



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MAYOR EMANUEL NAMES SUSAN RUSSELL TO SERVE AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE  
COMMISSION ON ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL**

*Appointment comes after expansive search, input from stakeholder groups*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today named Susan Russell as Executive Director for the Commission on Animal Care and Control (CACC). The City worked closely with national and local animal advocacy organizations and welfare groups to garner input and help identify qualified candidates. Russell was recommended to Mayor Emanuel by an advisory group formed to assist through the candidate selection process and provide recommendations.

"I want to thank the advisory committee for their work to identify the best candidate to lead CACC; this organization works closely with other animal welfare organizations, which is why it was imperative that community stakeholders be a part of the selection process," said Mayor Emanuel. "Susan has my full confidence to begin a new chapter at CACC that will increase transparency, build partnerships, and improve outcomes for both animals and the public."

An attorney by trade, Russell has been an active volunteer over the past 20 years in a number of animal and community groups, including CACC. In fact, she has been instrumental in evolving the CACC/Friends of Chicago Animal Care and Control's (FCACC) volunteer program, which provides volunteer orientations and training. To educate children about compassion toward animals and environmental responsibility, Russell has authored several children's books, including *Shelter Dog Kisses* and *We Can't Go There. We're Bears*. The most recent book she authored, *A Ruff Road Home: The Court Case Dogs of Chicago*, recounts the stories of dogs once caught in Chicago's court system after being confiscated from neglectful or abusive owners and their journey from the City shelter and Safe Humane Chicago's Court Case Dog Program into loving and supportive homes.

"I'm honored, humbled and grateful for this opportunity to work in partnership with a multitude of stakeholders who have a shared vision for making Chicago a leader in protecting and respecting companion animals," said Susan Russell. "I am excited about building on the many successes CACC and its partners have achieved to date like saving more lives and providing valuable community and public services."

Russell previously worked at Kaplan, Massamillo & Andrews LLC, where she litigated tort and commercial lawsuits in state and federal courts. She is a member of the Chicago Bar Association's Animal Law Committee and the Safe Humane Chicago attorney committee, as well as a Friends of Chicago Animal Care and Control volunteer.

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The position became vacant in October after the previous Executive Director retired. The City announced a national search in December following conversations with animal welfare advocates. The City established an advisory group to interview and provide a final set of recommendations to the Mayor. Members of the advisory group include:

- Cynthia Bathurst, Acting Chair Commission on Animal Care and Control, Safe Humane Chicago
- Jim Dickes, DVM, Uptown Animal Hospital
- Abby Smith, Felines & Canines, Illinois Animal Welfare Network
- Suzy Thomas, Dreamtown Realty, Advocates for Chicagoland Animals
- Terry Hillard, Hillard Heintze Consulting
- Julia Ellis J.D., Ellis & Associates Consulting
- Jose Muñoz, The Resurrection Project

"We are pleased to have been part of the process of selecting three candidates for the Mayor's consideration of the important position of Executive Director of Chicago Animal Care and Control from the pool of candidates we were given," said Suzy Thomas, Advocates for Chicagoland Animals who served on the advisory group. "We look forward to working with Susan Russell in her role as Executive Director in whatever ways we can, and we encourage the City to provide the resources needed to lead our City's Animal Care and Control successfully."

As Executive Director of CACC, Russell is charged with improving the quality of life for all Chicagoans as it relates to animals. She will lead CACC as the commission works to maximize lives saved while fulfilling equally important duties to respond to animal related service requests and assist in ensuring public health and safety as it relates to animals.

CACC is an open admission shelter that takes in approximately 20,000 animals each year, focusing on increasing live outcomes and ensuring the health and safety of all animals under its temporary care. With the help of volunteers and more than 175 rescue organizations and humane societies, the agency has increased live release rates and decreased shelter intakes. CACC has seen an 18 percent decrease in impoundments in 2015 as compared to 2014 as well as decreases in euthanasia of cats and smaller dogs. CACC has continually increased live outcome rates over the past five years. CACC continues to enhance adoption programs, simplify pet returns to owners and maximize transfers to rescues to further increase live outcomes of dogs and cats that are less likely to be adopted.

Russell will start serving in her new role as Executive Director on May 2.

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