



March 11, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

We, the undersigned, would like to express our deep concern regarding Megan Alexander, contract Behaviorist, at Sonoma County Animal Services, SCAS.

Megan has had a contract with the County of Sonoma for behavioral services for more than a year. During this time several people and animals have been injured due to her negligence. Megan, herself, was bitten by two shelter dogs during her first 6 months working at the shelter. We have staff that have worked more than 20 years for Sonoma County Animal Services who have never been bitten. Megan claims to be an expert yet she was unable to recognize warning signs that would have prevented her from being injured. The first bite incident occurred on 2/5/15. The dog, a Poodle, A316229, had several memos warning of its aggressive behavior prior to Megan getting bit. The second bite incident occurred on 7/23/15. The dog, a German Shepherd, A324375, also had memos warning of its aggressive behavior prior to Megan getting bit.

In both cases Megan ignored the memos warning staff of the dog's aggressive behavior and put herself in harm's way. Not only did Megan put herself in harm's way the second time she was bit, she had a private citizen with her at the time putting him at risk.

Megan continually makes incompetent decisions putting herself and others in danger:

On 3/13/15 a Lab mix, A300378, attacked an Animal Control Officer and a volunteer while being walked down a shelter hallway by another volunteer. On 3/27/15 the dog again showed aggression towards another Animal Control Officer while in its kennel. On 4/14/15, Megan, disregarding the memos of the attack and aggressive behavior, took the dog out and tried to provoke the dog to bite her. She was not injured.

On 5/21/15, Megan had a dog, A316418, in a high traffic area in the shelters front office at the entrance to our dispatch desk. Megan, along with two volunteers and the dispatcher, were sitting on the floor closely surrounding the dog, the dog showed signs of being nervous, dilated eyes. Megan let the dog lick the volunteer's faces. This dog had numerous memos regarding its aggressive behavior. Megan knowingly put these people in danger.

On 8/18/15 a Shepherd Mix, A324370, had been adopted but was returned for attacking cats. Megan decided to put this dog back up for adoption regardless of the cat aggression issues. The dog was adopted again and returned on 11/3/15 for killing a number of cats. There currently is no policy requiring the disclosure to the adopter of previous concerns.

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On 9/8/15 a volunteer was bitten by a Pit Bull, A326235, when walking it out on a leash from its kennel. The behavioral assessment and a memo, from an Animal Control Officer, document concerning aggressive behavior prior to the volunteer being bitten. Regardless of the documented aggression, the volunteer was still allowed to take the dog out of its kennel.

On 9/23/15 Megan was with a family that was potentially going to adopt an American Bulldog A321634. Megan notes that she noticed this dog stare and growl at the adopter's little girl. Instead of immediately ending the visit, Megan used the child as a guinea pig by asking the child to stand up, the girl had been sitting, to see what the dog would do. The dog again stared at the little girl but this time lunged at the little girl's face. Megan had to block the dog with her arm to keep the dog from attacking the little girl. This same dog had just attacked another dog on 9/15/15, regardless, Megan was still going to adopt this dog out. Megan did allow this dog to go back into a foster home after both these aggressive instances.

On 12/29/15 Megan spent 45 minutes in a kennel with a German Shepherd; A249622. This dog had prior memos documenting its aggressive behavior warning staff. Again, Megan ignored the warnings and put herself in danger. Megan noted that she tried touching the dog with one hand while giving him treats with her other. The dog quickly turned, per Megan, had she not reacted quickly she could have been bitten.

These are just a few, of many, examples of why we are concerned for the public's safety by continuing to contract with Megan Alexander. There are several more instances that prove her incompetence to remain as SCAS' behaviorist. Staff has witnessed, on many occasions, Megan down playing or making excuses for dog's aggressive behavior in order to "save" the dog from euthanasia.

Another major concern we have is the fact that dogs are being warehoused for months at the County shelter. Questionable dogs, no one wants to adopt, are languishing in kennels for months in the hopes that someone will adopt or rescue them. These dogs have been deemed adoptable or rescue worthy by Megan and are psychologically and physically deteriorating while waiting for that "perfect" adopter or anyone to take them. Dogs begin to go kennel crazy, i.e. spinning, jumping, barking, and fecal painting. As a result, they lose weight, they become depressed, they begin self mutilating, and/or they become aggressive. These unadoptable dogs are filling precious kennel space that is needed for strays and owner surrenders.

Megan is contracted to evaluate dogs within 72 hours after they have been surrendered by their owner or 48 hours after the dogs stray hold period has ended. This is to insure the animals are quickly processed through. It has been noted and brought to management's attention, on several occasions, that dogs are sitting one to two weeks, without evaluation, past Megan's contractual obligation. Example: German Shepherd, A332762. This dogs stray hold period ended on 2/24/16, as of 3/9/16 the dog had not been evaluated. This dog was brought to management's attention by concerned staff and the dog was finally evaluated on 3/10/16, 15 days after Megan's contractual obligations were due.

We currently have a 3 month waiting list for owners, tax payers, to surrender their dogs. Many of these dogs end up being abandoned or dumped in the community because their owners can no longer keep them. Example: On 2/23/16 a man came into the shelter lobby and wanted to surrender his dog. He was advised by the office clerks that we could not take his dog today but that he could be put on our waiting list, which was currently 3 months long. The man said he would check with the Sonoma Humane Society to see if they could take his dog. Our security cameras caught the man leaving out the front lobby door; he then turned around and placed the dog loose in the lobby then ran away. The dog, A333290, is currently up for adoption. Officers are responding frequently to calls of dumped and abandoned dogs throughout Sonoma County and even at the shelters front gate, as in the case of the Bulldog A327833. Staff arrived to work early 10/1/15 to find an emaciated Bulldog left in a crate outside our front gate. The dog was covered in maggots and needed emergency care.

Management has been notified of all the above cases of staff being put in danger, dogs languishing in kennels, along with many other incidents, and has done nothing to rectify the problem. The most recent incident occurred on 3/9/16. An employee was almost bitten by a dog, A329869 that had previously been up for adoption. The dog was removed from the adoption floor around 1/7/16 for being aggressive with a volunteer. Megan had been working with the dog for two months prior to this recent incident. This is an employee the dog was familiar with but still showed aggression towards her. Megan's efforts to work with this dog obviously failed, this is not the first time.

Ellen Bauer, Public Health Director, when asked why she decided to hire Megan, stated that Megan was the only one who applied, insinuating, the County settled. Many staff members, along with a SEIU representative, Irene Rosario, met with many of the Board of Supervisors, RISK and even reported our concerns to OSHA. (As a result SCAS was cited by OSHA, one of the citations is currently under appeal by the County). Our concerns, unfortunately, were only given back to our management to resolve. As I mentioned before, nothing has been done.

There are rumors that management is planning on hiring Megan permanently for the Shelter Supervisor position or in another permanent position. We find this ridiculous considering Megan's history with our department. The majority of staff has no respect for Megan or her skills, supported by the numerous incidents of injuries to both humans and public, as a result of her incompetence.

We strongly suggest you look further into discontinuing to contract, or prevent permanent hire, of Megan Alexander. Megan poses a liability to the county and is a threat to staff, public and animals from the animals she is deeming safe.

If you would like more evidence of Megan Alexander's incompetence, please contact our SEIU representative, Irene Rosario.

April 22, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is to inform you of problems with the current management at Sonoma County Animal Services, (SCAS). As you are probably aware, there are many serious existing issues within the department, none of which have been resolved.

One of the most urgent issues is SCAS knowingly adopting out aggressive dogs. Many dogs that have come in with a history of aggression, or have demonstrated aggression at the shelter, have been made available for adoption or adopted out regardless of staffs numerous warnings to management. As a result, staff, public, volunteers and pets have been injured, even some pets killed, by known aggressive shelter dogs.

Management, John Skeel, Brian Whipple, James Dress, Kevin Davis, Debbie Christian, and the contracted behaviorist, Megan Alexander, have all been notified in writing numerous times of individual dogs displaying aggression. Management continues to allow dangerous dogs to be housed in public areas, allow volunteers to walk these dangerous dogs, and still allow the public to adopt these dangerous dogs exposing their families, pets and friends to potentially being attacked.

The next urgent issue is the warehousing of dogs at the SCAS shelter. There are numerous dogs that have been languishing in kennels for months. Most of the dogs do not kennel well and become stressed. These dogs start deteriorating showing signs of stress such as not eating, depression, jumping, spinning, barking, self mutilating, fecal painting, and aggression. Regardless of notifying management, these dogs are allowed to continue to deteriorate, usually with no effort to enrich their lives. These are undesirable dogs, no one wants to adopt these dogs because they don't show well in the kennels, they are undesirable breeds or they have aggression issues. The contract behaviorist, Megan Alexander, is supposed to evaluate each dog within 72 hours of being surrendered by their owner and 48 hours after a stray dogs hold period is up, this is not happening. Dogs are held days/weeks beyond their legal hold time without being evaluated.

Management dismisses staff's comments, (the majority of the staff with concerns are educated, trained and have decades of experience in dog behavior).

It appears management is more concerned about the live release numbers then they are for public safety and the animals well being. There is documentation to support the above claims both in emails and memos in the animal's files, contact Irene Rosario with SEIU for copies. Management will tell you that there are policies and procedures in place, which there are, but they are not being followed. Excuses or down playing of serious concerns happens on a daily basis by management.

Staff is confused and frustrated that management does not care for their safety. Staff is hoping that you care and will do something to protect them.

Sincerely,

Concerned SCAS Staff