

## **Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA Statement Regarding False Allegations of Animal Abuse**

On October 24, 2016, some Union employees along with a Teamsters Local 856 Union representative took it upon themselves to call a press conference with documentation alleging animal abuse at Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA due to short staffing and poor conditions at the Coyote Point Shelter. The Union represents approximately 30 percent of our staff and less than half of Union employees attended the press conference. The concerns aired at the press conference are listed below and addressed by PHS/SPCA's leadership team.

- 1) **Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA's Coyote Point Shelter in San Mateo is in substandard condition.** We agree with the concern that our Coyote Point Shelter needs to be upgraded. While PHS/SPCA is fortunate to have a dedicated and extremely hard-working facilities maintenance team, they face an uphill struggle in trying to maintain a facility as old as the Coyote Point Shelter, which was built in the early 1950s. The decision and responsibility to build a new shelter is not in our hands. We have been lobbying very hard for years on this and we have worked diligently with the County of San Mateo on plans for a new shelter at that location. We are deep in the planning stages and hope to break ground on a new shelter in the very near future.

**The documentation lumped together several unrelated incidents that they felt were due to short staffing and/or substandard facilities. The issues were isolated and unrelated, and each was dealt with as they occurred:**

- 2) **A dog was injured on a hole in a kennel.** The documentation stated that the dog was injured because the hole failed to be repaired, and provided dramatic photos as evidence. However, the dog (named Max) chewed the hole in the kennel himself, the day that he arrived at the shelter (October 18), and subsequently injured himself. Being in a shelter or kennel can be very difficult for many dogs, as was the case with Max, and sometimes they will injure themselves trying to escape. Max was not seriously injured and the hole was repaired the following day. Max met with reporters the day of the press conference; he is doing great and the cuts on his face from chewing the kennel are healing nicely.
- 3) **The documentation claimed that 12 kittens died because they were not fed properly.** We're baffled by this accusation because the alleged supporting documentation actually referred to at least 27 kittens from multiple litters. Of those 27 kittens, 3 died, even though they were receiving proper care. Unfortunately, very young kittens have a high mortality rate despite all of our expertise and best efforts. As an open-door and American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)-accredited shelter, PHS/SPCA cares for all of the community's animals, including medically fragile ones like underage kittens, which are very challenging to care for and most shelters do not have the resources to accept. Some of the kittens were placed into the care of trained volunteer foster parents, so that they could receive individualized care and attention. In total, 3 kittens died while 24 were adopted or are still in foster care. This actually speaks to the excellence of our staff, volunteers and programs.
- 4) **Erroneous euthanasia.** This is true. A dog was wrongly euthanized in Dec 2015 because the staff involved did not follow established procedure. Their employment was separated immediately, including the managers involved. The animal care department was fully staffed at the time, and everyone at PHS/SPCA was horrified that it happened and is following euthanasia procedures extremely closely. No dog was erroneously euthanized in Dec 2013. This is factually untrue.
- 5) **The documentation claimed that a dog died due to overheating in a PHS/SPCA vehicle with improper cooling in 2015.** An Animal Care & Control officer picked up an animal in distress that had been suffering in a citizen's locked car on a very hot day for an extended period of time. Unfortunately, the officer did not follow procedure to bring the dog directly back to the shelter. Had the

employee followed procedure, we believe the dog would be alive because she would have been seen immediately by our veterinarians. Our Veterinary Chief of Staff is confident that the Animal Care & Control vehicles are adequately cooled and we have not had an incident before or after. Employment for this particular Animal Care & Control officer was separated and we're not at liberty to discuss personnel issues further.

**Finally, the documentation brings up issues surrounding salary negotiations, which we believe were the true reason for calling this press conference.**

- 6) The documentation states that Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA has unresponsive leadership because President Ken White “refused to meet with whistleblowers and their representative.”** This is untrue. The Union business agent did not follow the previously agreed-upon protocol of going to specific contacts in order to request Ken’s attendance in a meeting. The Union business agent had clearly been told who his contacts were for negotiation and chose to bypass them.

Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA is negotiating in good faith and will continue to follow all rules set forth by the National Labor Relations Act. However, when the Union business agent decided to break the process rules, it made it problematic to address his concerns. Even though the Union business agent didn’t follow protocol, Ken directly addressed the staff and offered multiple ways to meet. On October 13 a representative from Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA met with the Teamsters Local 856 business agent and a Union-represented employee regarding health and welfare options available to employees. On October 18, the PHS/SPCA representative followed up and requested in an email the dates for the next bargaining session and offered additional information to help with the health and welfare discussion.

- 7) The documentation states that Ken White’s salary is too high, and is the reason improvements have not been made at the Coyote Point Shelter.** Ken White is a world-renown expert in the animal welfare field and the Board of Directors of Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA feels that he is compensated appropriately. The amount given in the documentation from our 2014 990 tax returns is NOT an annual salary – rather it represents total compensation, including salary and all benefits. Further, Ken’s salary has absolutely no bearing on how much or little the Coyote Point shelter receives for animal care or improvements.

The Board works with a compensation consultant to determine Ken’s overall compensation package, based in part on Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA’s programs, number of animals and progress we have made. Under Ken’s leadership over the last 15 years, Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA has grown and thrived. We are very proud of our live release rate (LRR) of 86 percent, which has improved 30% in Ken’s tenure, and is extremely high compared to the national average (LRR is an industry standard which measures the percent of animals that leave shelter facilities alive through: adoption, return-to-owner, or transfer to another adoption agency).

- 8) Short Staffing. The documentation alleged that Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA is short-staffed.** In fact, we have 96 percent of our positions staffed, with only 5 open positions at this time. The turnover rate in the animal welfare industry is extremely high, but Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA’s turnover rate is much lower than the national average for our industry.

### **About Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA**

Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA is a private, open-door, not-for-profit animal welfare organization. Primary programs include animal adoptions; animal rescue and sheltering, including specialty care for domestic animals with medical and/or behavioral challenges; wildlife rehabilitation; animal cruelty investigation; community outreach and education; low-cost spay/neuter; and obedience classes. This vital work is made possible by volunteers and donations. PHS/SPCA receives no funding from national animal

welfare organizations. Visit [www.phs-spca.org](http://www.phs-spca.org) to learn about all PHS/SPCA's programs and services, ways to help the animals and special events.

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