



February 23, 2012

The Honorable Paul Fraim
Mayor of Norfolk
810 Union St., Ste. 1001
Norfolk, VA 23510

Dear Mayor Fraim:

I hope that all is well with you. Please feel free to share this letter with members of City Council. I would gladly meet with and/or speak to them if desired.

It's been about four and a half years since you were kind enough to meet with me about what was, at the time (the summer of 2007), a dire situation at the city's animal shelter. Thanks to your help and intervention as well as involvement and warnings from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, things shaped up and have gradually improved over the last few years.

Unfortunately, I understand that the same small group of people whose hysterical, incessant e-mails and calls brought about the severely crowded, filthy, and cruel conditions that animals were subjected to in 2007 are at it again. I understand that the City Council feels pressure as a result of being bombarded with e-mails demanding a "70% save rate by the end of the year" and pushing the council to implement a program to allow the spay/neuter and abandonment of feral cats in our city (note that we believe that such a program would violate state statute and city code and that we would vigorously oppose any proposal to formalize such a practice). We know based on your televised comments to the council on February 7 that you are well aware that this group of residents is a small constituency. It's worth noting that these are people who—despite meaning well, perhaps—have no actual sheltering experience whatsoever and in fact only take in a few dozen animals annually.

Currently, the treatment of and conditions for our city's lost and abandoned animals housed at the Norfolk Animal Care Center (NACC) are by far the best I have ever seen them. The city followed PETA's advice in 2007 and hired caring sheltering professionals to manage the facility, and that's made all the difference in the world. Assistant Animal Services Supervisor Jake Roos began working at NACC in August of 2007 and set in motion a series of changes that resulted in wonderful things for animals. And in September of 2009, the city hired Bureau Manager Barbara Hays, who, along with Roos, turned the facility around. These days, the facility is clean and inviting; animals are afforded bedding, toys, attention, and proper daily care as well as veterinary care; and staffers are friendly and devoted to the animals and to finding homes for those who are adoptable.

Hays moved to Norfolk from Springfield, Mass., where for four years, she served as executive director of a large, open-admission municipal shelter, a job she took after working in various positions—adoption center manager, animal care supervisor, and veterinary technician—for the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, where she spent a total of nine years. Hays' résumé lists other sheltering and animal-related jobs, but the bottom line is that she is a seasoned professional

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Washington, D.C.

1536 16th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles

2154 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
323-644-PETA

Norfolk

501 Front St.
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-PETA

Oakland

554 Grand Ave.
Oakland, CA 94610
510-763-PETA

Info@peta.org
PETA.org

Affiliates:

- PETA Foundation (U.K.)
- PETA Asia-Pacific
- PETA India
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands

with 15 years of experience and a great deal of expertise. Her and Roos' service to the City of Norfolk and its unwanted animal population have resulted in the shelter's implementation of best practices in many areas—translating into good things for the community and animals alike.

The dangerous, unrealistic policies and procedures pushed on the council by this small but fanatical constituency is part of a national movement to target, harass, and vilify open-admission shelters and their staff in an effort to mislead the public into believing that "no kill" is as easy as simply not euthanizing animals. I would encourage the council to review the facts, including the 2005 Humane Society of the United States' (HSUS) comprehensive 176-page report on the NACC detailing problems and recommendations to improve policies and conditions at the facility. One of the report's recommendations (p. 151) was to hire an experienced professional to lead the operation. Hays is just that. Pages 156 to 161 ("Governance, Management and Leadership") of the HSUS report discuss the desire to move NACC toward a "no kill" platform as well as the dangers involved in following this misguided trend: "There are no municipal shelters in the country that operate as 'no-kill.' A few have tried, but have quickly turned back due to overcrowding, inability to manage services, and staff outcry. It is the municipality's job to accept all animals and conduct responsible adoptions. The reality is there are not enough homes for all animals The goals of reducing overpopulation and euthanasia do not get accomplished by limiting yourself to the category of 'no-kill.' It is an unattainable goal that will set you up for failure." Our files are filled with media articles about such failures, including what turned out to be one in Norfolk just two years after this HSUS report.

Last time that Norfolk succumbed to pressure from this same group of uninformed individuals, animals suffered the consequences, and the city was close to being cited and fined by the state. We would like to help you ensure that this does not happen again. Please let me know if and how we can help.

I can be reached at 962-8338 or DaphnaN@peta.org. Thank you, as always, for your time, compassion, and consideration. The people and animals of Norfolk are fortunate to have you as our leader.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daphna Nachminovitch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "N".

Daphna Nachminovitch
Vice President
Cruelty Investigations Department