuter asset to be made available to address the serious and costly dog and cat intake and high euthanasia rate at the ASCMV shelter has been brought forward again and again by animal welfare organizations.

When the subject has been brought up, county administrators have voiced resistance to employing the van to its fullest potential in the form of legal and liability concerns. There have been recent efforts to address all these concerns and eliminate roadblocks preventing more effective use of the vehicle.

The ASCMV board of directors is seeking to have the unit transferred from the county fleet to the ASCMV facility for operation by the shelter director. The shelter director has been instructed to develop a budget to operate the vehicle for off-site spay and neuter services and provide a plan for the vehicle staffing by the September meeting of the board.

The board seemed intent on setting forth strong direction to accomplish this goal. A letter from an ASCMV lawyer citing old and persistent concerns was literally described as "premature and presumptive."

The board members wanted to know how to accomplish the transfer, not reasons and concerns why this should not be accomplished.

It was stated that the vehicle should be transferred to the ASCMV and then the board would resolve the issues of operation and maintenance.

There was what appeared to be universal recognition by the ASCMV board of the need for this asset and how it would be invaluable in addressing the required spay and neuter services to reach the "Zero in Seven" goal of the Coalition for Pets and People. This goal is officially supported by the ASCMV board.

This discussion took place before public input was allowed.

The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico did read the following prepared statement into the record: "It is up to this board to take the initiative on the part of the ASCMV to develop and implement resources to address our animal welfare issues.

The ASCMV officially supports spay and neuter, community cat management, and micro-chipping programs with affiliated community organizations, and as such must play a strong leadership role to overcome real or perceived obstacles to accomplish goals.

It has been demonstrated the efficiency of surgical mobile van use, it has been demonstrated the ability to conduct such mobile van operations, limited mobile van operations are being conducted as we speak and funding is being found.

Together, we can add this van to our combined arsenal and you can make this happen. Please lead the way!"

It appears the ASCMV board is doing just that.

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