

Board of Supervisors
Safety and Security Committee

February 11, 2025 11:00 a.m.
Government Center Conference Room 11

Board of Supervisors (Board) Members present:

Rodney Lusk, Franconia District (Committee Chair) – In Person

James Walkinshaw, Braddock District (Vice Chair) – In Person

Jeff McKay, Chairman – In Person

James Bierman, Dranesville District – In Person

Walter Alcorn, Hunter Mill District – In Person

Andres Jimenez, Mason District – In Person

Dan Storck, Mount Vernon District – In Person

Dalia Palchik, Providence District – In Person

Pat Herrity, Springfield District – In Person

Kathy Smith, Sully District – In Person

The Safety and Security Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at **11:10 a.m.**

FCPD Wildlife Management Overview 2025: 11:11 a.m.

Bob Blakley, Assistant Chief of Police presented an update on the future of the FCPD's Wildlife Section, including the possibility of transferring it to the Fairfax County Park Authority.

Members were pleased with the presentation and asked the following:

Chairman McKay: What is the Wildlife Section doing to ensure that we are in keeping with national best practices for humane euthanasia? How will the upcoming consolidation affect the ability of the County to address dangerous animals? Expressed concern over the Wildlife Section being moved under the Park Authority Board and out of the BOS' immediate control.

Assistant Chief Blakley and Director Currier responded that our Wildlife Section is consistently examining national best practices to ensure we remain consistent. DAS is also working with state authorities to ensure our field euthanasia is consistent with their guidance. The handling of dangerous animals is separate from general wildlife calls. Dangerous animals will be addressed by Animal Services Officers unless there is an immediate threat to the public, then FCPD will assist.

Supervisor Lusk: What conversations with the Park Authority leadership have already been had? Have any other County agencies been considered? What are the pros and cons of moving the Section out of the FCPD?

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Deputy County Executive Arnold and Assistant Chief Blakley responded that initial conversations were had with the Park Authority who has a similar, and possibly more appropriate, job class of Ecologist. The Department of Public Works was also considered as a home for the Section, but ultimately the recommendations were limited to the Park Authority or remaining with the FCPD. The pros of moving the Section were that the Police Department is leaving the line of business of animal services under the consolidation with DAS and the program might not receive sufficient attention in the future. The pros of leaving the Section with the FCPD is maintaining the status quo: the program is already successful under Dr. Edwards' leadership.

Supervisor Jimenez: Are there any other County agencies that would object to the move or be impacted by it?

Assistant Chief Blakley responded that the FCPD was not aware of any objections or impacts.

Supervisor Alcorn: During the proposed consolidation with DAS, the decision was made to not include the Wildlife Section. His belief was that it would remain with the FCPD as this program is controversial with the public. The continued oversight by the BOS is of paramount importance.

Supervisor Herrity: How is Park Authority the right place when County Parks only account for 10% of the County land and wildlife exist on all properties in the County? He also expressed concern over the BOS losing oversight over the program. What is Dr. Edwards' position on the proposal?

Assistant Chief Blakley responded that it has been the FCPD's position since the beginning that this is a BOS program and did not believe the program would be negatively impacted by a move. Dr. Edwards' position is that the Wildlife Section should remain with the Police Department.

There was then discussion involving all Board members on the issue, with several expressing concerns with public knowledge and understanding of the mission and who to reach out to when they need help. The topic of BOS oversight was brought up again and concerns were expressed over the program being moved under the Park Authority Board. Ultimately the consensus was that the program should remain with the FCPD and County Executive Hill stated that a NIP would be submitted covering this plan.

FCPD/DAS Consolidation Update: 11:48 a.m.

Reasa Currier, Director of Animal Sheltering, presented an overview of the status of the DAS consolidation and the path moving forward. This included information on what steps have been taken to this point, to include the recently advertised Animal Services Officer positions, the proposed organizational chart of the Field Services Division, trainings that will be required for Animal Services Officers, and that there should be minimal impact to the delivery of public service.

Assistant Chief Blakley provided an update on the progress of the MOU between the County and the SSPBA governing the transition. Emphasis was made so that no County staff member will be negatively impacted by the consolidation. Staff that elect to remain with the FCPD will receive on-the-job training to ensure they are prepared for their new roles.

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Members were pleased with the information and asked the following:

Supervisor Lusk: What proposed updates to County Ordinances will be put forth due to the consolidation? Who will be responsible for training new Animal Services Officers? How will violations of state hunting codes be handled?

Deputy County Executive Arnold, Assistant Chief Blakley, and Director Currier responded that the proposed changes regarding retirement plans will be put before the BOS in March. New Animal Services Officers will be trained by current APPOs who elect to remain with the DAS since they are the subject matter experts. There will be a transition period where calls for service are being handled both by DAS and FCPD until the DAS is fully staffed. The FCPD will continue to support DAS in complex criminal investigations after the consolidation is complete, and this includes necessary enforcement of statutes that cannot be used by Animal Services Officers. These calls for hunting violations account for less than 1% of total animal-related calls for service.

Chairman McKay: What is the state mandated training for Animal Services Officers? He also expressed his appreciation for the DAS' recognition of the need to engage human services, such as mental health, when appropriate.

Director Currier and Deputy Director Ingle responded that the state training is a certified Animal Control Academy along with courses on humane euthanasia. Many of these courses are already being attended by current APPOs.

Supervisor Herrity: Are two investigators sufficient for the cases that require investigation? How will we ensure continuity of services during the consolidation process? Why are Animal Services Officers being sent to engage in ride-alongs in other jurisdictions?

Deputy County Executive Arnold and Director Currier responded that the investigator role is a good opportunity for incumbent APPOs who transition to DAS and will be a liaison to the FCPD and the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney. The decision to have two positions was based on an analysis of current calls for service and case load for the Animal Services Division. Once an agreement is reached with the SSPBA we will be able to allow staff to transition. Once that is done both DAS and FCPD will work together to provide services until the DAS is prepared to handle it alone. Animal enforcement is a multi-jurisdictional effort and sending ASOs to other jurisdictions allows them to see how it is done elsewhere and build a network of contacts for addressing regional issues.

Supervisor Stork: Why are there so many supervisory positions and oversight in the DAS' proposed organizational structure?

Deputy County Executive Arnold, Director Currier, and Deputy Director Ingle responded that there are multiple reasons. First is that the structure was based on the current model used by the FCPD. Having these positions also allows for growth opportunities for staff. It was also pointed out that this proposal covers four teams working rotating days and varying shifts so overlap and redundancy are key.

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Additional Information: N/A

The Committee meeting adjourned at **12:29 p.m.**

The next Committee meeting is April 8, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.