On November 29th of 2022, Petco Love hosted a meeting with the City of San Antonio Animal Care Services (ACS) Director Shannon Sims, and Chief Operations Officer Bethany Colonnese. During this meeting, the Petco Love CEO, Susanne Kogut, and Director of Life Saving (Chelsea Staley) proposed providing the services of Outcomes Consulting Principal, Kristen Hassen (Outcomes), at no cost to ACS to evaluate operations and provide recommendations they believed would aid ACS in restoring the Live Release Rate to above 90%. ACS welcomed ideas to increase potential live outcomes for the shelter and set clear parameters that suggestions would be taken under advisement, and the goal was a sustainable approach with a balance of public safety and live release.

Hassen came to the ACS campus to begin meeting staff and evaluating processes on December 7-8, 2022. Outcomes provided a six-page evaluation of operations on December 9th in an email, promising a full report in a few days. The final 14-page report, with 46 recommendations, was sent to ACS on December 12, 2023. Upon review, the document appeared to be boiler-plate recommendations, was vague, lacked detail or any supporting analysis. The report was conclusory and based solely on short observations and a limited number of staff interviews and lacked professionalism.

An analysis of the recommendations showed ACS already performs 14, supports 23, and disagrees with nine. ACS is seeking details and specificity on the general recommendations from Petco Love and Outcomes.

ACS based its evaluation of the agreed recommendations on resources, facilities, staffing required for implementation, and all ACS goals, not just the live release rate. Nine of the supported recommendations are either now in place or being finalized for implementation, and 14 require additional resources necessitating budgetary requests.

After passionate disagreement early in December regarding the timeliness of implementation, ACS took time to evaluate several recommendations prior to implementation. On December 27th Petco Love and Outcomes requested two behaviorists work with ACS’ behavioral staff to improve notes on animals, as well as show methodologies for play groups and responsible co-housing to maximize space. On December 29th, Director Sims received a glowing review from Outcomes about the great work of the team and their commitment.

On January 19th and 20th, 2023 the Outcomes behaviorists came to work with kennels and behavioral staff. Almost immediately, they directed ACS kennel staff to co-house non-medically cleared animals
with healthy animals to create space and stop euthanasia that day. ACS Chief Operations Officer Colonnese refocused the consultant team about their tasks, and that they were not at ACS to prevent euthanasia that day, but to instruct and teach methodologies to staff that result in sustainable solutions. Colonnese came up with a plan with ACS staff and the consultants for the following day and departed for the day. The next day started well but escalated quickly when the consultant behaviorists again attempted to take over kennel operations to co-house sick and healthy animals together. When they were reminded their mission was to teach methodologies and not to stop euthanasia for the day, they became verbally combative, frustrated, and left. Later, one of the dogs the behaviorists were denied for co-housing tested distemper positive. Should the co-housing have occurred, other animals would have been infected.

Later the same day Director Sims met with the Petco Love Lifesaving Director Staley who categorized our actions as unwilling to change, based on nothing but feedback from the frustrated behaviorist. Staley later made recommendations that the Chief Operations Officer, Live Release Manager, and the Shelter Manager “needed to go because they were toxic” and that my unwillingness to do so would reflect poorly on me and asked that Hassen fill the Chief Operations Officer’s role while she was out on vacation. Director Sims ended the meeting, stating that these recommendations were inappropriate. On January 23, Staley reiterated her request, which was denied.

Since these events ACS has received multiple inquiries from people outside of ACS regarding Petco Love and Outcomes Consulting pushing this report out unsolicited and passing information about ACS’ unwillingness to improve the operation. In two separate known instances Petco Love or Outcomes Consulting has sent the report to the Regional Director of Best Friends (Paula Powell) and disparaged ACS on a national animal welfare conference call related to this consultation that an ACS Advisory Board Member was on.

The claims about ACS’ unwillingness to implement change are patently false. The sharing of the report and the unverified opinions of this consultancy, and attempts to terminate staff are manipulative, unprofessional, unproductive, and not reflective of a partner organization seeking to implement change.

ACS continues to evaluate operations and integrate any appropriate recommendations through the normal budget processes and continued development of our Strategic Plan. ACS must maintain a balanced and sustainable approach to making San Antonio a safer place for people and animals.