

12 Dec 2022 General Meeting Minutes of Animal Companions of Las Cruces via Zoom

Present: Dawn Duncan (President), Nancy Sharp (VP), Miguel Marquez (Treasurer/Webmaster), Dara Parker (Secretary), Cherri Hudson-Brown (Member at Large), Carrie Greer, Debbie Iles, Patti Knowles (had to leave early), Linda Mandel, Kathe Starke, Candis Stern, Geri Wheelis. Absent: Julie Basile (Member at Large).

Media and Communications, and more: Dawn said we got four volunteers from the Senior Amigos volunteer fair Nov. 17, but one immediately had to drop out. We had more people sign up with us than any other table, however.

Dawn also said that Leah Romero of the *Las Cruces Sun-News* interviewed her for a story on Movers and Shakers in Las Cruces. Candis and Linda also were there to comment on Dawn and the work of Animal Companions. The story should run the end of December or early January.

The Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico's annual report will include a photo of volunteers from our September auction and photos of Dawn's dogs who were part of the start of our group.

We are in the November issue of *Stroll Sonoma Ranch* magazine (a web link is on our page).

Dawn has done work with Iowa State University for us to be a Practice Partner and Las Cruces jobs will be advertised to their veterinary students. We may also become a partner with Texas A & M and others, thanks to the money received through the Gala Grant.

This week or next Dawn will send a progress report to the local veterinarians.

Items stored at Cherri and Jeff's were transferred the weekend of Nov. 19 to the storage unit. The on-line auction runs throughs Dec. 14 at 6 p.m. Thanks to Cherri, Jeff, Miguel, Nancy and Dawn for helping with the move, and to Miguel, Julie, and Dawn for work on the on-line auction.

Update on Website and Donations: Miguel said VetTriage page has been updated so there is a Spanish language component and now there are Spanish speaking veterinarians who can offer help. We also are adding preventive care and other ways to reduce pet emergencies. We will also have listings of local veterinary jobs. Miguel has also updated local vet clinic hours and included their website addresses and more information. There is also a link to the on-line auction at the top of our web page.

Miguel gave the following report on our finances: We received \$72,145.13 in donations from 128 donors. **Our net fund balance was \$69,151.97** after deducting the monthly administrative fees to CFSNM of \$315.97 and expenses to-date for the year totaling \$2,677.19 (such as printing, magnets, etc.)

Giving Tuesday--- We met and exceeded our goal which earned us a matching grant of \$5,000 from the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico. **Additional donations**—Upon meeting our goal, we continued to receive donations directly through our website. We received \$1,495 in donations from 12 supporters, of whom two were anonymous.

2022 Spirit of Giving Annual Gala Grant---We received \$2,000 from the foundation as a result of Dawn and Julie's work as casino croupiers at the Foundation gala and our subsequent grant application.

By-laws: Dara said that by-laws are necessary for us to apply as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We want to do this because it will be good for us as we grow and allow us to reduce out account management fees, which are increasing as our fundraising success continues. We are working on a draft of the by-laws and hope to have them ready no later than March. The board will vote on the by-laws then the members will vote. Dara said by-laws can be changed, but it requires notifying government authorities so it's best to try to create a flexible document that is enduring. We are trying to provide for our needs now and into the future. Dawn said the Community Foundation would keep us for a quarter until all out nonprofit application is approved. Where we don't have by-laws, we'll have official policies, procedures, and guidelines.

General information on by-laws discussed thus far---The initial board will be the board we have in 2023 and will have staggered terms. Officers will be called executive officers. The bylaws allow us to create committees and advisory groups. The board will appoint committee and advisory group members and, separately, any other positions needed such as a web manager or graphic designer. In the future those people may not have to be on the board, though we currently have board members skilled at doing both. Starting in 2024, voting members will be whoever has done 20 hours of volunteer work and shown up for at least three general meetings in the previous year. Because we have only been keeping count of volunteer hours since September 2022, in 2023, anyone who attends the meeting during which a vote occurs will be considered a voting member.

Volunteers---Dara said she knows some people have problems with Excel sheets so she is going to send a PDF for people to record their volunteer hours or people can just use a pen and paper, or keep a running log on their computer in their own manner. But please report your hours each month. Attending general meetings does not count, but any work one does for the organization---conversations promoting us, emails, tasks, assigned research, etc.---counts.

Action Needs: Dawn asked people to consider serving on a committee such as appreciation for veterinarians, events, fundraising, grant writing, outreach and development. She said, "think of your joy and how we can use that for our group." She said consider building ACofLC into your monthly or annual giving and also looking at organizations you belong to that may be able to help us. Dawn mentioned Debbie Watkins who is a member of the Italian Club of Las Cruces. She informed the club of our work, and they gave us a generous donation at the time of the September auction. Some members also give monthly, part of their budget. Dawn clarified also that just because someone donates doesn't mean, however, they're automatically a voting member. We cannot award such membership for a donation or it is not considered a donation. Voting members must meet the criteria listed above.

Dawn thanked Christa Slaton for willingness to work on grant writing and Geri Wheelis for willingness to track and report veterinary openings.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN---In the coming year, Dawn believes it will be time to begin our capital campaign, once we have stand-alone 501(c)(3) status. Dawn said veterinarians and others have told her it will cost \$2 to \$5 million for a stand-alone emergency hospital. Candis asked if that covered equipment and staffing.

Dawn said it does. Cherri said we need to have an economic feasibility study before we can consider building a stand-alone clinic and that money probably would have to come outside the community because of Las Cruces's poverty rate. Dawn said a capital campaign usually takes five years but "we can't drag our feet." Dara added that it was standard to do a economic feasibility study before taking on a campaign.

Dara said she'd met a past chair of the Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce who was a mostly retired architect and has had experience designing animal hospitals and who could be helpful. Dawn noted that one of our donors, the Carvlins, are into real estate and might be able to find us a space and a place to renovate. There are just possibilities.

Dara said we can do what we can in the meantime, such as advocating preventive measures to lessen pet emergencies. Dawn reminded all that our local vets also support such a hospital and that we know it is essential even though it will take time.