

# Dallas Deputy Mayor Garcia Backs Animal Rights Extremist On Board

by JOHN YATES

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DALLAS, TX – Dallas Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Elba Garcia is City Council's most vocal advocate of a mandatory spay and neuter ordinance and other severe restrictions on animal ownership in the city.

An American Sporting Dog Alliance investigation reveals that Garcia's support for the ordinance reflects a long-term ideological flirtation with one of the most extreme animal rights activists in Texas, Susan Oakey.

Oakey, who has been quoted as saying that she is "proud" to be a member of the ultra radical People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), was Garcia's nominee for a vacancy on the City of Dallas Animal Shelter Commission. A previous American Sporting Dog Alliance report conclusively linked Commission Chairman Robert "Skip" Trimble to PETA. In fact, PETA honored Trimble with a national award for his work to advance the animal rights agenda.

The Commission authored the proposed ordinance, and will oversee its enforcement if it is approved by City Council. Representatives of dog owners' groups have been pointedly excluded from membership on the Commission, which has become in essence a city-sanctioned animal rights group. The Commission has been meeting privately with City Council for more than two years in preparation from this ordinance, and dog owners were not invited to the table at any point.

Despite numerous meetings with the PETA contingent, City Council as a whole continues to refuse to meet with animal ownership advocates to discuss the ordinance. At a scheduled meeting two weeks ago, only two council members showed up.

"I am proud to be a member of PETA (and our local animal rights group, Animal Connection of Texas)," Oakey wrote in a letter to the editor that appeared last week in The Fort Worth Weekly.

Oakey makes no bones about her radical beliefs, and has a clear track record of supporting PETA positions on many issues. These include:

- Picketing American Kennel Club dog shows, claiming that breeders of purebred dogs are responsible for the deaths of mixed-

breed dogs in the animal shelter. Oakey plans to continue this activity, and has applied for a city permit to demonstrate at a Dallas dog show planned for July.

- Supporting the erection of a tasteless billboard on I-35 that claimed that Ronald Reagan's diagnosed Alzheimer's disease was the result of eating meat.
- A PETA and Animal Connection of Texas protest against eating meat where naked people were wrapped in cellophane and put on display.
- Consistent opposition to raising livestock for food. Her opposition to farming and ranching spans many years, and includes beef ranching and chicken farming.
- Protests against the March of Dimes because the organization supports research that uses animals.
- Leaflet distribution against IAMS/Eukanuba pet foods, alleging that this company uses inhumane practices in nutritional research..
- Published support of people who vandalized a café for serving a food item that she feels causes animals to be harmed.
- Openly published support of other radical animal rights groups, including North Texas Animal Rights Network, Vegetarian Network of Dallas, and Animal Connection of Texas.
- Protests against a plan by the Dallas zoo to breed a female elephant to a male owned by Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus.
- Demonstrations against Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets in the Dallas area, making unsubstantiated allegations that the food chain sells rancid and insect-infested chicken, and supports "hideous cruelty to animals."

Oakey is a board member of Animal Connection of Texas, a group that was honored by PETA in 2006 as the local animal rights group of the month. Her work is mentioned in numerous PETA websites and press releases.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance supports Oakey's right to hold whatever opinions she chooses.

However, we also oppose City Council's action of naming people who hold Oakey's views to represent the city of Dallas on issues pertaining to animals. Her views reflect only a tiny fraction of the

people who live in Dallas. We find it impossible to believe that more than a tiny minority of Dallas residents would endorse her views on most of these issues.

Oakey frequently touts her official role on the Commission for the personal actions she takes on animal rights issues, and this holds the potential to create much embarrassment for the city, City Council and the animal control/shelter program. Trimble also is connected publicly to the Commission.

Because of Oakey's activism in radical animal causes, we also believe that her service on the Commission (as well as that of Chairman Trimble and other members) gives the appearance of a conflict of interest in decision-making about the city shelter and animal control program.

Oakey also has another troubling role with the City of Dallas. She is a benefits specialist for the City of Dallas Employees' Retirement Fund. While this does not appear to be a violation of city personnel policy, it has the potential to raise some eyebrows, especially in regard to Oakey's relationship with Mayor Pro Tem Garcia in being appointed to the Animal Shelter Commission.

The retirement fund handles the pensions of all animal control employees, according to its website. Oakey's dual role of working for the animal control pension program and being on a committee that oversees this department would appear to create a conflict of interest.

At the least, an animal control employee might think twice before advocating a point of view that conflicts with Oakey's extremist animal rights beliefs, or to question or criticize pension fund policies, practices or investments.

One thing is certain. Because of Oakey's and Trimble's extremist positions, no animal control or shelter employee would be able to express any opinion or propose any program that conflicts with the PETA agenda.

This kind of heavy-handedness was demonstrated at a recent meeting between Trimble and dog owners, when Trimble was alleged to have screamed, "shut up," when another member of his team (a former Commission member) revealed information about zoning issues for breeders that disclosed plans that have been kept secret from the public. Zealots in any cause rarely are open to constructive criticism or candor.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance represents owners, hobby breeders and professionals who work with breeds of dogs that are used for hunting. We are a grassroots movement working to protect the rights

and to assure that the traditional relationships  
and humans maintains its rightful place in American  
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