

**TOMPKINS COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
**MINUTES**  
**October 12, 2007**  
**Special Meeting**

Present: Don Barber-T. Caroline-D. Austic, T. Ulysses, Carol Szepanski-Clerk for Town of Danby, Cathy Valentino-T. Ithaca, H. Engman-T. Ithaca, J. Owens-T. Enfield, Bambi Hollenbeck-Clerk for Town of Dryden, R. Dolge-T. Newfield, Steve Thayer-Controller for City of Ithaca, S. Whicher-Co. Administration, T. Joseph-Co. Legislature, R. Dietrich-T. Danby, S. Farkas-T. Lansing.

Meeting began at 9:07 am

At the September 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of TCCOG Abigail Smith, Director of the Tompkins County SPCA, made a presentation on the SPCA's financial challenges and the resulting fees for county municipalities which were doubled for 2008. The consensus of the TCCOG membership was to hold a separate meeting specifically to address the issue of municipal contracts with the SPCA for animal control.

Key Issues for SPCA:

- What is the SPCA's mission? It contracts out for dog control but takes surrendered dogs as part of its program
- The SPCA contract fees for 2008 are based on all of the municipalities within the County paying for its services. Groton has decided to go with a separate entity for dog control and Dryden is considering doing the same. Therefore, the fees may need to be increased further. (Tompkins County has a contract for rabies clinics and a feral cat program, not for dog control, however, they are part of the pool of support.)
- The fee increase the SPCA gave the municipalities is only for 2008, it may increase again in 2009-there is no long-term contract.
- What will happen with the SPCA without local dog control contracts? Do they even want to do animal control? Most SPCA's do not do animal control.
- The SPCA needs to provide the municipalities with more concise financial data. Specifically how was its \$ 350, 000 estimated cost derived?
- What is covered under the contracts, this varies per municipality.
- What about a uniform contract for all county municipalities.
- How much service is provided for each entity.
- The fees doubled and the service was reduced over the years.
- Municipalities have taken over much of the administrative work for the SPCA.
- If the SPCA has been surviving on reserve funds up until now, why did they not increase fees before this?

- TCCOG members will need to review the books of the SPCA. They are a 501c3 organization and should have a current audit on file.
- What is accounted for in dog control?
- What is the fee structure?
- What level of service is required and what level is provided?

**Key Issues for Municipalities:**

- 2008 budgets are due.
- Do the municipalities want to form a Defacto Dog Control Consortium via TCCOG or work individually? Either way, it is important that we include all municipalities that want to be a part of this process.
- Dog control is a State mandated program.
- What are the regulations?
- What are the consequences of not having dog control?
- Who are all the players; Ag & Markets, FEMA, NIMS and the municipalities? (Town of Caroline has a model in place for FEMA.)
- The SPCA seems to be in charge of this situation, but municipalities should have a say in this process.
- The SPCA does not have a monopoly on dog control, there are several other entities in operation qualified to do the job.
- The SPCA contracts should be handled more along the lines of the Rec. Partnership contacts, where using the service is optional.
- There are concerns regarding how the SPCA presentations were delivered.
- The president of the SPCA board recently resigned.
- Not everyone at the SPCA would like to keep the dog control program.
- It would be very difficult to have a countywide alternative in place by the first of January 2008.
- Is the SPCA willing to negotiate: for contract fees, for a process?
- Should the County Municipalities negotiate for a 6-month interim contract with the SPCA; then issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for future animal control, and invite the SPCA to offer a bid?
- There are several Shared Service agreements available through the State, maybe we should see what is available to Tompkins County via that route.
- Local municipalities have revenue sources to help balance out dog control costs through licensing fees, impoundment fees and court enforcement fines.

Actions:

1. Establish a sub-committee to meet with the SPCA Board of Directors
2. Negotiate with the SPCA on current contracts, through June of 2008.  
Review SPCA financial records.  
Determine a scope of services delivered for payment received.
3. As a consortium, draft a RFP for dog control in Tompkins County.

Motion: That the established sub-committee of Don Barber, Ric Dietrich, Doug Austic, Cathy Valentino and Steve Thayer meet with the SPCA Board of Directors to discuss negotiation of a contract for the time period of January to June of 2008 for dog control.

Made by:           Cathy Valentino  
Second:           Jean Owens  
Carried unanimously

Next Steps:

- The sub-committee will set up a meeting with the SPCA Board.
  - Discuss meeting half way with the contract.
  - Inform the Board of where the Municipalities stand on animal control.
  - Request financial information.
  - Inquire about the SPCA fee schedule setting process.
- Compile historic information from each municipality on animal control usage to establish countywide need.
- Schedule a meeting with Ag & Markets for information on animal control regulations and the consequences of not having something in place. Possibly contact FEMA for information.
- Coordinate an effort to draft an RFQ for animal control in Tompkins County.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.