

To whom it may concern:

This letter is a testament to the demeanor, character, and work ethic of Tawny Hammond.

I met Tawny when she “auditioned” for the job of Chief Animal Officer for the City of Austin, Texas. After each candidate made their presentation, it was obvious to most people in the room, and certainly to me, that she was the best candidate to head our recently-established no-kill shelter.

No-kill is an interesting concept in that it is pretty simple to state, but politically complex to execute. As you probably know, Tawny hit the ground running, and did an excellent job establishing the largest no-kill shelter in existence here in Austin (as well as Travis County, over which Texas State law mandates that Austin’s shelter has jurisdiction), of which Austin remains proud. This took a tremendous amount of work, and Tawny was completely up to the task.

At the same time, Austin was having an issue with wildlife issues, particularly coyote/human conflicts, in our growing city. This was of special interest to me, and I had been involved with this for some time. I was shortly appointed to the Austin Animal Advisory Commission, from which I observed Tawny’s efforts for a humane policy, particularly when it came to the use of steel-jawed leg hold traps on coyotes. These traps were then being used on City property (in clear violation of prior City ordinance, as it turned out) through a contact with the USDA’s Wildlife Services, a very cryptic and unaccountable organization.

Tawny had the support of the entire Animal Advisory Commission on ending the predator control contract with Texas Wildlife Services, but her immediate superior, an Assistant City Manager, was doubtful of this approach. At a very memorable Austin City Council meeting, where some City Council Members were unconvinced at the start of the meeting, and with an unconvinced Assistant City Manager questioning her position at the same time, Tawny Hammond STOOD HER GROUND without being in any way offensive or insubordinate. She quietly insisted that the contract with Wildlife Services at the time violated City ordinance, which its execution had clearly done, injuring cats and dogs and other wildlife in addition to coyotes in City parks and wildlife preserves. She stated that she intended to uphold all City ordinances, which that contract would not allow. She also confidently insisted that Austin Animal Control Officers could offer a better, more humane, and far more accountable program at less cost to the City.

She had the facts and the experience to back up her arguments. She was calm, and at the same time, passionate about this new direction for Austin. She was unafraid to disagree with the status-quo misinformation about coyotes, from any quarter, and wanted to chart a new path.

She convinced the room. She ultimately convinced the Assistant City Manager. The City Council voted to support her, and a new path for Austin was chosen. She had won everyone’s respect. To this day, I remain impressed with Tawny’s integrity, intelligence, compassion, and political acumen.

We are still on this far more humane path concerning human/wildlife conflicts in a rapidly growing metropolitan area. Shortly after Tawny left Austin, but not without first laying the groundwork for continuation of this new course at the county level, Travis County became the first county in the State of Texas to reject an existing contract with Wildlife Services, as well, opting in to Austin Animal Services far better and more economical program.

The new program is working to everyone's satisfaction. We have a full-time, dedicated wildlife specialist to deal with such conflicts. The program is FULLY accountable. Tawny's leadership was essential in allowing Austin set a new policy that is cheaper, more humane, and much more in the character of our City.

Please feel free to contact me for any further details, or questions you may have.

Dr. Craig Nazor