

Hampton Animal Response Team Advisory Committee

Lawson Conference Room – January 15, 2026

MEETING MINUTES

Voting Members Present: Jeannie Belgrave, Zechariah Brown, Dr. Désirée Darden, Philip Siff, Glenda Watson, Victoria Wineland

Ex-Officio Members Present: Sgt. David Giles (Hampton Animal Response Team)

Staff Present: Oliva Alexander (City Attorney’s Office), Monique Jordan (City Manager’s Office), Chief Jimmie Wideman (Hampton Police Department)

Guests: Ally Griffing (Interpreter), Melanie Paul, Cam Strowbridge (Interpreter)

Welcome & Introductions

Prior to the meeting, the Committee selected Zechariah Brown as the Chair Pro Tempore until a chair could be elected later in the meeting. Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. and began with introductions. Each member present shared information about themselves and expressed their pleasure to serve on the Committee. Melanie Paul, a citizen attending the meeting, also introduced herself.

New HART Manager Introduction

Sgt. David Giles shared he will be serving as the interim Hampton Animal Response Team (HART) Manager, and there has been a posting for a civilian HART Manager. While the Hampton Police Division will still oversee HART, it will be managed by a civilian reporting to Sgt. Giles. Olivia Alexander shared a short history of the oversight of HART and some of the changes that are happening, which are still fluid.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Ms. Alexander clarified that the Committee needed to elect a chair, vice chair, and secretary, and explained the procedure. Discussion was had on the positions, and Ms. Alexander shared each role’s responsibilities per the bylaws. She noted that although the secretary position is supposed to record attendance and minutes, in addition to distributing the agendas, this is generally performed by the City Manager’s Office (CMO). It has been previous practice that the secretary will work with the CMO to review and finalize the minutes for approval by the Committee. These positions are established annually in January, but members may serve more than one term if they desire.

ACTION: A motion was made by Dr. Désirée Darden and seconded by Philip Siff to approve the following officers:

Jeannie Belgrave, Chair

Victoria Wineland, Vice Chair

Glenda Watson, Secretary

The motion passed unanimously.

Review Agenda & Approval of Minutes

Chair Jeannie Belgrave asked if everyone had a chance to review the minutes from November 20, 2025, and called for a motion if there were no changes.

ACTION: A motion was made by Philip Siff and seconded by Victoria Wineland to approve the November

20, 2025 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

City Manager's Report

Monique Jordan noted that Assistant City Manager Kwasi Obeng (absent) had mentioned bringing in a guest speaker from the Peninsula Regional Animal Shelter (PRAS). Due to the holidays, staff was unable to make those arrangements in time for this meeting. Staff will work to have that established for the March 19, 2026 meeting.

HART Animal Control Report

Sgt. Giles noted that HART has increased their activities related to feral cats in the Magruder Heights area. It is currently unknown if there is an established colony. Seven calls related to feral cats had come in today alone. Ms. Alexander noted that HART scans any cat during these activities to reconnect pets with owners whenever possible. There is no law against pet cats free roaming, as long as they are spayed/neutered and are up-to-date on their immunizations. It was asked if the State Code hinders the City in regulating this, and Ms. Alexander confirmed this was correct, and provided information on Dillon's Rule, explaining that changes would have to be made at the State level. If the Committee would like to make changes to Chapter 5 (Animals) of the City Code, Ms. Alexander will research the matter and bring options to the Committee. If the Committee wants to propose a change that can be made within the parameters of the State Code, she will work with them on a proposal to Council. She also invited the Committee to see what court actions the City is taking related to animals, which occur on Friday mornings at 9:30AM in the General District Court.

Ms. Alexander explained that the City shares a shelter with Newport News, Poquoson and York County, but each Animal Control is responsible for maintaining their own numbers related to how many of each animal type brought in. A request was made to bring a printed copy of the report to future meetings.

Current Issues/Trends

There was no discussion under Current Issues/Trends.

Old Business

There was no discussion under Old Business.

New Business

Mr. Siff inquired if the City could highlight the amount of funding received from the Virginia Form 760 Resident Income Tax Return, which provides an option for citizens to contribute funding to the City's low-cost Spay & Neuter program. Ms. Jordan noted that ACM Obeng had also discussed potential fundraising opportunities for the program, and she will look into publicizing the information.

Victoria Wineland asked for clarification on the City Manager's report from the previous meeting, and if the implication was that there is not enough funding to hire a second vet to perform services, or if it was that there was difficulty in finding one. Chief Wideman clarified that the problem is finding a vet willing to perform services at the price point the City is able to afford. The City tries to work through the vet at PRAS, but more costly services must be handled with outside vets directly. Most recently, a dealership made a substantial donation to cover a complicated canine surgery. There are a group of donors that can sometimes be tapped when the services exceed what the City is able to afford. Ms. Wineland asked if this was a full-time position or a part-time situation. Chief Wideman stated that the vet at PRAS is full-time, and this would be an as-needed contract position. Dr. Darden asked if the contract position would be responsible for administrative duties, as it is her understanding that the full-time vet is required to perform those duties, such as attending department meetings. Ms. Alexander explained this would be a contract position and not an employee working out of the shelter itself. Chief Wideman confirmed that this person would be operating out of their own facility and HART would transport the animal to them. Ms. Wineland asked about the spaying and neutering services, and if a second position was needed for those services at the shelter. Chief

Wideman stated he was not sure about that status. Ms. Wineland noted she had previously brought up the suggestion of soliciting vet volunteers to provide spaying and neutering services. Chief Wideman stated that this would be welcome, and Ms. Alexander confirmed she would look into the process. Ms. Alexander noted that one issue that often arises with outside vet services is that HART is dealing with animals who have been abused or neglected, and if a vet provides services to the animal, they may be called upon to testify to the animal's injuries in court. This has created an understandable frustration for vets. The question was asked if volunteer vets would be able to work out of PRAS when providing services, and Ms. Alexander noted that there is only one surgical suite, so there would likely not be sufficient space. It was asked if the space was used daily, and it was confirmed that the vet there is kept extremely busy. The suggestion was made that a volunteer vet could offer service hours during non-business hours at PRAS, which would not interfere with the full-time vet's use of the surgery suite. Mr. Siff questioned who the best person would be to direct these questions. Ms. Jordan offered to research the matter, and reminded the Committee that staff was working on having someone from PRAS as a guest speaker at the next meeting. She requested that the Committee prepare questions for the next meeting.

Mr. Brown requested a copy of the bylaws for the Committee. Ms. Jordan stated that she will email those to the whole Committee. Ms. Alexander reminded the group not to reply-all to emails sent to the Committee as they would be considered an unlawful meeting of the Committee. When replying, only reply to Ms. Jordan or Ms. Alexander. She also requested that members do not continue to discuss Committee business in groups of three or more unless in a called meeting.

Public Comment

Chair Belgrave read the protocol for the Public Comment period.

Ms. Melanie Paul shared the animal shelter report she had picked up from PRAS for the Committee. She also shared that kitten season starts soon, and provided additional information related to founding kittens and their care.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Belgrave adjourned the meeting at 6:17 p.m.