

1ST ANNUAL BCAS STATUS REPORT
Submitted by the Baltimore County
Animal Services Advisory Commission
Submitted June, 2016

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I. Opening Statement

The Baltimore County Animal Services Advisory Commission was created as a result of Baltimore County Council Bill 2-15, passed in February 2015.

After Council members and the County Executive appointed its 11 members, the Commission held its first monthly meeting in July 2015. Its mandate: to maintain liaison with the Animal Services Division, to observe all phases and areas of the operation of the Baltimore County Animal Shelter, and to advise the County Council and County Executive on issues pertaining to animal care and welfare, animal rescue and adoption, control of the animal population, training of personnel and volunteers, and other issues pertaining to the county's Animal Services Division.

The bill tasked Commission members with working with the County's Animal Services Division on, among other things, volunteer opportunities, enhancing adoption opportunities, and partnering with rescue groups.

The Commission's creation came at a time of difficulty at BCAS, following many months of protests and complaints about the shelter. This acrimonious atmosphere had created an environment of distrust between county officials and animal advocates in Baltimore County.

It was clear that the Commission could not carry out its mission without first opening lines of communication and creating a positive working relationship between Commission members, Baltimore County officials, and shelter administrators.

Over the ensuing months, Commission members and county officials dedicated themselves to creating a productive and cooperative atmosphere, and several months ago, the Commission established a permanent Liaison Committee to meet monthly with shelter and county officials.

These meetings have been open, friendly, and productive. I believe all involved see the Commission and the shelter as working on the same side and toward common goals.

In the last year or so, Baltimore County has, for the most part, re-created its animal shelter. It has embraced a modern-day sheltering outlook that is focused on saving as many lives as possible.

These efforts have resulted in dramatically lower euthanasia rates and corresponding increases in live release rates.

It is within this positive environment that the Commission submits this report with a two-fold purpose:

- 1) To provide a status update on the work and the programs underway at BCAS.
- 2) To provide preliminary recommendations for the shelter going forward.

This first annual report is submitted to members of the Baltimore County Council and County Executive Kevin Kamenetz, with great respect and appreciation for the County's dedication to saving the lives of animals.

Sincerely,

Commission Chair

Commission Members:

Deborah Stone Hess

Joy Freedman

Ann Gearhart

Michelle Guarino

Leslie Kaminski

James O'Neill

Roy Plummer

Lavinia Ringgold

Dr. Jocelyn Spiga

Jean Townsend

Janice Vincent

II. Shelter Statistics

This seems a logical place to start, as it represents a shelter's bottom line: the number of animals taken in and the number that leave alive.

Achieving low euthanasia rates (and therefore high live release rates) is always a challenge for open-admission shelters like the one in Baltimore County because the shelter must accept every animal that comes through the door, and space is not limitless.

It's virtually impossible for an open admission shelter to achieve 100% live release, as not all animals are adoptable. There will always be some that must be euthanized for health or behavior reasons. That said, the goal is to ensure that every adoptable animal leaves either through adoption or rescue.

Over the past months, the improvement in live release rates for dogs and cats at BCAS has been dramatic.

In the first quarter of 2016, the live release rate for dogs surpassed 92%. This is an extraordinary achievement. The live release rate for cats also improved greatly.

Here is a summary of the shelter's euthanasia rates during the first quarter of 2016, along with a comparison for the same period of 2015, and the annual rate for 2014 (Reliable quarterly stats are not available for 2014).

EUTHANASIA

(Numbers do not include owner requested euthanasia)

	1st QTR. 2016	1st QTR. 2015	2014 annual rate
Dogs	About 7.3%	About 15.8%	About 23%
Cats	About 17.3%	About 46.7%	About 63%

These are impressive improvements. The Commission **commends the shelter and its staff** for the dedication and hard work that resulted in these vastly improved euthanasia rates. You will find the shelter's full statistical analysis for the first of quarter of 2016 on the next page.



MARYLAND ANIMAL CONTROL SHELTER SURVEY / 1

(Boxes will expand as you enter text)

Name of Shelter/Facility: Baltimore County Animal Services

Address: 13800 Manor Road, Baldwin, MD. 21013

Name of Shelter Manager: Lauren Pavlik

EMAIL: lpavlik@baltimorecountymd.gov

Phone: 410-887-7297

Name of Person completing this survey: Gary Klunk

Activity for Reporting Quarter: January-March, 2016

	DOGS	CATS
A. Live Animal Count at Beginning of Qtr	30	36
LIVE INTAKE DURING QTR:		
B. Stray/At Large	276	389
C. Relinquished by Owner	104	126
D. Owner Requested Euthanasia	30	19
E. Transferred in from another Agency	0	0
F. Other Live Intakes (impounds, births, animals placed in foster care, brought in for TNR, etc)	0	0
G. TOTAL LIVE INTAKE DURING QTR (B+C+D+E+F)	410	534

DISPOSITION DURING QTR:

H. Adoption	126	132
I. Returned to Owner	129	9
J. Transferred to another Agency	88	260
K. Other Live Outcome (includes TNRs released)	0	0
L. Died/Lost in Care	0	5
M. Euthanasia- at Owner's Request	27	19
N. Euthanasia-All other than owner request	30	93
O. TOTAL DISPOSITION DURING QTR	400	518
P. Live Animal Count at End of QTR (includes Fosters). (A+G - O)	40	52

In order to better understand to what degree unowned cats are a source of intake and euthanasia, we need your help. To the best of your abilities, please indicate what percent and/or how much of CAT intake would you consider unowned (i.e. feral, or community cats) animals:

How many of the euthanized cats would you guess are unowned:

¹/Pursuant to section 2-1602(H) of the Agriculture Article which states: "Beginning January 14, 2014, each county and municipal animal control shelter and each organization that contracts with a county or municipality for animal control shall report quarterly to the Department on a form prescribed by the Department describing for the previous 3 months: (1) The number of cats and dogs taken in; (2) The number of cats and dogs disposed of, broken down by method of disposal, including euthanasia; and (3) Any other relevant data the Department requires." Please return completed survey by email attachment to mda.spayandneuter@maryland.gov or by mail to Maryland Department of Agriculture, Marketing Department (Spay and Neuter Program), 50 Harry S Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401. Questions call Jane Mallory 410-481-5766 email: Jane.Mallory@maryland.gov.

Work to further improve BCAS euthanasia rates is ongoing.

A group known as Target Zero offers shelters recommendations for achieving zero euthanasia of all adoptable shelter animals. To learn more about that group's ideas, BCAS recently invited Target Zero to evaluate the shelter's policies and programs.

You will see more on the group's visit to BCAS in Section XI of this report.

III. NEW SHELTER FACILITY

After lengthy construction, BCAS moved into its new shelter facility in December 2015. As one would expect, the new building offers much-needed improvements across the board. Below is a comparison of the old building versus the new.

Appearance	Old Facility	New Facility
Outside appearance	Dingy, dark, run down	Inviting, well lit, bright and open
Main entrance	Difficult to find, not clearly marked. not able to see traffic coming in/out	Well defined, guarded, Able to see traffic in/out
Welcome desk	Cluttered, not clear what to do or who to ask.	Open, welcoming, clear directions on what to do and who to ask
Staff at welcome desk	Difficult at times to get attention	You are welcomed with offers to help
Areas of interest	No real well- defined borders for different animals	Cat, Dog and small animal areas are well-defined and labeled
Cat areas	Not able to observe cats/kittens in a relaxed state	Two areas for cats to play and interact with each other, well-equipped and comfortable play rooms Also improved cat cages for those not in play rooms
Dog kennels	Small, not well- lit, noisy, aged holding pens facing each other added to	Well lit, clean and bright areas as well as larger kennels not facing each other add

	stressful situation for dogs	to more relaxed atmosphere for dogs
Outside dog runs	No real areas for dogs to run freely. For most part had to be leashed.	Huge contained areas for dogs to run leashed and un-leashed, as well as for interaction with possible adopters.
Dog meet and greet	No real defined area; dogs could occasionally meet possible adopters at front reception desk.	Nicely planned get-acquainted areas; Clean bright and airy. Outside enclosed runs nearby.

Serviceability of building	Old Facility	New Facility
Ease of kennel/cage care	Cleaning water accessibility difficult because the location of hose bib and mop station were far apart	Central green chemical dispensing stations located throughout kennel/cage area.
Laundry	Antiquated wash machine area equipment.	Modern efficient area dedicated to washing of materials
Food Prep	Minimal equipment, often with hot water failure and lack of wash materials	Efficient state-of-the-art equipment to sanitize and prepare food products
Air Handling	Very poor ventilation, outside extreme temperatures made for uncomfortable temperatures inside	Modern digitally controlled air handling A/C and heating plant, with over capacity duct

		work that exchanges air at the needed rate
Safety	None supplied, power outages left facility in the dark	Back-up generator
Security	None present, existing staff supplied security when needed.	Security personnel at entrance triages visitors and deliveries; swipe card entry secures the building and all occupants.
Traffic and grounds	No defined area for parking, often only available spaces were in the grassy areas.	Still in Phase 2 as of this report but the large lot is paved and properly marked for staff and visitors. Grounds in the stages of various plantings.
Mindset		A new bright/open facility reflects positively in the attitudes of staff.

The Commission **commends** Baltimore County for dedicating funds for the shelter's new state-of-the-art facility.

This new building continues to evolve as shelter staff members identify areas that need change. For example, Baltimore County recently decided to install additional fencing in the dog park area to provide multiple fenced-off areas where volunteers can walk dogs.

IV. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP'S)

An entirely new facility, along with new policies and procedures, have made it necessary to completely revise the shelter's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Baltimore County has hired a technical writer to assist in this effort, and it's hoped the new SOP's will be completed in July.

V. SPAY/NEUTER SERVICES

Approximately 4500 animals come into BCAS each year. One way to decrease euthanasia is to get more of those animals out through adoption and rescue.

The other piece of the puzzle is lowering the number of animals that come to the shelter in the first place. And the way to do that is through increased spay/neuter.

Unfortunately, the cost of spay/neuter surgery can be prohibitive for many pet owners.

As a result, Baltimore County has embarked on an aggressive program to offer spay/neuter services at low cost to its residents.

BCAS began performing spay/neuter surgery on shelter animals in October 2013, and, in April 2014, it began offering this service to the public.

Today, Baltimore County residents can pay just \$20 to have their pets spayed or neutered. Also provided as part of the fee are vaccinations (including rabies), a county license, and a microchip.

In addition to offering this service at the Baldwin facility, BCAS opened a **spay/neuter clinic** on the county's east side in **Dundalk** in August 2015. Since that time, that clinic has performed **over 2000 surgeries**.

This number is in addition to the **4,474 animals that have been altered at the Baldwin location (2750 shelter animals and 1,724 belonging to the public.)**

There are **plans to reach residents on the county's west side as well by opening another spay/neuter clinic at Southwest Area Park in the fall of 2016.**

Once that facility is up and running, **the county expects to spay/neuter 15 thousand animals a year** at these three clinic locations. This is an **amazing number**.

These efforts to make spay/neuter accessible to those with limited incomes have been noticed and rewarded by the Maryland Dept. of Agriculture (MDA). That agency has a grant program for providing funds to government departments and non-profit organizations that, in turn, provide no-cost spay/neuter services to Maryland pet owners.

After failing to win one of these grants in 2014, BCAS's 2015 grant application was successful.

The grant provided \$45,514 for free spay/neuter services to low-income pet owners in Dundalk/Turner's Station and Sparrows Point in east Baltimore County.

The Commission **commends** Baltimore County's efforts to increase availability of spay/neuter services and to provide them at such a reasonable cost.

This shows **the county's dedication to addressing the root cause of animal overpopulation.**

Over time, spaying/neutering more dogs and cats should reduce the number of homeless animals in Baltimore County.

That, in turn, should translate into fewer animals being brought to the shelter, and, as a result, should positively impact the number of animals being euthanized in Baltimore County.

VI. TRAP, NEUTER, RETURN (TNR)

The ASPCA estimates there are tens of millions of free-roaming cats in the United States. These are a mixture of truly feral or wild cats, abandoned or lost animals, and their offspring.

For decades, many communities (including Baltimore County) have attempted to deal with the problem of free-roaming cats by trapping and euthanizing them. Yet trap-and-kill efforts seemed to do nothing to reduce the overall number of cats.

Many believe this is due to something called the "Vacuum Effect." Cats congregate in colonies, usually around shelter and a food source. When members of a cat colony are trapped and removed, it's believed other cats move in to fill the vacuum in the colony and take advantage of the food source that's there. Then reproduction starts all over again.

Trap, Neuter, Return or TNR is a different, humane way of managing the free-roaming cat population. According to Wikipedia, TNR had its start in the 1950's in the U.K. and came into use in the U.S. in the late 1960's.

TNR involves trapping cats, spaying or neutering them, vaccinating them, removing the tip of one ear for identification purposes, and then returning the cats to the place where they were found.

When 90-100% of cats in a given colony are spayed or neutered, that effectively stops reproduction and stabilizes the colony's numbers. Eventually members of that colony will die with no offspring to take their place.

Today many countries and cities all over the United States use TNR, including Baltimore City, Washington D.C., New York, Boston, Oklahoma City, Houston, San Antonio, Beverly Hills, and San Francisco. Even Disney Land and Disney World employ TNR.

Many (including the ASPCA and other animal organizations) believe TNR is not only humane, but is the only method of controlling cat populations that works.

Until recently, Baltimore County was opposed to TNR and euthanized feral cats that came into the shelter. This contributed to extremely high euthanasia rates.

In 2013, of 2800 cats impounded at BCAS, 1947 or 69.6% were euthanized.

In 2015, Baltimore County boldly changed course. It began a pilot TNR program in partnership with a reputable local organization called Community Cats of Maryland (CCMD). The county gave CCMD space at the county's east side clinic in Dundalk, and in September of 2015, **CCMD began conducting TNR clinics there once a month.**

At the clinic, cats are spayed or neutered, vaccinated for rabies and "distemper" (FVRCP), ear tipped, given a dose of flea medication, and micro-chipped. Some cats are also seen for medical reasons.

Afterwards, CCMD supplies the county with a list of microchips used for each cat. That way, any cat that lands in the shelter again can be quickly identified and returned to its community.

After CCMD's 9th clinic in May, it had treated 783 cats. 634 were spayed or neutered; 148 were seen for other reasons, most for rabies vaccine updates and microchips.

Recently Baltimore County began taking the TNR concept even further. Animal Control Officers transport approximately 30 feral cats that come into the shelter each month to the MD SPCA.

There they undergo spay/neuter surgery, vaccination, micro-chipping, and ear-tipping. CCMD cares for the cats post-surgery and then returns them to the areas where they were found.

All of this is evidence of **a complete shift in the mindset of county officials concerning TNR, and the Commission applauds this change!**

The Commission **commends** the county's TNR program and **recommends** expanding the program beyond its current pilot program status.

VII. RESCUE EFFORTS

Baltimore County added a Rescue Coordinator position to its staff in mid-2015. There was a lot of work to do on the rescue front, as the number of BCAS rescue partners was far lower than at other area shelters.

The reason for this appears to have been three-fold:

- 1) BCAS previously had not aggressively pursued new rescue partners.
- 2) BCAS's reputation in its dealings with rescue organizations was not very good.
- 3) A number of rescue organizations found the shelter's rescue partner agreement so distasteful that they refused to partner with BCAS. They felt that some of the agreement's wording and provisions were overly intrusive and even intimidating. Rescue partner agreements at other area shelters were far simpler and more welcoming.

BCAS has since revised its Rescue Partner Agreement and has been actively **growing its list of rescue partners**. That list now numbers 64.

As a result of this progress, **more BCAS animals are going to rescue**. These numbers can be seen on the statistics shown in Section II (Shelter Statistics) of this report.

Here is a comparison between rescue numbers from the first quarter of 2016, the first quarter of 2015, and all of 2014 (again, reliable quarterly stats are not available for 2014.)

	1 st QTR. 2016	1 st QTR. 2015	ALL of 2014
Dogs	88	51	224
Cats	260	125	515

Percentage-wise, the number of **dogs pulled for rescue** in the first quarter of 2016 represents **more than a 72% increase** over the first quarter of 2015. **For cats, the increase is 108%.**

This progress is **significant**. While there is more work to be done, the Commission **commends** BCAS for this accomplishment.

Several weeks ago, the shelter **began further efforts to grow its cooperation with rescue organizations**. Its Rescue Coordinator attended a meeting of an organization called CORE (Coalition of Rescues.)

CORE counts 210 individuals and 50 rescues, shelters, and humane organizations among its members.

BCAS is clearly furthering its outreach efforts and the Commission **commends** this effort.

In addition, BCAS has been in discussions with an organization called Rescue Well, which is offering to assist the shelter with things like rescue transports and outreach efforts.

All of this is **going in a great direction**. The Commission **encourages BCAS to continue to grow its list of rescue partners** as rescue organizations play a critical role in getting animals out of the shelter alive.

VIII. FOSTER PROGRAM

The spring and summer months are known as kitten season...a time when countless homeless litters are born. Each year, this presents enormous challenges for animal shelters like BCAS.

In May 2016, Baltimore County announced the beginning of a new foster effort, known as the Milkman Program, in an effort to save the lives of many of these cats.

The Milkman Program will allow Animal Services Field Officers to respond to calls about kittens that require bottle feedings, and to train willing community members to care for these kittens in their own homes.

Officers will supply a starter kit along with instructions, and will collect contact information so that a BCAS team can check in on their progress.

Once kittens are old enough, they will start a series of vaccinations and veterinary visits at BCAS.

All kittens will be spayed/neutered and made available for adoption at the shelter.

This is a great new program, and the Commission **applauds** this effort. The Commission, however, **recommends** additional marketing efforts to grow participation, as very few foster volunteers have come forward.

In addition to the Milkman Program, Baltimore County recently announced another new foster effort for animals in need of either extra recovery time after an injury or illness, a comfortable environment for extra socialization, or a quiet home for young puppies and kittens.

Again, the Commission **applauds** these efforts but **recommends** a strong marketing effort to reach potential fosters and grow this program.

IX. ADMINISTRATIVE HOLD

Animals brought to the shelter because of cases of animal abuse or neglect, or because of incidents of animal aggression are placed on what is called "Administrative Hold". All animals on Administrative Hold in the past have remained at the shelter while legal cases made their way through the courts.

This, of course, can be a lengthy process.

Administrators at **BCAS saw a need for change in its policies regarding Administrative Hold for animals that have been abused or neglected.**

They created new policies to gather necessary evidence as quickly as possible to more rapidly move animals out of Administrative Hold so they can be made available for adoption or rescue.

This effort can face roadblocks if an animal's owners refuse to relinquish ownership. But for most of these animals, this change in policy can shorten an animal's time on Administrative Hold.

The Commission **applauds** BCAS efforts to shorten the length of Administrative Hold time for animals that are victims of neglect or abuse.

X. MEMBERSHIP IN THE BALTIMORE ANIMAL WELFARE ALLIANCE (BAWA)

Over the last year and a half or so, the Baltimore County Animal Shelter has steadily become more involved in the Baltimore Animal Welfare Alliance (BAWA) and in May 2016 became a full member of that group.

BAWA was formed in 2008. Its other members are BARCS, the Baltimore Humane Society, and the MD SPCA. BAWA meets regularly so that its members can share information and work together to better serve the animals and people of the Baltimore community.

The group's joint efforts have included activities such as adoption events, spaying and neutering animals and transporting animals from one shelter to another so that fewer pets are euthanized.

Several years ago, Baltimore County's shelter administrators refused to take part in BAWA. But BCAS had begun attending BAWA meetings by the time the Commission began meeting in July 2015.

At that time, shelter officials said they were working toward full BAWA membership by being able to provide required shelter data. In May of 2016, BCAS announced it is now able to provide the data in the format required by BAWA and has become a full member of BAWA.

The Commission **applauds this.**

XI. TARGET ZERO

As previously mentioned in this report, BCAS invited an organization known as Target Zero to visit the Baltimore County Animal Shelter and provide an evaluation.

Target Zero is a philanthropist-funded program that offers advice at no charge to animal shelters on ways to achieve zero euthanasia of all adoptable shelter animals.

It's important to note that Target Zero commended the shelter for several of its programs and recent accomplishments. Some Target Zero recommended policies are already in place at BCAS.

In addition, after the group's visit, Baltimore County's shelter immediately moved to implement several of Target Zero's suggestions.

- 1) Target Zero believes that even a \$20 fee for spay/neuter surgery may be cost prohibitive for those on public assistance. So, Target Zero recommended eliminating the cost of spay/neuter services for these county citizens. As a result of this recommendation, **BCAS will eliminate the fee for cat spay/neuter surgery for those eligible for public assistance.**

(Providing additional cat surgeries is easier than providing more surgeries for dogs, as cat surgeries are less complicated and take less time.) The Commission **supports this move** and urges the county to reach out to those on public assistance to let them know of this free service.

- 2) Baltimore County has a **stray hold period** (the length of time an animal is held in hopes that an owner will reclaim it) of 4 days.

Target Zero recommended shortening that to 3 days because very few animals are reclaimed after 3 days. Baltimore County is requesting an ordinance change to allow it to shorten its stray hold time from 4 to 3 days. This can benefit the animals that can be put up for adoption or released to rescue sooner. And the more animals that leave the shelter, the more cage space there is for new animals that come in. This can be extremely important at times when the shelter runs full.

The Commission supports changing the stray hold to 3 days with one caveat: Baltimore County should make efforts to publicize its shelter and let county residents know

that BCAS is where their lost pets may be found. This will improve chances that owners searching for strays will be reunited with their pets.

- 3) Current county ordinance requires the shelter to spay/neuter an animal upon its second impoundment before it can be reclaimed by its owner. Target Zero recommends changing that policy to require spay/neuter after the first impoundment. The county is introducing legislation to the County Council for a change in county ordinance to implement this recommendation. This is a **great move.**

There are other recommendations made by Target Zero that seem important:

- 1) The shelter currently uses Accela software which is apparently a government software program. Target Zero recommends the adoption of shelter-specific software for record-keeping, saying it's considered basic Best Practice. According to Target Zero's assessment, "standard shelter software allows for an endless array of needed reports and can auto upload data to the Asilomar and/or the National Federation of Humane Societies data matrix. Even more significant is the auto upload in real time of each picture and information about a pet into standard search engines with high traffic, such as Adopt a Pet and Petfinder to search for lost pets, adopt or transfer pets."
- 2) According to Target Zero, BCAS does not use adoption search engines such as Petfinder, Petango, Adopt a Pet or Petharbor. The report says, "The internet provides the greatest reach and when used appropriately will increase all live outcome categories." It recommends making use of internet search engines to promote BCAS animals.
- 3) Target Zero recommends the creation of a formal Surrender Prevention Program. Strategies in Surrender Prevention Programs encourage those who want to surrender their pets to consider other alternatives. Sometimes pet owners need temporary assistance (pet food, foster, vet care) to help them keep their animals and prevent the need to surrender them to the

shelter. This, of course, could reduce the number of animals the shelter takes in.

- 4) Target Zero recommends that the sterilization of shelter pets should take priority over public animals and be done as soon as the pet has completed the stray hold or the following surgery day if the animal is owner-surrendered.
- 5) Target Zero recommends that members of the public be allowed to walk through the shelter at their leisure, as opposed to being escorted individually. According to Target Zero, "Shelter attendants can introduce themselves at the front counter and be available in the adoption areas to answer any questions and help an adopter with a visit. Allowing the public to walk unescorted through the main shelter areas is standard."
- 6) Target Zero recommends that BCAS include spay/neuter and minor medical/surgical services for rescue groups at no charge and recommends that pets transferred to rescue partners should take priority over the public surgeries done at the shelter.

These suggestions appear to have merit and **should be considered** by BCAS.

The Commission commends Baltimore County for inviting Target Zero to evaluate the shelter, for its openness to Target Zero's suggestions, and for the speed with which it implemented several of the group's recommendations. This is **indicative of the overall shift in mindset** at the shelter.

XII. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The volunteer program has been a major source of difficulty in the relationship between BCAS and the animal advocate community.

There's a long history here.

Several years ago, BCAS began allowing citizens to volunteer at the shelter, and some began to loudly criticize shelter conditions, programs, personnel, etc. Many of these complaints were aired on social media. The environment became hostile. Some volunteers were dismissed.

In 2015, Baltimore County began a new effort to create a successful volunteer program. It added a Volunteer Coordinator position to its staff, and the number of volunteers at the shelter has grown.

The number of active volunteers at BCAS has increased from about 20 to 57 volunteers.

Volunteer hours for 2016 are as follows:

January 2016	90 Hours
February 2016	83 Hours
March 2016	96 Hours
April 2016	183 hours
May 2016	190.5 hours

There's clearly **an upward trend** here and the Commission is **pleased** to see it.

Despite the growth in the volunteer program, the number of volunteers at BCAS is still well below that of BARCS and the MD SPCA. To be fair, these organizations have been growing their volunteer programs for a long time, and BCAS is just getting started. But it **should be a priority to grow the number of volunteers** who give their time to the animals at BCAS, and **more outreach is needed** if this is to be accomplished. This can be done through PSA's on radio and TV, through flyers in the community, on social media, etc.

Another **issue that should be addressed involves volunteer duties.**

BCAS allows volunteers to socialize cats and dogs as well as walk dogs. Volunteers also help with off-site adoption events. Volunteers at BARCS and the MD SPCA are permitted to perform many duties, not just animal socialization, dog walking and off-site events.

For example, at the MD SPCA, volunteers can be trained for over twenty different jobs, including working with the spay/neuter program, working at the reception desk and in the exam room. At BARCS, duties include basic behavior training with the dogs; volunteers can be “Pet Locators” who help connect lost and found companion animals with their owners; they can be “matchmakers” who escort customers into the shelter and assist them in selecting an animal.

In its evaluation, Target Zero says, “A structured volunteer program will make the greatest and most positive impact for the shelter pets. Job descriptions should be created and the following categories considered, although volunteers should be encouraged to be cross-trained in any other areas they may be interested in such as:

- Dog adoptions
- Cat adoptions
- Offsite adoptions
- Community Cat Diversion program
- Enrichment, play groups, dog behavior training
- Dog walkers
- Bathing (dogs)
- Adoption follow up support
- Photographers to highlight pets

The Commission **recommends** that BCAS begin expanding its list of allowed volunteer activities and create training programs to properly prepare volunteers to perform these duties.

The shelter should capitalize on volunteers’ expertise and interests. For example, volunteers may have web design skills, veterinarian experience, dog training skills, etc. Let’s put these talents and interests to use!

All of these things will give volunteers the ability to choose where to invest the time that they provide to the shelter. This will enrich the volunteer experience and create a loyal and devoted volunteer staff.

Another important issue is the hours that volunteers are allowed at BCAS. They are permitted to volunteer only when the Volunteer Coordinator is on site. This means that volunteers cannot be at the shelter when the Coordinator is off work, at an off-site event, or out sick.

Since the Coordinator is off Sundays and Mondays, this takes away a weekend day when many volunteers are off work and would like to volunteer.

Animals can benefit from volunteer interaction seven days a week. **And if volunteers are properly trained, there is no reason to require constant supervision.**

So, the Commission **recommends changing this policy and allowing volunteers whenever the shelter is open.**

On days when the Volunteer Coordinator is not on site, someone should be assigned to take over the Coordinator's duties to supervise volunteers when needed.

To sum up, the Commission **recommends** taking steps to **increase volunteer training, duties, autonomy, and allowable hours.**

Commission members believe this would create a more welcoming and exciting environment for BCAS volunteers and would help grow the program. The benefits for the animals are obvious.

In addition, a large group of dedicated and motivated volunteers **can save the county money.** While there is always concern that volunteers will not be as reliable as paid staff, a strong, well-managed volunteer program can ensure that volunteers will work shifts to which they commit.

This works at BARCS and at the MD SPCA. In fact, the MD SPCA estimates that if it were to pay staff to do all the work its volunteers perform each year, it would cost over a million dollars in wages.

It's likely that the history of past volunteer problems has lingered and that the county is reluctant to make itself vulnerable with those who might volunteer, then criticize the shelter and its programs.

To cope with this issue, volunteers should be required to live up to a code of conduct and follow rules. They should bring any complaints to the

Volunteer Coordinator. Any who do not comply can be dismissed.

People will say what they will. There's no reason to adopt a defensive position to prevent negative remarks. This only serves to limit the program's growth and what it can accomplish.

Shelter administrators and staff are working diligently to make BCAS the best it can be. They have every reason to be proud of what is happening at the there, and there is nothing to hide.

Volunteers are a vital part of any shelter program. They connect the shelter with the community it serves and improve the lives of shelter animals. The Commission **recommends** Baltimore County fully embrace volunteers' potential.

As an addendum, a software program called Volgistics used by many shelters would enhance the volunteer experience at BCAS.

XIV. SHELTER ADOPTION HOURS

BCAS is currently open for adoptions

Tuesday through Friday	12 noon-6pm
Saturday	10am-4pm

The shelter is closed for adoptions on Sunday and Monday.

This current schedule was adopted in 2015. Previously the shelter had been open for adoptions on Sundays.

Here is a list of the number of 2015 adoptions at BCAS by day of the week (in order of the largest number of adoptions to the smallest):

Saturday	309
Wednesday	247
Friday	197
Sunday	181
Thursday	150
Tuesday	100
Monday	45

BCAS is not the only shelter in our region that is closed for adoptions on Sunday. However, many shelters like BARCS in Baltimore City and the MD SPCA say that Sunday is one of their busiest days of the week.

This makes sense because most people are off work on Sunday. And, in fact, when BCAS was open for Sunday adoptions, it was the 4th most popular day for adoptions. Monday and Tuesday were the least popular.

In its report, Target Zero states, "Leadership should focus on ensuring live outcome hours (reclaim, adoption, rescue, transfer, transport, and foster) exceed intake hours whether by the public or enforcement staff. Currently, ACO's (Animal Control Officers) are on the road 48 hours with 64 hours open to the public to surrender their own pets or strays for a total of 112 intake hours per week. Conversely, there are only 30 hours available per week for reclaim, adoptions, foster, or rescue."

The Commission **recommends** that the shelter consider the above recommendation from Target Zero and, at the very least, be open for adoptions on both weekend days.

XV. MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

BCAS is making an effort to connect with the public through social media. This, of course, is an important way to reach potential adopters, volunteers, and fosters.

BCAS has a Facebook page where you can find information about animals needing adoption, animals that have been adopted, rabies clinics, off-site adoption events, videos, pictures, etc.

It has also become a regular participant in off-site adoption events including cat adoption events at Pet Valu in Hunt Valley.

BCAS recently participated in a **hugely successful Mega Adoption event** at Timonium Fairgrounds, along with the MD SPCA, BARCS, the Baltimore Humane Society, and the Humane Society of Harford County.

This event was “Mega” in every sense of the word, in the amount of work it required to plan and execute, and in the final result. Every adoptable animal was adopted that day (19 dogs, 38 cats), clearing the cages at BCAS!

BCAS is also a participant in the Baltimore 500, along with the other shelters listed above. The Baltimore 500 is a month-long event in June to promote at least 500 cat adoptions, at a time of year when there are an especially large number of cats being born.

In addition, BCAS is finalizing paperwork to participate in off-site events at Petco and Petsmart, both of which allow dogs at adoption events.

But despite its Facebook page and its increased presence at off-site events, BCAS is still not well known in our area. If you mention BCAS in conversation, many will ask where it is and will confuse it with BARCS, the Baltimore Humane Society, or the MD SPCA.

Therefore, the Commission **recommends the creation of a marketing communications plan for the shelter to increase its visibility.**

This plan should include:

- Refreshing the BCAS website (All county websites are maintained through the county’s IT Dept. The shelter needs to have input into what is on the site and how it is displayed, as well as creating a schedule for regular updates. The site should announce off-site events, and encourage residents to participate in shelter programs like the county’s low-cost spay/neuter program, fostering, volunteering, and provide general information about

responsible pet ownership, etc. Videos on the Facebook page should also be accessible from the web page.

- Refreshing the Facebook page so that we are adding posts in a scheduled and planned way to affect the response we want from the public (i.e. better awareness of the shelter and its work and increased adoptions).

As the first step in a two-step process, BCAS should decide its goals for the future, for example:

- 1) Advancements in public and community relations
- 2) Participation in more events and increasing attendance
- 3) Increasing adoptions
- 4) Increasing participation in BCAS Foster and Volunteer Programs

After finalizing specific and measureable goals, BCAS can decide on the tactics it wants to employ to achieve these goals; for example, looking forward at the calendar for the upcoming year and deciding what events it can participate in and/or create to further its goals.

Planning in this way, the shelter can set aside dates in advance to best allocate resources for staffing (paid or volunteer) sending out press releases, doing PSA's, and adding notifications on its website and Facebook page.

This also allows for plenty of time to coordinate media activities with the county's Marketing and Communications Department.

To top it off, local well-known personalities could be BCAS spokesmen on public service announcements. His/her image could also be used on flyers and other printed materials.

It would be ideal if the shelter had a staff member who was in charge of marketing and PR. If the budget will not allow it, let's train current staff to do it and train volunteers to help with many of these duties.

Finally, the Commission **recommends shelter outreach to the community by offering animal behavior and other classes as well as events** at our beautiful new facility.

This will bring the public to the shelter and engage them in activities there, growing awareness and a connection between the shelter and the community it serves.

People care deeply about animals. If Baltimore County shares its needs, event plans, and expertise with the public, many will surely respond.

Let's make sure BCAS is not one of the county's best kept secrets!

XVI. 501(c)3

Currently Baltimore County citizens are not allowed to donate money to BCAS. The only way around this would be through the creation of a 501(c)3 organization to partner with the shelter.

Many government-run shelters find great benefit in partnering with a non-profit because a 501(c)3 can not only raise money for items that aren't in the shelter's budget but can also promote the shelter's mission.

For example, in late summer of 2014, volunteers in Anne Arundel County created a 501(c)3 called Friends of Anne Arundel County Animal Control.

That non-profit has raised 66 thousand dollars, and used the money to purchase a variety of things, including monthly flea and tick medication, sound abatement tiles for the ceilings of dog cages, and kitten food and kitten milk replacement.

Montgomery County Animal Services partners with a 501(c)3 called Montgomery County Partners for Animal Wellbeing (MCPAW).

MCPAW recently hosted an event that's popular at many shelters called a kitten shower, to raise money for supplies for kitten fosters, and to encourage new people to volunteer as fosters, etc.

MCPAW 's shower included food, crafts, games, prizes, and educational opportunities, plus information about fostering. Those interested could also make donations and buy needed kitten supplies on Amazon.com.

In addition to raising money to help the shelter, a 501(c)3 can also work to increase awareness of the shelter and promote its mission.

A partner 501(c)3 could be of great use for BCAS. Increased awareness can lead to increased adoptions, increased cooperation with rescue organizations, and increased participation in foster and volunteer programs.

In addition, a 501(c)3 could be strategic in implementing another of Target Zero's recommendations: "the creation of a formal Surrender Prevention Program. A recent study by the ASPCA and published in the American Veterinary Medical Association Journal showed that over one third of owners surrendering pets to shelters would have kept their pets if they had access to temporary assistance." A 501 c3 could raise

money for the kinds of temporary assistance (pet food, medical care, etc.) that could help owners avoid the need for surrendering their pets.

The Commission **recommends** creating a 501(c)3 organization for BCAS.

XVII. CONCLUSIONS

The overall conclusion of the Baltimore County Animal Services Advisory Commission is that Baltimore County officials, as well as animal shelter administrators and staff, are doing a wonderful job.

In a relatively short period of time, the county and shelter administrators have dramatically shifted the mindset of BCAS, adopting best practices and achieving amazing results.

Shelter staff members are clearly committed to the welfare of animals in their care and to saving as many lives as possible at BCAS. Administrators have embarked on wide-ranging efforts to grow many great programs.

Here is a list of ways in which the shelter has and continues to move forward:

- **Live Release Rates**

In the first quarter of 2016, live release rates for dogs climbed past 90% and past 83% for cats.

- **New Facility**

BCAS has a brand new state-of-the-art facility.

- **New SOP's**

BCAS is developing new SOP's, which should be completed by July 2016.

- **Spay/Neuter Program**

BCAS has embarked on a major effort to get at the core of the animal over-population problem, by offering low-cost spay/neuter surgery in Baldwin, and at a satellite location on the county's east side in Dundalk. Another satellite spay/neuter facility will open in the fall of 2016 on the county's west side. Once this additional satellite location is operational, Baltimore County expects to spay/neuter 15,000 animals annually.

In addition, the county is moving forward with eliminating fees for cat spay/neuter surgeries for residents who qualify for public assistance.

- **TNR**

After past resistance to Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR), Baltimore County is now embracing the concept and is working with Community Cats of Maryland to conduct TNR. In addition, BCAS is transporting 30 feral cats a month to the MD SPCA for

spay/neuter surgery, vaccination, ear-tipping and return to the community.

- **Rescue Program**

BCAS has revised its Rescue Partner Agreement, and is actively growing its cooperation with rescue organizations. The BCAS Rescue Coordinator recently attended the second meeting of a group called CORE (Coalition of Rescues). BCAS is also expanding its cooperation with an organization called Rescue Well.

- **Foster Program**

BCAS is growing its foster program, both for litters of kittens, as well as other animals with special needs. More marketing is needed to grow these programs.

- **Administrative Hold**

BCAS is working actively to quickly gather all evidence needed in animal abuse and neglect cases, so that the animals involved can be more quickly eligible for adoption or rescue.

- **Baltimore Animal Welfare Alliance (BAWA)**

BCAS is now a full member of BAWA. This holds great promise for cooperative efforts to help shelter animals throughout our community.

- **Target Zero**

BCAS invited Target Zero to visit the shelter and make recommendations. BCAS already had some Target Zero protocols in place. After Target Zero issued its report, BCAS immediately implemented several of its recommendations.

- **Volunteer Program**

BCAS is growing its volunteer program. More efforts are needed here. (See recommendations below)

In addition, Baltimore County and its shelter are working openly with the Animal Services Advisory Commission. There is a regular exchange of ideas.

Plans are underway for one of the Commission members, Animal Behaviorist and Trainer Joy Freedman, to begin teaching a class for new adopters, as well as an animal behavior class for shelter employees so that all shelter workers can help improve animals' behavior and make them more adoptable.

All of these changes have been dramatic and have unfolded over a very short period of time.

There are areas that continue to need attention and change. To recap, here are those recommendations:

- Implement a TNR program for all free-roaming cats in Baltimore County.
- Increase marketing of foster programs.
- Increase allowed volunteer duties, autonomy and the hours when volunteers are allowed to work in the shelter. Volunteers should be allowed whenever the shelter is open.
- Change BCAS adoption hours to allow adoptions on both weekend days and consider Target Zero recommendation about ensuring that live outcome hours exceed intake hours.
- Expand marketing communications efforts.
- Provide classes for the community.
- Allow the creation of a 501(c)3 to raise money for things needed at BCAS and to promote the shelter.
- Consider additional Target Zero recommendations.

Finally, efforts to dispel distrust between the animal advocate community and the shelter must continue. The Animal Services Advisory Commission has proven to be a good conduit for information about the shelter to the general public. But as time goes on, there should be increased transparency from BCAS itself. The shelter has nothing to hide. To the contrary, it has proven its dedication to doing good work for the animals in its care.

Unfortunately, many negative remarks on social media still sting.

There is no way to prevent all naysayers from posting what they will. And a defensive posture does nothing to stop negativity. Therefore, the Commission believes **the only answer is complete openness.**

Transparency will actually decrease negative comments by those who complain that openness is lacking.

It will also put a stop to the many Public Information Act requests that take up the county's time that could be better spent doing work for animals.

Shelter staff should be very proud of their accomplishments and know that negative comments cannot diminish those achievements.

The Commission submits this report with great appreciation to Baltimore County and to all those who have provided information and guidance to Commission members.

The Commission looks forward to ongoing engagement with BCAS, to providing any help it can in furthering the shelter's efforts, and to seeing the continued progress of our animal shelter.