

Work Session of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on December 16, 2025 at 6:00 PM, Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

I. Staff Discussion Items

Mayor Rusty Paul called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A. 2025-285 Lifeline Animal Project at Fulton County Animal Services

Audrey Shoemaker, Shelter Director, presented the Lifeline Animal Project.

Shelter Director Shoemaker said Lifeline Animal Project at Fulton County Animal Services is the county animal facility. It was founded in 2002 with the mission to end the euthanasia of healthy and treatable pets in metro Atlanta. To accomplish the mission, we began to operate the county shelters in 2013, and there have been tremendous efforts of life saving by starting many shelter programs. Lifeline has a community and a broad approach to achieve the mission. In addition to being the county animal facility, Lifeline at Fulton County Animal Services also has a public clinic focusing on community outreach. This is the same for Lifeline at DeKalb County Animal Services. There is also a no kill shelter and a full service spay and neuter clinic in Chamblee and a low cost spay and neuter clinic in College Park.

The intake numbers are unprecedented for the third quarter of 2025 and the numbers for the fourth quarter are not available as yet. Dogs are the biggest challenge but many cats have also come this year. By the end of the third quarter, over eight thousand were taken and it may be about ten thousand by the end of the year. Compared with the third quarter of 2024, it has been a massive increase. The City of Atlanta has the majority of our intakes. Fortunately, the City of Sandy Springs has a low intake compared with other jurisdictions. With shelter outcomes, adoption is a major part of our success in getting animals through the shelter system. We are on track to do better than last year with adoptions, but it is still a big challenge. We have also made a lot of effort to increase people reclaiming their pets.

We have 2,280 rescue coordinators that build partnerships with other animal welfare organizations that take in our animals to provide for them and get them adopted, creating more space in our shelter and freeing up our resources for more animals who need us. Many of our rescue partners take animals that are medically fragile or who have been injured and have the resources to get them settled and adopted. The foster program is much needed to prevent animals from sitting in the shelter, and there are currently 699 animals in the program. The animals are there until ready for adoption, for reasons that include general fostering, behavior modification, bottle babies, court-case holds, special needs, and also for short-term needs.

Key programs of focus include Animal Shelters, Pets for Life, Community Support, Foster Program, Foster Program, Affordable Veterinary Clinics, Community Cats/TNR, Healthy Pets and Adoption Matchmaking. The four pillars of animal sheltering is adopt, foster, rescue and volunteer. With the shelter program, there were over 4,100 adoptions last year. Also, 1,344 foster replacements, and 1,228 animals were returned home. The Dog for the Day & Weekend Warrior program is a popular program that began in 2016 to allow the community to have short-term, less intimidating outings with the animals. A one to two day outing increases chances of adoption over fourteen times. Volunteering is the pillar of everything important to our organization and our volunteers and number of hours increased after moving in the new shelter. We continue to address the issue of keeping pets with their people as often as possible and it is a matter of resources. Lifeline also has a community outreach program and we help people in seven zip codes below the poverty line with spay and neuter, vaccines, food, and more. The Healthy Pets events are done four times a year and free offerings include pet vaccines, microchips, spay/neuter vouchers, pet

supplies, food and more. The Community Support program is at both shelters and supports pet owners in keeping their pets, as well as supporting the community through free resources and supplies. The clinics mostly focus on spay/neuter services for the shelter animals because all animals are spayed or neutered prior to adoption.

Councilmember Melody Kelley asked for more information about the recent news around animal attacks and how Lifeline is coordinating with law enforcement.

Shelter Director Shoemaker said the Fulton County Police Department is taking over field services tomorrow and has already been partnering with our organization. It will be easier for resources to get to the community in the long term and they already have connections to different agencies.

Councilmember Kelley asked will the Fulton County Police Department do the coordinating as needed?

Shelter Director Shoemaker said yes, starting tomorrow.

Councilmember Kelley asked what are field services?

Shelter Director Shoemaker said these are officers that pick up pets and investigate bites, dog attacks, and animal cruelty in the community.

Councilmember Melissa Mular said I have adopted animals from both Fulton and Dekalb. What can councilmembers do to help with the organization's mission and create awareness?

Shelter Director Shoemaker said one challenge is communicating that overcrowding is a problem in our animal shelters and adoption is an option. People are focused on animal issues but community events will make a big difference.

Councilmember Melissa Mular said both of my adoptions were from the old and new shelters. One of my dogs was from the Weekend Warrior program. Everyone is encouraged to participate in that. Is your organization also doing the Home for Holidays program?

Shelter Director Shoemaker said we just completed that. Thank you for adopting.

Mayor Rusty Paul said I am familiar with the old shelter due to a pet who was a vagabond. From the exterior, the new shelter looks better and a tour is needed. Thank you **Shelter Director Shoemaker** for the presentation.

II. City Council Discussion Items

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.