Opening Remarks – Community Cat Meeting

Good evening everyone, and thank you sincerely for being here tonight.

I want to begin by acknowledging all of you and the incredible care and commitment in this room tonight. People do not show up like this unless they genuinely care — about animals, about their neighbourhoods, and about their community. This meeting is happening because of that passion.

We have also heard from several groups and individuals who are eager to help. I know that will be important to those here who want to create a truly community-driven plan. Later in the meeting, we will identify the individuals and organizations that have offered assistance so everyone knows where support may be available.

I think we can all acknowledge that stray and feral cat issues create real challenges and generate a variety of ideas and opinions. Tonight's discussion is not about whether something should be done — that decision has already been made. Instead, tonight is about bringing together passionate people and groups in our community to help shape and enhance the municipal plan approved by Council.

This truly is your meeting. The Township has provided the venue and framework so that committed individuals can

gather and develop a workable plan. However, before turning the discussion over to the group, it is important to clearly frame the conversation.

Of course, we want to do what is best for the cats. At the same time, we must acknowledge what has become clear: returning the cats to their original location is not a viable option. Residents and local businesses in the area have been — and continue to be — significantly affected by the feral cat colony. The presence of stray cats has interfered with their ability to enjoy and use their properties. For that reason, Council determined that municipal involvement was necessary.

As we move forward, any plan developed must be guided by three clear objectives:

1. **No ongoing nuisance impacts in our neighbourhoods.** Residents deserve to enjoy their properties and businesses deserve to not be negatively affected by the presence of a feral cat colony.
2. **Full compliance with legislation.** We must operate within provincial law and municipal authority, even when the issue is emotional.
3. **Fiscal responsibility.** Any solution must be sustainable and fair to the broader taxpayer base.

We recognize that TNR — Trap, Neuter, Return — is widely considered best practice in many circumstances and will be a topic of discussion tonight. However, given the legitimate concerns of affected property owners and businesses, returning cats to the area we are discussing this evening is not an option.

We also recognize the “vacuum effect” that can occur when colonies are removed. As such, we know this is not a one-time fix. It will require ongoing monitoring and commitment from the Township and the community to prevent the issue from re-emerging.

Tonight is about harnessing the energy in this room and turning it into action.

We ask that everyone participate with respect and a solutions-focused mindset.

Again, tonight is not about debating whether the issue should be addressed. It is about determining how we address it — responsibly, collaboratively, and sustainably.

Thank you again for showing up, for caring, and for being willing to engage.