

Introduction

This document outlines the timeline and provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution, discussions, and implementations of the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) ordinance in League City. It includes collaborative efforts, resources, and opinions involving a variety of key stakeholders, including city officials, staff, committee members, volunteers, and external consultants. The timeline is detailed, providing context, relevance, and direct quotes, aiming to offer transparency and clarity on the process and the participants involved.

The objective of this document is to illustrate the transformation of opinions and the varying levels of support for the TNR practices over time. Initially, we feel there was collective effort and a consensus among stakeholders in advocating for the implementation of TNR as a humane approach to managing community cat populations. The discussions and recommendations were characterized by a shared understanding and mutual agreement on the benefits of TNR, leading to the unanimous passing of the TNR ordinance by the City Council on February 28, 2023.

Today however, post-implementation of League City's TNR program, there appears to be a divergence in viewpoints and diminishing support for TNR practices among some stakeholders. Some members of the LCAAC and other involved parties have expressed concerns and reservations about the execution and outcomes of the TNR program, leading to public comments questioning the decisions and actions of the shelter management and staff. This shift in stance seems to be rooted in differing interpretations and expectations of the TNR policy and its application to various categories of cats, including feral, friendly, unowned, and community cats.

As a result, Mayor Long asked for a full timeline starting from when staff first began investigating the implementation of a TNR program, as well as a 360-degree assessment of the shelter's TNR practices from American Pets Alive!, an organization that has been supported in the past by League City Animal Advisory Committee to assess the League City Animal Shelter so that the public can better understand the reasoning as to how the City came to the decision to implement a TNR program.

Timeline

November 15, 2019: League City Animal Advisory Committee Member, Patty Rytlewski, recommends a TNR webinar to Monica Millican (League City Pets Alive), Animal Services Manager Jasmine O'Keefe, and former Animal Services Manager Kim Schoolcraft, stating, "file for TNR when we make case to League City...I sat 90 minutes through this live...EXCELLENT research and slides to make TNR vs euthanize case. Covers liability too"

Relevance: The suggested webinar highlights "Return to Field/TNR" as a practical approach for shelters to release healthy, free-roaming cats, including adults and older kittens.

- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to Webinar: Return to Field: Expanding Our Tools for Free-Roaming Cats](#)
- [Link to Webinar Slides: Return to Field: Expanding Our Tools for Free-Roaming Cats](#)

December 6, 2020: Monica Millican, Executive Director of League City Pets Alive! emailed Jasmine O'Keefe the webinar "Traditional to Innovative: The Future for Cat In-take at Shelters".

Ms. Millican state's "Should be a good program full of useful information." The Webinar was also shared with volunteers on Facebook and the Cat Condo crew's internal communication phone app which is accessible by all Condo Crew Volunteers.

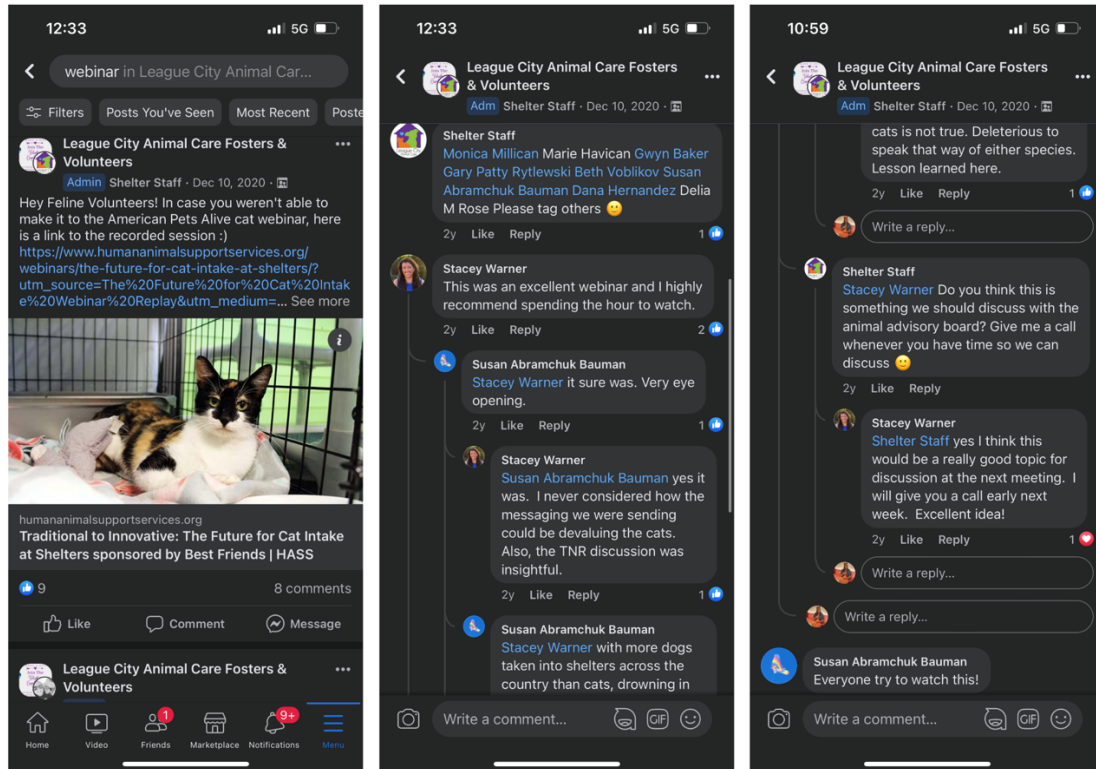
- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to Webinar: Traditional to Innovative: The Future for Cat Intake at Shelters sponsored by Best Friends Animal Society](#)

December 10, 2020: League City Animal Shelter (LCAS) Staff shared the webinar "Traditional to Innovative: The Future for Cat In-take at Shelters with all shelter volunteers.

Stacey Warner, the former Animal Advisory Board Chairperson, commented, *"This was an excellent webinar and I highly recommend spending the hour to watch."*

Animal Services Manager, Jasmine O'Keefe reached out to Ms. Warner and asked *"Do you think this is something we should discuss with the animal advisory board? Give me a call whenever you have time so we can discuss."*

Ms. Warner responded *"yes I think this would be a really good topic for discussion at the next meeting. I will give you a call early next week. Excellent idea!"*



December 11, 2020: LCAS volunteer, Gwen Baker, shared the “Traditional to Innovative: The Future for Cat In-take at Shelters” presentation and webinar with the “Cat Condo Crew” management team including Sue Joosten, current Animal Advisory Committee Chair. The presentation was then added to the “Cat Condo Krewe’s” agenda for discussion.

- [Link to Email](#)

January 26, 2021 and January 27, 2021: Former LCAAC Chair, Stacey Warner, informs Jasmine O’Keefe that she will send the “Traditional to Innovative: The Future for Cat In-take at Shelters” webinar to the advisory board for review. On January 27, 2021, Ms. Warner sends the presentation to the League City Animal Advisory Committee for review.

- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to Email](#)

February 3, 2021: Per the request of Animal Services Manager, Jasmine O’Keefe, Dickinson Animal Shelter Director shares their “Multi-pet Permit; Requirements” ordinance which speaks to practices including TNR, Community Cats, Cat Colonies.

- [Link to Email](#)

Relevance: Ms. O’Keefe reached out to the City of Dickinson to begin collecting information pertaining to TNR and community cat programs as requested by Ms. Millican and LCAAC.

February 3, 2021: The advisory board met to discuss the “Traditional to Innovative: The Future for Cat In-take at Shelters” presentation and webinar. According to the meeting minutes.

- [Link to Advisory Board Meeting Agenda](#)
- [Link to Advisory Board Minutes](#)
-

December 1, 2021: Ms. Millican contacts League City's City Attorney's Office and former Mayor Pat Hallisey, suggesting removing the stray hold for "unowned cats", requesting an ordinance change to spell out the criteria for owned or unowned cats.

According to staff, this request was made without consulting LCAS staff. However, Former Assistant City Manager Michael Kramm and Ms. O'Keefe were notified on December 2nd. As a result Mr. Kramm and Ms. O'Keefe agreed that a definition for "unowned" cat was needed which lead to the decision to pursue changes to League City's Animal Ordinances including the adoption of a TNR and community cat ordinance.

- [Link to Email](#)

December 3, 2021: City staff reached out to Ms. Millican to propose a TNR ordinance, however Ms. Millican declined changes as it would delay the originally proposed changes Ms. Millican suggested to the Mayor on December 1st.

- [Link to Email](#)

December 6, 2021: Ms. Millican shares with Ms. O'Keefe a variety of resources that references "Community Cat" programs.

Relevance: The ordinances referenced by Ms. Millican all speaks in some way to defining "Community Cats" as something beyond "feral". Ordinance examples Ms. Millican provided included:

- **Montgomery County:** Defined Community cats as any unowned cats. These cats may be feral, unsocialized, or friendly and may either have been borne into the wild or are lost or abandoned pet cats.
- **Delaware County:** Defined Community Cats as a cat that is abandoned, stray, lost, or feral.
- **Jacksonville, Florida:** Community Cat means any free-roaming cat that may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known; a community cat may or may not be feral

The TNR, Community Cat, and RTF references that Ms. Millican shares with shelter staff all suggest that these programs are intended for more than just "feral" cat populations, but some variation of unowned, stray, or "community cat".

- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to TNR Ordinance: Montgomery County](#)
- [Link to TNR Ordinance: Delaware County](#)
- [Link to TNR Ordinance: Jacksonville, Florida](#)
- [Link to Neighborhood Cats: Legalizing Trap-Neuter-Return Article](#)

December 14, 2021: The council approves the "Stray Hold" cat ordinance suggested by Ms. Millican and sponsored by Pat Hallisey. Prior to the approval, Ms. Millican stated during public

comment “I am so grateful that the ordinance for the cats got pushed through so fast, and if now you would just approve it that would make me even happier.”

- [Link to Council Meeting Recording](#)

March 2, 2022: Ms. O’Keefe reached out to the Houston BARC Division Manager for Community Outreach & Customer Service to continue collecting information pertaining to TNR and community cat programs.

- [Link to Email](#)

April 7, 2022: Ms. O’Keefe continues to work on a rewrite of all League City animal ordinances including an updated TNR draft language to the City Attorney’s office for review. Ms. O’Keefe provided the previously mentioned resources to the legal team to assist with drafting the ordinance.

- [Link to TNR Ordinance: Montgomery County](#)
- [Link to Alley Cat Allies: How to Draft a Lifesaving Cat Ordinance with Trap-Neuter-Return](#)

July 18, 2022: League City Animal Advisory Committee requests a third-party assessment of the League City Animal Shelter.

- [Link to Agenda](#)
- [Link to Minutes](#)

August 19, 2022: Ms. O’Keefe meets with Mara Hartsell to discuss shelter assessment.

September 20, 2022: American Pets Alive completes their assessment on the shelter. Within the assessment, AMPA! Suggests the implementation of TNR for Community Cats and provides reference to several resources that state community cat programs, such as TNR, no longer lean on a separation of “feral versus friendly” as the determination of a cat’s level of socialization is difficult to assess on intake to a shelter.

- [Link to Assessment](#)
- [Link to “Human Animal Support Services Community Cats: Language and Definitions](#)

October 10, 2022: Ms. Millican emails City Manager John Baumgartner stating “The current leadership has taken no action to rectify the situation, choosing to try to adopt their way out. The shelter remains overcapacity and will until focus is put on reducing intake through initiatives that require community support and buy-in. Microchipping gets pets home, TNR greatly reduces the number of free roaming cats and sterilization reduces overall population.”

- [Link to Email](#)

November 11, 2022: Mara Hartsell sends TNR information to Ms. O’Keefe, defining TNR resources, common practices, and protocols that define TNR as the sterilization, ear-tipping, and rabies vaccination of a healthy cat, ‘found’ outside that is friendly or feral, brought to the shelter, who is returned to their home location the day after surgery.

Relevance: This information went on to be utilized by staff to create the Community Cat Policy as these were suggested by American Pets Alive as part of the League City Animal

Shelter Assessment that was suggested by the Animal Advisory Committee and Ms. Millican.

- [Link to Email](#)

November 14, 2022: The Animal Advisory Committee met and requests the creation of a TNR ordinance based on staff's previously recommended language that was created out of the recommendation by American Pets Alive!

- [Link to Agenda](#)
- [Link to Minutes](#)

November 15, 2022, and November 16, 2022: Ms. O'Keefe provides legal with several resources that assist in the creation of a TNR ordinance including one of the resources shared by Ms. Millican to Ms. O'Keefe on December 6, 2021. Ordinance redlines were finalized and ready to be shared with the Animal Advisory Committee.

- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to Alley Cat Allies: How to Draft a Lifesaving Cat Ordinance with Trap-Neuter-Return](#)
- [Link to Alley Cat Allies: Get Help with Ordinances](#)

November 17, 2022, and November 22, 2022 – Finalized animal ordinance redlines including TNR program are shared with the Animal Advisory Committee. Ms. O'Keefe followed up with the advisory board on November 22, to inform them the ordinances were pulled from the council agenda due to administrative matters. Ms. O'Keefe requested any feedback or open discussion from the board regarding the final changes.

Relevance: TNR ordinance was given to the board four months prior to council's approval. Within the new ordinance a definition of community cat is clearly defined as "*Community Cat* is a member of the domestic species *Felis Catus* and shall mean a free-roaming cat who may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known or unknown; a community cat may or may not be feral. Community cats are not wildlife."

- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to Chapter 18 Animals Redline 11.16.22](#)
- [Link to Proposed Ordinance Amending Ch 18 Animals](#)

December 12, 2022: Ms. Millican emails City Manager John Baumgartner, the League City Animal Advisory Committee, Mara Hartsell from American Pets Alive!, and other animal shelter volunteers stating "*everyone needs to send an email to the Texas Attorney General stating it (TNR) is humane and not abandonment*".

Additionally, Ms. Millican provided a fact sheet drafted by the Best Friends Animal Society that states Trap-neuter-vaccinate-return programs ("TNVR) which sterilize, vaccinate and return unowned outdoor cats to the location from where they were found do not violate Texas state law, and lists TNR as being successful at reducing euthanasia, overpopulation, feline intake, and reuniting lost cats with their care-takers.

- [Link to Email](#)

February 27th, 2023: Mara Hartsell from American Pets Alive emails Mayor, City Council, and the City Manager encouraging the City to consider and pass the addition of a TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) Program to the Chapter 18 Code of Ordinances. Stating:

“[TNR is the premier solution](#) used to humanely and proactively control stray cat populations, and as such, it is embraced by hundreds of other municipalities across the nation. Among other benefits, TNR:

- Stops the rapid, uncontrollable reproduction of stray cats
- Stops the nuisance roaming, mating, and fighting behaviors of intact cats
- Increases community immunity against rabies
- Decreases citizen complaint calls
- Decreases City costs over time

TNR is a win-win solution for free-roaming cats and local neighborhoods”

- [Link to Email](#)

February 28, 2023: TNR is passed by City Council unanimously. Prior to the vote Ms. Millican states during public comment “I am very much in favor of the ordinance. It will do a lot to help the animal shelter.”

- [Link to Council Meeting Recording](#)

June 5, 2023: Ms. Millican’s organization, League City Pets Alive!, shares via Facebook support for League City’s approval of TNR stating: “How can you easily save so many cats lives - but you are not able to foster or adopt? Spay a stray! The solution to the never-ending pet overpopulation is to spay and neuter. We cannot rescue our way out of this overpopulation problem. TNR (trap neuter return) is the best thing you can do to help a stray / feral / community cat. TNR is now approved in League City. No birth = no kill! To learn more about TNR visit the link below: <https://www.alleycat.org/our-work/trap-neuter-return/>”

 **League City Pets Alive aka Friends of League City Animal Shelter** · [Follow](#)

June 5 · 🌐

How can you easily save so many cats lives - but you are not able to foster or adopt ? Spay a stray !

The solution to the never ending pet over population is to spay and neuter . We can not rescue our way out of this overpopulation problem .

TNR (trap neuter return) is the best thing you can do to help a stray / feral / community cat .

TNR is now approved in League City .

No birth = no kill !

To learn more about TNR visit the link below 🐾

<https://www.alleycat.org/our-work/trap-neuter-return/>



Relevance: Within this post, the referenced webpage defines “Community Cats” as anything that “encompass outdoor, unowned, free-roaming, friendly, feral, adult, and healthy” All of which, were included as part of League City’s Community Cat Program Policy when defining a “Community Cat” eligible for TNR.

June 14, 2023: Ms. O’Keefe shared the webinar Friendly for a Reason: Expanding Shelter-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return Eligibility for Cats with LCAAC Committee Member Ms. Rytlewski

- [Link to Email](#)
- [Link to Webinar: Friendly for a Reason: Expanding Shelter-Neuter-Return-Vaccinate-Return Eligibility for Cats](#)

June 19, 2023: Ms. O’Keefe emailed the webinar “Friendly for a Reason: Expanding Shelter-Neuter-Return-Vaccinate-Return Eligibility for Cats” to staff for review and future discussion.

- [Link to Email](#)

July 20, 2023: The Community Cat policy is finalized by management. Over the next 3 months, TNR was in effect, resulting in the trap, neuter, and release of 68 cats.

- [Link to Data](#)

July 24, 2023: The Community Cat Policy was distributed by management to staff requesting feedback concerning the policy.

- [Link to Email](#)

August 8, 2023: City Manager John Baumgartner share that a hold on TNR would take place until a plan of action was made to look into the City’s TNR program.

- [Link to Council Meeting Recording](#)

August 14, 2023: LCAAC receives an update regarding the status of the TNR program and it currently being on hold, while an assessment is completed.

- [Link to Agenda](#)
- [Link to Minutes](#)

August 21, 2023: Drey Hicks, Chief of Staff, notified Mayor and Council that the City will be working with American Pets Alive! on a second assessment on the City’s TNR practices. The assessment will include a public workshop to gather as much public feedback expressed by the community which will be incorporated into their assessment.

- [Link to Email](#)

August 22, 2023: The city posts a message on Facebook post announcing a hold on the TNR until a full assessment of the program can be made by an outside agency and further feedback is gathered from the community.

- [Link to Facebook Post](#)

August 22, 2023: During public comment, LCAAC members including Ms. Rytlewski and Ms. Joosten state the following:

“Shelter management just insists they are following what City Council directed. Is this what City Council wants? I am asking” and “you wonder why some express no confidence in the staff decision making to do the right thing for these animals.” – Ms. Rytlewski

“I have read the SOP for July 2023, that was produced. It was created by the shelter. It appears that staff decided on an endpoint, and then gather documentation in support of their position” – Ms. Joosten

- [Link to Council Meeting Recording](#)

Conclusion

The decision to implement a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) policy in League City emerged from the community as a pressing need to manage a growing stray cat population in a humane and effective manner and was done so in support by:

- Animal Service's Manager Jasmine O'Keefe
- League City Animal Advisory Committee and its members
- League City Pets Alive! Executive Director Monica Millican
- City Council through the adoption of ordinances
- Shelter Assessment Partner Mara Hartsell with American Pets Alive!

As illustrated via the timeline, there are numerous actions taken by all parties that support the adoption and implementation of a TNR ordinance and Community Cat Program that encompasses TNR for an umbrella of cat categories beyond the definition of "feral" including:

- Friendly
- Unowned
- Free-roaming
- Healthy
- Adult

The opinions and resources shared throughout the timeline were considered in both the creation of the "Community Cat" ordinances and were also reviewed and supported by the LCAAC and was done so prior to the adoption of the ordinance by League City Council.

Once adopted, The League City Animal Shelter's Community Cat Program policy was created based off the recommendations and resources expressed above and was done so in an attempt to develop a humane solution to managing a challenging cat in-take process while reducing the risks of disease, overcapacity, and uncontrollable reproduction, while minimizing shelter costs associated with euthanasia and extended length of stay.

Regardless, if any of the sentiment expressed in support of TNR practices has changed since the adoption of TNR, staff will continue to evaluate the program via a collaborative effort that engages the entire community and will present suggestions that are brought forth by American Pets Alive!, upon conclusion of the public assessment, allowing City Council to review the suggestions and direct staff as to how to move forward with the goal in mind of creating a TNR definition best reflects to values of the League City community.