

To Whom it May Concern

We are writing to address the statements made during the legislative session of the City of Spokane Council meeting on Thursday October 5TH, 2023. We recognize the delay in our written response, although many spoke at the Open Forum of the County Commissioners and additionally spoke at Spokane City Council Meetings. We wanted to ensure actual facts were presented. While there were many statements made that we could respond to, we have chosen most of the larger issues.

During his discussion, Scott Simmons, CEO of Spokane County stated, "There have been some who refer to it as Spokane County Regional Animal Protection Shelter. It's not. It's Spokane County Regional Animal Protections Services. That's the correct acronym. Their principal focus, their principal charge is Animal Control and Protection."

This statement regarding the acronym SCRAPS, emphasizing that the last "s" stands for "services," was an important point to note. Factually, that last "s" in SCRAPS stands for "service", not plural. However, it has come to our attention that there may be discrepancies between the stated purpose of SCRAPS and the services currently being provided to our community. As stated on many social media sites, individuals have found lost dogs and state they have contacted SCRAPS for assistance. They have faced difficulties in obtaining those services, they claim, SCRAPS does not respond to animal protection situations promptly or effectively. There are many people who have stated that this has been their experience on social media, such as on Nextdoor and various Facebook pages, including SCRAPS Facebook page, Spokane Lost and Found pets, Just Ducky, and The Underground Rainbow. This raises questions about the alignment of the services offered with the organization's stated mission.

Since the SCRAPS website should serve as an official source of information regarding their services. We would like to make you aware that the word "shelter" is used many times within the site, CARS (Canine Assessment Risk for Shelters) was hired to train for behavior assessments, and the word shelter is also used by the SCRAPS Hope Foundation to solicit funds for SCRAPS. By definition, this would be a misallocation of funds if SCRAPS is indeed not a shelter. Day in and day out there are people not receiving those Animal Protection and Animal Control services that he stated are the principal charge.

Next, he stated, "the last number I saw, over 7000 animals come into our facility on an annual basis."

According to public records we have received, the population from January 1st, 2023 to October 13th, 2023 shows that SCRAPS has collectively received 2766 animals into their care. This could only mean two things: one- the report we received by Spokane County is appallingly incorrect, or two-the population Simmons claims is preposterously over inflated.

He declared, "I can say unequivocally, regardless of what our code policy says, SCRAPS operating policy is not to euthanize for space. We do not. We only euthanize animals who are either at end of life, terminally ill and have been deemed to have a poor quality of life remaining or dogs that have and pose an untreatable threat to humans and to other animals. That is 100% what we do."

On September 20, 2023, 14 (fourteen) dogs that had resided within the facility were killed. The events of that day raise critical questions regarding that statement. He referred to the importance of ensuring the quality of life for these animals, and we wholeheartedly agree. However, for the final six months of their lives, nearly all these animals were confined to their kennels for close to 23 hours a day, or longer - with some not being taken outside at all, for days if a certain dedicated volunteer hadn't been there. Moreover, the lack of enrichment activities for these creatures is concerning. Even individuals on death row are afforded better treatment, and we must recognize that the animals' quality of life was undoubtedly compromised under this leadership.

There were also qualified adopters for many of those animals killed. Those adoptions were denied for no clear reason, as the majority of these dogs had never bitten anyone. They also had been off site on many occasions, around people, children, and other animals, making it more than clear that they were not an untreatable threat to humans or other animals. The dogs were not proven to be untreatable threats, nor deemed dangerous by law.

The "assessments" performed on those dogs aren't proven to be reliable, nor beneficial. In fact, according to a study found in the No Kill Advocacy Center – No Dog Left Behind: managers at the Fairfax county animal shelter in Virginia sought to save the lives of more dogs by putting in place a pilot program to determine if their temperament testing had predictive ability, if the shelter environment itself was contributing to perceived behavior problems including aggression, and if time spent out of the shelter would allow for rehabilitation of dogs in ways that might be difficult in a municipal shelter environment: prior to the program, dogs who failed the shelter's temperament evaluation were killed (many who were not evaluated were also killed). One of the most common reasons for killing these dogs was perceived "aggression towards humans or animals" arising from testing results. As part of the program, medium to large dogs who failed the evaluation were instead sent into foster care for further evaluation and training. The end result: 90.4% of these dogs were successfully adopted. More importantly, none of the placed dogs ended up needing any rehabilitation; simply getting out of the shelter resolved any problematic behavior staff saw in the shelter.

For dogs who actually do require rehabilitation, a review of the literature on resilience in humans and applied to dogs through the pioneering work of the no kill advocacy center, Bioethicist Jessica Pierce, and Dr. Karen Overall, the editor-in-chief of the journal of veterinary behavior: clinical applications and research demonstrates that dogs are incredibly resilient, that there is no such thing as "irremediable psychological suffering" in dogs, and that all dogs with

behavior trauma can be appropriately rehabilitated and/or placed through criteria that depends on the severity of the trauma.

Simmons goes on to state, “The council did pass an ordinance that’s directly in violation of our contract. It says the ordinance in the, and I’ll read you, in our contract with the city. It says, in conjunction with enforcement of the city’s animal control ordinance, the city shall adopt and keep current by appropriate legislative action an animal control ordinance substantially identical to that adopted by the county as it presently exists or as it may hereinafter be modified/amended, to include all licenses/fees/and penalties.”

While yes, the language Simmons quoted is in the contract, under Attachment “1” (4) under Animal Control ordinance/license fees/penalties services; what was omitted in this statement is that this is regarding license fees and penalties ordinances, not ordinances to remove verbiages to euthanize for space. Another omission, is that the very next sentence states “the city may enact ordinances dealing with animal control within its boundaries”. This same verbiage is stated in Section No 1 Recitals and Findings: d. City of Spokane may enact ordinances dealing with animal control within its boundaries.

We also note further violations of the contract by Spokane County. Section No 6 “The County or its designee agrees to meet upon request of the City or its designee to discuss services provided under the terms of this restated agreement.” It was stated at the beginning of this session that SCRAPS was asked to have meetings multiple times and failed to do so until now, months later.

Simmons then stated, “Kittens have to be looked at every hour to two hours to make sure they’re getting fed, they’re getting their nutrition, they’re not getting into a crisis situation. Sometimes those have to go to a pet emergency clinic to get responded to.”

Kittens, in general, do not have to be looked at every hour or two hours. Neonate kittens (which shelter operations manager Nick Hobbs-Doyle previously stated, “If the animal has the will to live, then they will survive the night.”) must be fed and stimulated to eliminate, every two to three hours. However, neonate kittens are not the entire population of kittens coming into SCRAPS care. Cats at SCRAPS have been held in TNR traps for, as Jesse Ferrari stated, “about 14 days”, when the usual protocol is 36 hours. There is a human resource investigation in which it states numerous times that there were problems due to the leadership’s lack of experience, and these statements support that notion.

Further, Simmons states, “We are open to the public. We don’t require appointments. We haven’t. We encourage appointments because if you want to adopt an animal, it can save your spot in line, you can come in and have an immediate view of the animal that you want to adopt. But our hours of operation are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday from noon to seven. All those days. Thursday we are closed because we have to go in and do some cleaning and give the animals some care and loving. Saturdays we are open from 11:30a to 5:30p and Sundays we are closed. Our front door is not open. We’re open through our receiving area. The reason we’re

not opening the front door is because of safety to our employees. Not unlike other businesses that are experiencing the same things. People wander in, the drug issues, the safety of mental health and stuff that's occurring, people wandering. We can't expose out employees to that." later when he was asked if you no longer have to be buzzed in, you can just walk in?, Simmons replied, "Yeah, Yep."

Unfortunately, community members do still have to buzz in to be "allowed" into the receiving area. It is reasonable to conclude that having a few of the employees able to see through the large front windows and doors before someone comes in, is safer than just letting everyone in through receiving where the employees have no view of the person(s) except through a small camera view.

They have previously claimed to follow ASV guidelines. Yet those guidelines state, "designed appropriately, shelter lobbies provide a welcoming environment for clients and help reduce animal stress. Shelter admission areas should be separated from adoptions and other client-facing areas. "

Furthermore, when a person is entering through the receiving door, they will still have full access to the building once they have entered, also known as "wandering", unless certain individuals are not being permitted to enter. The EEOC states that to "discriminate" against someone means to treat that person differently, or less favorably, for some reason. There are also many state and federal laws surrounding discrimination especially by a local government agency.

He goes on the claim "We do a lot of partnering with other shelters and rescues regularly. They come through our facility. I just wanna make sure that's understood as well. There was a period of time prior to our current director where that wasn't occurring. Those relationships were shut off."

We have public records of all animals transferred out in 2022 and up to October 11th, 2023. Those reports show, that are 12 documented rescues who have been utilized in 2023. In stark contrast, in 2022, there were 23 partner rescues utilized. Despite the numerous claims they are building relationships with rescue partners that had not been there, this data from SCRAPS, directly contradicts and proves those statements false.

Simmons states, "We have a veterinary on staff." We believe Simmons meant to say the term veterinarian, not veterinary.

Another statement Simmons makes is that, "The veterinary that we have on staff and pretty much all vets already go through behavioral training during their degree pursuit. So that, person or persons will have the most experience with animal behavioral training."

The veterinarian on staff at SCRAPS, graduated from WSU. As you can see on the attached curriculum for WSU, animal behavior is not a course within the curriculum. Animal handling and orientation is in the first semester of the first year, this would not be considered animal

behavior training. So, while the curriculum may have animal behavior sprinkled in, it is not sufficient to claim to be a Behaviorist.

<https://vetmed.wsu.edu/education/dvm/discover-our-program/curriculum/courses/>

Additionally, anyone who owns a pet, knows that most dogs do not correlate a good experience with their veterinarian and therefore will likely not do well if that person is assessing their behavior. A clear conclusion would be that, a veterinarian should not be the first choice for assessing behavior due to the negative association.

Simmons then states, "I'm not aware of any degree program that you can go get a behavioral specialist animal behavioral specialist. "

We would like to bring the fact that there certainly are degrees in animal behavior to Mr. Simmons attention, or ethology as well as the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists (ACVB) which is the certifying board for veterinarians who are specialty trained to advance the behavioral health of animals. Board-certified specialists are known as diplomates. Veterinary behaviorists are trained to address the relationships between an animal's health, environment, experiences, and its behavior. They have extensive knowledge of psychotropic medications, their uses, potential side effects and interactions with other medications, and are licensed to prescribe them when indicated. One of the primary missions of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists is to promote education and training in behavior. They have been recognized by the American Board of Veterinary Specialties as the organization to promote and standardize programs for veterinarians to become board certified in veterinary behavior. The general requirements for a certification for veterinarians is:

1. Graduate from an accredited veterinary school and attain veterinary licensure.
2. Complete the equivalency of a rotating internship.
3. Complete a behavior residency program (currently approved programs included below) or an individual behavior residency training program which was mentored and approved by ACVB. The individual program requires that the veterinarian find an ACVB diplomate who is willing to serve as their mentor. Each resident is required to accomplish a supervised behavioral caseload during their training, the first 25 clinical cases are seen with the mentor present, 25 of the next 50 cases are seen under the direct supervision of the mentor. Close supervision is required for all 400 cases.
4. Author a scientific paper published in a peer reviewed journal based on your own research.
5. Write three peer-reviewed case reports.
6. Make an application for the examination. A successful application allows the candidate to sit a comprehensive two-day test. When that examination has been successfully completed, the individual may become an ACVB diplomate.
7. Once a person becomes a diplomate, they may use the terms board-certified veterinary behaviorist, veterinary behavior specialist, or veterinary behaviorist to describe their credentials.

We would like to note, Dr. O’Keeffe was not found in their database to “find a vet behaviorist: locate a board certified veterinary behaviorist.” We would also like to point out number 7 again, “Once a person becomes a diplomate, they may use the terms board-certified veterinary behaviorist, veterinary behavior specialist, or veterinary behaviorist to describe their credentials.”

In closing, we are committed to the truth, facts, and to prove that the current narrative, falsifications, and actions of Spokane County and SCRAPS Leadership are untrue. The community deserves better, and the animals deserve better.

Sincerely,

The Underground Rainbow