



**Animal Welfare Society  
of Howard County**

# **PAWS**

**PUBLICATION OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY  
HOWARD COUNTY**

**OCTOBER 1, 2021**



## **Greetings!**

Hello Friends!

We want you to know that we are amidst a fantastic Howard County comeback story! Animal Welfare Society of Howard County (AWSHC) is coming back to life and to flourish again!

This is the very first issue from AWSHC since our reconstitution this past December. Because this is our first issue, we'll be covering everything from December 7, 2020 through September 30, 2021, but we'll try to go fast!

## **For Starters**

We won't bother with the disturbing events that occurred at AWSHC prior to our arrival last December; there is plenty of media out there about that. Suffice it to say that some concerned citizens, to especially recognize Columbia attorney Sandra M. Holt, took a keen interest in trying to lawfully transfer control of the crumbling rescue from the former administration and to emplace an entirely new administration. That monumental effort culminated in a resolution and agreement between the former AWSHC administration and a new AWSHC administration on December 7, 2020. The former administration was barred from all AWSHC involvement and the new administration was now empowered to govern the nonprofit charity. Since that time the makeup of AWSHC's Board of Directors has evolved; they are introduced online at <https://awshc.org/transparency-governance>. If you'd like to see the dilapidated condition of the rescue as we found it, there are some photos at <https://awshc.org/pics-fixer-upper-2-6-21>.

## Legal Issues

We were faced with several legal challenges from the start. First, this nonprofit had lost its privilege to solicit for charitable contributions by the prior administration. Second, the organization was in dire financial distress, due in part to the failure of a former employee to repay approximately \$25,000 she owes AWSHC for a court ordered restitution of embezzled funds. And third, the ownership of the property on which AWSHC operates was not at all clear. It turns out that the five acre property belongs to a board of trustees, all of whom are deceased, so the trust had been orphaned with no acting oversight. Altogether a challenging collection of legal problems.

After roughly six months of discussions and negotiations with the State of Maryland Charitable Organizations Division and Attorney General, AWSHC was successful in getting its cease and desist order for charitable solicitations rescinded. Thankfully, AWSHC is now permitted to lawfully solicit for charitable contributions!

Like the solicitation rescission, the land trust ownership issue has required many months to resolve. AWSHC and Howard County have recently appointed five jointly nominated trustees. We are now in the process of getting the final details and signatures on the agreement and acceptance of appointment.

Our remaining legal issue is the recovery of our outstanding court ordered restitution due AWSHC from the money that was embezzled. We have spent several thousand dollars so far to try to recover those funds but are unfortunately not much closer to having that happen. We need something to compel the court to compel the former employee to pay her criminal restitution debt.

## Plans and Activities

Our initial plans for the rescue are to restore the first floor of one of the buildings to where we can achieve our Phase 1 operational capability. Phase 1 entails resuming rescue and adoption activities at the Davis Road facility. This, we decided, was the fastest and least expensive (not inexpensive) path to a useful, productive presence for the community. The physical implementation will include a working kitchen and bathroom, two kennel rooms, a reception area and a small office.

Preparing this portion of the building for Phase 1 has been no small feat. Unfortunately, the building was left in a deplorable condition. There is no functioning HVAC system, the electrical system is super sketchy and the plumbing system is mostly non-functional. We are extremely grateful to an anonymous donor who will be contributing over \$5,000 to bring the plumbing system back to good repair. On top of the inoperative and missing major infrastructure systems, the building and the animals that were in it were subjected to appalling conditions. There was a hardwood floor that had been urinated on so heavily that the urine seeped into the basement. It is apparent that this had been going on for quite a long time and that the animals were likely never let out. There were also indications that dogs had been kept in closets; there were signs of clawing on the inside of the closet doors and the walls, and there were also feces on the walls, doors and floors of the closets.



We've had three very successful work parties so far with some awesome volunteers. One of our biggest jobs has been to demolish and remove the urine-soaked floorboards. Thankfully, that is gone from the building now. Unfortunately, the plywood subfloor was also significantly involved in the urine penetration. Some or all of the subfloor will have to be replaced. There are portions of the plywood subfloor that have been so weakened by the dog urine that they crumble and collapse under foot.

Once we get the first floor of this building back to a habitable condition and get the HVAC, plumbing, and electrical sorted out, we will be ready to start our Phase 1 rescue and adoption operations. We'd love to be able to say exactly when that will be but that answer largely depends on funding. If money weren't an issue, it's probably 10 weeks of work or thereabouts.

We'd like to take just a moment to thank some of our amazing volunteers who have helped us on our workdays so far.

- Howard County VolunTeens
- theCHIVE Maryland
- Spartan Junk Removal
- JO and Son Construction
- Canine Humane Network
- Terrific neighbors and supporters of AWSHC

These fabulous folks have gone above and beyond in helping us move forward.



Phase 2 we envision to be a complete fit-out of the basement of the reception building to serve as a veterinary clinic. We want the charity to be able to serve the community with discount veterinary services.

Phase 3 is not yet defined, but it may involve the existing kennel building. For Phase 3 we have some ideas like expanding to include a cat rescue, creating a dog park that the community can use to exercise and socialize their dogs, and canine training programs.

Many other things were accomplished so far this year. We secured ownership of the awshc.org Internet domain, Google My Business, and Facebook page, we've published the substantial beginnings of a website, we've got email, we're in good standing with the State of Maryland, we've been in the newspaper and on TV twice, and hopefully we're getting the much needed attention and support of our community! We also took down an enormous and very dead red oak tree that was threatening to take out one of the buildings. We've been getting estimates for an HVAC system and electrical repairs, and we've hauled off an old oil tank. We were also fortunate to have been gifted a previously owned washer and dryer which will come in very handy.

## **Conclusion**

We knew this would be a rather lengthy story to tell, but we've just covered the highlights of nine months of really hard and devoted work! We promise future issues won't be such a long read. But now you're up to date. Now you're in the know!

This poor shelter has been through hell. But you know what they say, if you're going through hell, keep going! We can't wait to be telling stories of our rescued animals and the volunteers who will be making the magic happen! We are coming back!



You can always reach us by email at [info@awshc.org](mailto:info@awshc.org), through our contact page on our website at <https://awshc.org/contact>, or by phone at 800-993-6680. We welcome volunteers, contributions, good vibes, and your brilliant ideas and suggestions. Thank you for reading all this and best wishes from the AWSHC team! Thank you for your support and we'll talk to you next month!

**Come Visit Us on the Internet!**



**Animal Welfare Society of Howard County**

8556 Davis Road, Columbia, Maryland 21045

You've received this email because we like you and we want you to know what we're up to! You can opt out of these emails by clicking Unsubscribe below.

[View in browser](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)