



Fairfield County Public Information

250 N. Walnut Drive

Winnsboro, S.C. 29180

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fairfield County Statement Regarding Animal Shelter Allegations

Winnsboro, SC— April 8th, 2026 — Fairfield County is aware of recent allegations circulating locally, statewide, and nationally concerning operations at the Fairfield County Animal Shelter, in regards to an incident on January 31, 2026, involving two trustees from the Fairfield County Detention Center. These claims are serious, but most importantly they are also untrue, unfounded, and unsupported by evidence.

The public allegations began shortly after a volunteer was informed that their services would not be needed during the weekend of March 13th because the volunteer program at the Shelter was being paused until a proper vetting and application process for volunteers could be formalized. Following this notification, the former volunteer initiated a campaign criticizing Shelter staff and management. This campaign included outreach to funding partners, nonprofit organizations, and other entities that support the Shelter. Claims were made suggesting the individual had been dismissed for “whistleblowing.” The individual had not presented any allegations or concerns to Fairfield County staff or elected officials, at any time, prior to this action.

Various accusations have been made by the former volunteer and other supporters, including claims of criminal activity and mismanagement at the Shelter. These allegations were made without evidence or substantiation and without any notification to Fairfield County Administration or Fairfield County Council. While some media outlets have reported on these claims, attempts by County staff to provide accurate information have been discounted, leading to further public confusion and concern.

The individual was then separated from volunteer involvement for cause. A thorough, internal review identified multiple factors contributing to this decision, including conduct that created a toxic and hostile environment within the Shelter. Evidence exists that indicate the individual frequently undermined and disparaged staff to colleagues, volunteers, and members of the public. The volunteer attempted to exert unauthorized control over Shelter operations, including directing communications and access in ways that excluded County staff from their official responsibilities. This behavior negatively impacted workplace morale and led to concerns about staff retention. **(Statements from Staff Members verifying accounts of behavior in attachment).**

The need for a temporary pause in volunteer activities was created when it was revealed there was no formal volunteer application on file for any volunteer, nor had a formal volunteer program been officially adopted by the Shelter at that time. The former volunteer had proposed a draft volunteer program in the past that was never adopted, in great part because the program

proposed by the former volunteer would have granted significant operational control to the former volunteer and their affiliated organization—an arrangement that was not authorized or approved by Fairfield County.

Since these allegations, County staff have received numerous hostile and threatening communications. These messages have raised serious concerns for employee safety and wellbeing, with some staff experiencing significant emotional distress as a result. The former volunteer distributed communications encouraging rescue organizations to cease working with the Fairfield County Animal Shelter. While some organizations have chosen to remain active with the Fairfield County Animal Shelter, others have chosen to disengage, an outcome that ultimately impacts the animals in the County's care.

Fairfield County remains committed to transparency and accountability. In response to these allegations and the concerning nature of related communications, the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office was asked to review the matter and subsequently referred aspects of it to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED). Neither agency identified any information warranting a formal investigation into County operations, though the vile statements directed at staff have warranted a higher level of review to ensure that staff remains safe.

In light of recent events, concerns have been raised regarding fundraising activities conducted in the name of Fairfield County. The individual in question was formally asked to provide documentation related to any grants, financial commitments or fundraising efforts conducted on behalf of the County. To date, no such records have been provided. **(Fundraising advertisement and correspondence in attachment).**

In response to the incident on January 31st, Fairfield County is in the process of installing cameras at the Shelter facility to ensure the safety and accountability of Shelter staff, animals, future volunteers and trustees. The trustees involved in the initial incident have been removed from the work program at the Shelter. Fairfield County Administration is in the process of formalizing a proper system for vetting and verifying all volunteers and volunteer agencies that want to partner with the Fairfield County Animal Shelter. Shelter staff will attend appropriate trainings, which is consistent with County policy and expectations.

Fairfield County will continue to operate the Animal Shelter with integrity, professionalism, and a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of both staff and animals. The County remains focused on serving its residents and maintaining the public's trust through transparency and responsible governance.

(The attached supporting documents verify accounts of fundraising on behalf of the volunteer and testimony of detrimental behavior on behalf of the volunteer.)

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