

**CAMDEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
CAUCUS MEETING  
OCTOBER 17, 2023  
6<sup>th</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
520 MARKET STREET, CAMDEN, NJ 08102**

Director Cappelli called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and the following Commissioners answered to their name:

PRESENT: AL DYER, JEFFREY NASH, VIRGINIA BETTERIDGE, JONATHAN YOUNG, SR., EDWARD McDONNELL, LOUIS CAPPELLI, JR.

EXCISED: MELINDA KANE

Director Cappelli said good afternoon. This meeting has been properly advertised in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. The Director asked everyone to stand for a moment of silence and asked everyone to keep in their thoughts and prayers all of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Israel and the horrific heinous acts that have taken place over the last week. Director Cappelli asked Commissioner Nash to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The DIRECTOR says at Thursday's meeting we will have two Public Hearings:

**PUBLIC HEARING #1**

Resolution of the County of Camden in the State of New Jersey authorizing a Guarantee by the County of the payment of the principal of and interest on the "County Guaranteed Loan Revenue Bonds (County Capital Program), Series 2023" to be issued by the Camden County Improvement Authority for the purposes of financing the acquisition and installation of certain capital equipment and the construction of certain capital infrastructure improvements in, by and for the County.

**PUBLIC HEARING #2**

Resolution of the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Camden, New Jersey providing the County's consent to (i) the financing of the acquisition and installation of certain capital equipment and the construction of certain capital infrastructure improvements in, by and for the County; (ii) the issuance by the Authority of a series of its tax-exempt "County Guaranteed Loan Revenue Bonds (County Capital Program), Series 2023" for the purposes of financing the County project authorized hereby; (iii) the Loan Agreement by and between the County and the Authority in connection with the financing authorized hereby; and (iv) certain other matters related thereto and pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:37A-56.

The Director then called upon each Commissioner individually to present his or her Resolutions.

**Resolutions and discussion of proposed Resolutions by or on behalf of Commissioner Dyer**

Commissioner Dyer read Resolutions 1 through 21 into the record and they were approved to be placed on the agenda for adoption.

**Resolutions and discussion of proposed Resolutions by or on behalf of Commissioner Kane**

Commissioner Dyer read Commissioner Kane's Resolutions 22 through 24 into the record and they were approved to be placed on the agenda for adoption. Commissioner Dyer said there is one walk-on for Commissioner Kane as follows:

**Resolution authorizing a Bond Substitution in the amount of \$1,200,000 to provide financing for the Camen County Nutrition Hub.**

**Resolutions and discussion of proposed Resolutions by or on behalf of Commissioner Nash**

Commissioner Nash said Resolution No. 25 is pulled. Resolutions 26 through 32 were read into the record and approved to be placed on the agenda for adoption.

**Resolutions and discussion of proposed Resolutions by or on behalf of Commissioner Betteridge**

Commissioner Betteridge read Resolutions 33 through 41 into the record and they were approved to be placed on the agenda for adoption.

**Resolutions and discussion of proposed Resolutions by or on behalf of Commissioner Young**

Commissioner Young read Resolutions 42 through 55 into the record and they were approved to be placed on the agenda for adoption.

**Resolutions and discussion of proposed Resolutions by or on behalf of Commissioner Deputy Director McDonnell**

Deputy Director McDonnell read Resolution 56 through 58 into the record and they were approved to be placed on the agenda for adoption.

## **Resolutions and discussion of proposed Resolutions by or on behalf of Commissioner Director Cappelli**

Director Cappelli read Resolutions 59 through 66 and 68 through 71 into the record and they were approved to be placed on the agenda for adoption. Resolution No. 67 was pulled.

The Director opened the meeting to the public for discussion of the Resolutions and/or any other matters.

**Kathy Maguire, President of New Jersey Aid for Animals.** Ms. Maguire said we encourage responsible citizenship and implore our fellow citizens to take responsible actions such as spaying and neutering their pets, ensuring feral cats are fixed, and reclaiming lost pets. However, it is essential to recognize that a call to action without the necessary resources and tools to support it renders the call meaningless. In a few weeks, you, the Camden County Commissioners will vote on renewing a contract with the Animal Welfare Society Homeward Bound Pet Adoption Center. In 2023, taxpayers contributed \$393,713 towards the shelter's operations, a significant portion of its approximately \$2 million budget. The original Request for Proposal (RFP) submitted to the County in 2021 has undergone significant changes. With the imminent resolution vote and same-day adoption, it is urgent for the Commissioners to review the current practices. Having had four executive directors in the past 30 months, averaging one every 7.5 months, underscores the need for a thorough evaluation of the original RFP to ensure alignment with the shelter's mission and its impact on our citizens.

The Homeward Bound Pet Adoption Center serves as the primary intake facility for the City of Camden and ranks second for Winslow Township. We urge Camden County constituents to reclaim their lost pets, acknowledging that not everyone is active on social media. We need to provide accessible resources for pet owners to find their beloved animals. Despite suggesting a Missing Pet Flyer in November 2022, it wasn't printed until March 2023 and when it was we suggested double sided Spanish and English. It still has not been done. This flyer should be distributed in a way that serves both the Spanish and English-speaking communities. The shelter said they would be fixing it and distributing it themselves, however no flyers have been distributed. We would be happy to assist in distributing the flyers. There is a pharmacy in Camden that delivers almost 300 prescriptions a day and they would be happy to put the flyers in with their deliveries.

We encourage Camden County residents to spay or neuter their pets to address overpopulation. However, the policy that excludes larger dogs from this service must be reviewed, as it hinders the call to action for larger dogs to be fixed. Currently the shelter will not spay or neuter a female dog over 80 pounds and they will not neuter a male dog over 75 pounds. We need to explore cost-effective solutions to make spaying and neutering accessible to all pet owners regardless of the size of their dog. While information about discounts for owned pets is available on the website, it remains largely unnoticed due to limited promotion elsewhere. TNR services for feral/community cats in Camden County have fallen short of expectations. The shelter's underutilization of its clinic raises concerns about its efficiency. TNR services are available for feral/community cats in Camden County through a grant from the County. The shelter signed the RFP in Feb, 2021 and that RFP indicated the shelter was doing a very "high volume" low-cost

clinic at the shelter called "Spay our Strays". Spay our Strays hasn't been in effect since the signing of the RFP three years ago. However according to the shelter's newsletter distributed yesterday, from January to September the shelter only fixed 524 feral cats, that translates to 14 feral cats a week. At this rate, it will be impossible to fix all the feral cats just in Camden City alone. The trappers there can trap up to 40-50 in a colony at one time. Again, they all had to go to Pennsylvania low-cost clinics at their own cost. This is appalling that private citizens can't get appointments at the shelter where it is free. Again, even though there are no appointments this valuable information is under-advertised, primarily found on the HBPAC website. The trappers in Camden County for feral cats face financial constraints and lack support for their initiatives. More funding and assistance should be provided to ensure effective trapping efforts. Currently our trappers in Camden County, for feral cats, are paying for everything on their own and travelling to Pennsylvania to the low cost spay neuter clinics there. Without these volunteer trappers using their own time and money the feral cat population is going to be more overwhelming at the shelter resulting in bigger numbers and more euthanizing for space.

Several violations of NJ Administrative Code 8:23A, such as exercise requirements for dogs, have been observed such as not walking dogs in crates 2x a day. Dogs in the regular kennels must also be exercised under NJAC A:23-1.9 Disease Control "Environmental stress can be mediated through reducing negative impact of excess with exercise". While we appreciate the value of volunteers, they should not bear the responsibility for ensuring dogs receive adequate exercise.

Offering free microchipping clinics is a vital step in reuniting lost pets with their owners. This, along with providing information on missing pets and low-cost spaying/neutering, contributes to reducing the shelter's population and lessening the burden on taxpayers. 52.5% of all pets that are microchipped are returned to their owners. Providing microchips, missing pet information, low cost spay/neuter are all part of the solution to keeping the number of animals at the shelter low translating into less money being spent by the municipalities and taxpayers. The shelter could and should offer a free microchipping clinic or day of free microchipping like many of the other county shelters who are able to do this even with less of a budget than Homeward Bound. NJ Aid for Animals would be happy to provide a portion of the microchips for an event like this.

Today at 3:00 there is a Zoom meeting hosted by the City of Camden to address the feral cat population there. I have been invited personally by Camden City Council President Fuentes to be part of the discussion and try to come up with some solutions. However, this is not just a Camden issue, it will involve all or part of the suggestions and solutions listed above to work cohesively and in cooperation to solve this problem. It is crucial for Commissioners, especially those overseeing the shelter and its policies, to be proactive in addressing the issues outlined here before the next resolution is passed. The animals and people in Camden County deserve nothing less.

**Robert Ivone, 605 North Atlantic Avenue, Collingswood.** I teach at Collingswood High School, but I also used to volunteer at Homeward Bound. You might recognize my name from a few years ago when I wrote to you about dogs not being walked while I volunteered at the Shelter.

Dogs were sitting in cages for months on end. It was a concern for me back then when I was told do you really want to know or do you want to look the other way. I consider myself “boots on the ground”. I am at the High School, and I am very heavily involved in animal advocacy but really through my own efforts and through the efforts of some of the rescues with whom I partner. In the last 10 – 12 days at the High School, Park Boulevard and Baird Boulevard, I have caught 3 dogs, 2 cats and 1 domestic rabbit without looking for them. We have had dogs inside the high school. The domestic rabbit was inside the playground. During a time out during a recent game, my student picked up a cat. Six animals in a 10-12 day period is way too many. I keep a slip lead in my car, in my wife’s car and in my classroom, as well as a crate and food, again not because I am driving around like a strange individual looking for animals but anyone who has driven through the City knows that this is what we see. Not just the stray cats that are skinny and starving with eye disease but dogs as well. What I am looking for from the Shelter and everyone is preventative medicine, echoing a lot of what Ms. Maguire just said. Educating students and their parents about what to do when they lose their pet and where to check for their lost pet. They don’t know the importance of chips. All these pets that I have caught over the last few years, probably 50, never ever have I seen one with a chip. Not once, cat or dog.

My students and their families do not know where to get affordable pet care to help them keep their animals in such tough economic times. They do not know where to spay or neuter their pets. Probably equally important they do not know the importance of spaying and neutering and how it 100% saves lives. I do presentations during electives where I show them a cat growth chart. It’s exponential. One individual cat can have up to 3 litters a year. They do not know who to call when they see a lost or injured animal. They call me. They do not know what really happens when they dump a cat because it is urinating in the house. We know if you get a cat fixed, male cats specifically, they are less likely to spray in your home. When they are put outside, not only do they mate, but they go blind with eye disease, starve to death, freeze to death, etc. They do not know where to get free or reduced food and can’t get there. It’s a similar analogy to the food desert. I used to work all the food pantries on Saturday mornings at Homeward Bound. The problem is transportation. In my opinion we should be bringing food to families, having mobile clinics to spay and neuter, and mobile vans for food delivery. The families that need it can’t get it. I walk into Pet Smart and the cheapest bag of cat food might be \$30, dog food \$40. Families cannot afford it especially when 98% or even 100% of our high school students are on free lunch.

There is a terrible pit bull reputation nationwide but especially at the shelter. These are most of the animals that I catch in general. I have never been bitten. I’m not saying it can’t happen, it will probably by any dog or cat. A 6-pound dog can bite you. The problem with the shelter is that almost every pit bull that comes in is labeled no pets, no kids. Whose adopting pets? Families with kids. If the majority of the dogs at the shelter are coming from Winslow and from Camden, there are families. These dogs are running away, being dumped or jumping fences from homes with kids. We need better evaluative practice to make sure these dogs are actually a fit and not being so worried about liability.

In summary, we need to educate to prevent the flood and not grab buckets after the levee has already broken. Thank you.

**Kathy Liszewski, 10 Vale Road, Sicklerville.** I also have worked with the Shelter in the past. I have trapped about 500 cats this year, I have had about 350 fixed and returned, the rest were kittens that have been fixed and adopted out. I have been meeting with Shelter staff for years on improper operating procedures. As a trapper I will not bring a cat to the Shelter any longer to have surgery. The last feral cat I brought to the Shelter was accidentally set on fire. I have sent multiple reports to Mr. Young, one on a cat that was trapped at Subaru, a 5-week-old kitten that was 7 months old when the Shelter decided it was no longer adoptable and they dumped it in a field on Admiral Wilson Boulevard. I went and retrieved the cat and the cat is adoptable. Had I not done that, she would have starved to death or been hit by a car. We need to do something quickly to change this. I work with the Gloucester Township's Mayor's Office and our intake numbers have significantly decreased over the year due to the TNR efforts that we are making but we cannot continue to operate in this fashion if we don't have support from the County and from the Shelter. The Shelter continues to fire good volunteers because they are advocating for the animals. Something needs to change. There are no meetings for the Board. There are no Bylaws posted. We have no way of knowing how to get on the Board, to run for the Board. Everything seems to be operating under a cloak of darkness. We need change. I am happy to share all my documentation with all of you.

Seeing no further members of the public wishing to comment, the Director asked for a motion to close the public portion. Commissioner Betteridge made a motion with a second by Commissioner Nash. All Commissioners present voted aye.

### **CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTION**

Director Cappelli read the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners, County of Camden, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of the hereinafter-specified subject matter.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed:
  - A. **PERSONNEL**
    - Personnel Actions
3. It is anticipated at this time that the above subject matter will be made public when members of the Camden County Board of Commissioners have made a final determination.

4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

Director Cappelli asked for a motion to adopt the Resolution and go into closed session to discuss the aforementioned matters. Commissioner Nash made a motion with a second by Commissioner Dyer at 12:42 p.m.

The Commissioners returned from closed session with a motion made by Commissioner Betteridge and a second by Commissioner Young at 12:50 p.m.

There being no further discussion, the Director asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Young made a motion to adjourn with a second by Commissioner Betteridge at 12:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karyn Gilmore  
Clerk of the Board