From: Sheriff Daniel S. Bean

Subject: In response to a blog post on Pet Friends Magazine about Antrim County Animal Control

As Antrim County Animal Controldirector, I take the operation of our Animal Shelter, the work of our animal control officers and the care of the animals within the shelter very seriously.

Over the weekend, an online pet blog ran a story about our shelter. The author of the blog never spoke to me or anyone representing Antrim County. Aside from a FOIA request for information about our current staff, the County was not considered to be included in the story.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Animal Industry Division inspected the Animal Shelter on several occasions last year and as a result of its findings we were issued a “WARNING LETTER” for failing to maintain the proximate weight upon acquisition (weighing the animal when they first arrive at the shelter). The State’s report further states that Antrim County Animal Control was made aware of the violation, and had since been maintaining the approximate weight of animals upon acquisition. The letter from the MDARD provided a website for Animal Control to go to for information on additional action the agency can take if the County were to fail to maintain the proximate weight of the animals in the future. The letter served as closure to the investigation.

We took that report seriously, as we would any report from the state, and recognized where we fell short and made changes immediately.

The state inspected us several times – all unannounced – stemming from complaints made from Deborah Schultz after Animal Control seized her dogs, along with other complaints made anonymously.

I believe most of this stems from the Schultz incident. You may also remember that also tied up with the Schultz incident, was an employee who left employment from the Shelter in March 2019. You are all aware of that situation, the investigation and findings that went into it.

Since the former employee and the County parted ways, there has been much discussion, criticism and personal attacks on Facebook directed toward the Shelter and an Animal Control employee. I’ve been able to respond to the constructive criticism and inquiries concerning the shelter, and the employee has handled the attacks with thick skin and by taking the high road.

Since the ex-employee’s March departure, Animal Control Officer Inga Waldrep (who has experience as a veterinary technician) has turned the shelter around. We’ve updated outdated policies and practices; went through paperwork that had been set aside and followed through on investigations that had been ignored.

During summer 2019 we were short-staffed – still looking to find a quality hire to replace the former employee – and Inga was working as much as she could, while also handling some family issues regarding her children. In August 2019 we hired Heather Belknap. She has been a great hire. Heather has animal control experience and her skills have complemented Inga’s experience. The two have handled many cases and are a good team together.

You are also aware that Animal Control is still short-staffed. We have two open part-time positions that we have not been able to fill with a quality hire. We are in the background phase of the hiring process for one of the positions.

A good deal of blog post is about a pit bull named Frank that Animal Control received on May 2, 2019 after a County resident reported seeing the neglected dog left leashed to a tree. A few days later, Animal Control received a call from an individual, who informed us the dog might be his. He told us it had killed another dog the month before and, the year prior, attacked his son resulting in stitches on the boy’s face. Animal Control was investigating that concern, so we held onto the dog a little longer than usual before adopting it out on May 24, 2019 after our investigation came up unfounded.

The individual that adopted Frank was told he will need lots of good quality food throughout the day in smaller portions because he eats too fast, but at the same time needs to put weight on.

The staff at the Animal Shelter is in contact with a veterinarian multiple times a day regarding the care and medical needs of the animals. The veterinarian often provides direction that the staff carries out. When the needs of the animals are of a serious nature, the Animal Control staff does not hesitate to bring in the veterinarian.

The County has two admirable employees running the shelter. We should be proud of the work they have done, and continue to do.

I feel some one-sided information is being put out to the public. I am available to answer any questions or address any concerns.

The shelter is currently closed to the public as a precaution related to COVID-19. However, we will gladly welcome anyone who would like to visit and witness the conditions of the Animal Shelter and the care received by the Animal Control employees.