

Subject: Outrageous Government Conduct: Multnomah County, Oregon
Date: September 21, 2004

To the community:

The Multnomah County Commissioners, chaired by Diane Linn, may be among one of the few counties nationally to tolerate animal abuse in county government. It is time for this to end.

Citizens with a broad range of occupations and experiences have repeatedly brought evidence of abuses at Multnomah County Animal Services to the county commissioners attention. The county commissioners studiously ignore and dismiss these taking comfort in agency denials and "spin" that surrounds the truth like the flowerbeds of petunias that surround the evidence of what really goes on at this agency.

The hard data is all there from simple misconduct to alteration of records to fit a preferred story to presentation of false statistics. There is no oversight and no external supervision whatsoever at MCAS. There has been none for decades, the perfect breeding ground for corruption. The commissioners believe that "supervision" is the forwarding of citizens concerns, often unread, to the "Director" of MCAS, currently Michael Oswald, for a whitewash "response." A palatable lie is better than the truth any day of the week. After 8 years of attempting to help Multnomah County citizens caught in the dragnet of this corrupt authoritarian dishonest animal control agency (where a word means anything that they want it to mean), the climate has never been worse. Every day I counsel, help citizens find resources, legal assistance, and often just assist them in dealing with their grief. I try to help those the agency damages. I am not paid. The perpetrators are. They are paid to perform an enormous public disservice from the tax payers' county coffers. And the county commissioners are directly responsible for this state of affairs.

This morning I counseled a young woman who just learned that MCAS had killed her 8 month old Labrador Retriever mix. She had to wait to learn this today from John Rowton, the agency's "shelter" manager who was on vacation. When John is on vacation, no information is allowed to be released by any other staff person to citizens about the status of their animals. John is king. No one else may speak in his stead. So much for the "quality public service," "community access and involvement" and "professional excellence and personal integrity" promised by Director Michael Oswald in his tome "Guiding Principles and Leadership Expectations," guidelines for staff conduct.

This individual called me on Saturday, after I mailed her information on how to keep her pup from becoming at large (along with other educational materials). Her pup had been at large several times. She seemed to need the assistance. She called me on Saturday asking how she could check on her pup. She hadn't the quoted amount of money the agency wanted to redeem her pup. MCAS has no weekend telephone hours. I gave her an access number I know to call at MCAS when there are no public telephone hours so that she could learn the status of her dog. The staff person who answered told her that that information was "not available." She could call back when John Rowton returned from vacation. She asked to speak to a weekend supervisor and was told to stop *harassing the staff person who then hung up*.

John Rowton took the time this morning to inform this person that her 8 month old pup had been killed. He never had the courtesy to call beforehand and advise her of this pointless impending fate. She reported being upset that his tone was quite cocky and assured. It should be. No matter the misconduct or the insensitivity, this agency and its employees can rest assured nothing will ever be done to correct this or other forms of wrongdoing. That is why abuses have escalated. The county government gives permission.

This county citizen was never offered any payment plan for the 200 dollars the agency claimed it was owed. She was offered no assistance. She was called once and told that she had to pay 200 dollars that she did not have. She stated having paid 50 dollars wondering if that sum was included. She became confused and didn't know what to do, simply didn't have 200 dollars up front. No payment plans were offered. No options or assistance. No statement of what could happen to her dog. The staffer after making this demand simply hung up. Nothing was sent in the mail.

This dog was named Cocoa. He was a Labrador retriever/pit cross, between 6 and 8 months old. It appears he was adopted from MCAS in March with a note: "BA Tier 1 very outgoing sweet boy,...needs

dog-dog since pit x (pitbulls and pitbull crosses must pass at higher standards and more tests than any other dogs at MCAS. These are not reasonable standards. They are standards deliberately intended to allow/give license killing as many pitbulls as possible, Oswald's "educational program," kill as many as possible).

This young pup had been at large 3 times. If MCAS were a professional agency they would have followed up and helped this individual learn how to keep her pup from becoming at large. But as John Rowton once announced on a television news program about 8 years ago: "We can't kill the owners so we kill their dogs." He was press secretary then. He was later promoted to shelter manager, an activity that competes heavily with his other paid activity: dog show judge.

That is the agency's mission: teaching through pain and punishment, teaching through destruction and killing, and getting paid very competitive salaries to do so.

This is just one case, one of an enormous number that can best be described as a repeated pattern of abuse. The most frequent statement I have to make to those harmed is: "I am sorry." I am sorry your government is like this. I am sorry they employ persons of this ilk. I am sorry they support these activities. I am sorry. And you won't care about this part. Many is the night I cry myself to sleep, unable to hold the grief of so many others. It can be so overwhelming, dealing with casual government sponsored cruelty. I don't want to go on doing this, picking up the pieces of broken hearts but what do you do when government won't do its job? Just doesn't care? Just walk away?

It is time for the City of Portland to take back the animal control contract that Neil Goldschmidt arranged with Multnomah County when he was the Mayor of Portland. It was a big mistake. Apparently he did this because he didn't like dealing with animal issues, getting calls at City Hall.

The County Commissioners don't like animal related issues either and have defaulted on this service for a long long time. Either they aren't interested (homeless animals don't vote and don't marry the same or different genders, where's the political incentive) or they lack the competence or will to follow through.

There shouldn't have to be a volunteer public service that picks up the broken pieces of this county animal control's destructive service. And I have the evidence. This can't go on any more.

Sincerely,

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