

I was fired from my role as Communications Officer by Maricopa County Animal Care & Control on a live video for all of social media to see. The live video in question was a social media promotion for an adoptable shelter dog, Zoltan, who was to be euthanized if he was not adopted.

Using the live stream feature on TikTok, the plan was to remain on video with Zoltan until he was adopted. I filled the time by answering questions from the public about Zoltan, MCACC, and other animal welfare topics. It was informative, transparent, and with almost 30,000 viewers, it was noticeably engaging.

The video was abruptly shut down when Michael Mendel (MCACC Director) and Crystal Enojos (MCACC Deputy Director) entered my office to tell me (and everyone watching live) that they were “shutting this down” and that “the decision was already made to euthanize this animal.”

Zoltan was removed from my office. I was told he would be euthanized in the morning. Meanwhile, an adopter was on their way to the shelter to get him. To ease any uncertainty or worry you may be feeling about Zoltan’s fate, I will happily tell you that he did indeed end up getting adopted that afternoon.

I was told to gather my belongings and leave, which I did. MCACC then conducted an “investigation,” and I was terminated several days later. You can be fired for any reason in Arizona as long as it doesn’t infringe on your constitutional rights. Technically, I still don’t know the reason for my firing. They won’t give me a reason, and legally, they don’t have to.

I don’t wish to cause any harm or bad publicity for MCACC. If I believed that speaking out would be detrimental to the shelter, I wouldn’t do it. Ultimately, the animals are the ones who pay the price for a shelter that’s not supported. I am speaking out because I genuinely believe that transparency is critical for MCACC to build a stronger, trusting relationship with the community and save more animals.

Michael Mendel specifically instructed me to do more promotions for dogs headed for euthanasia. He told me not to hold back, filter myself, or worry about “pissing people off.”

So how did it come to this? Perhaps it was because my boss has a superior who disapproved of the information I shared during the promotional video. Rather than take responsibility for giving me those directives himself, it was easier for this brand-new director to let his devoted employee take the fall.

The people who care about me have been trying to offer comfort by telling me that I’m better off not working for an organization like this. Few people will understand, but it is precisely *because* of this dysfunction and need for improvement that I want to work for MCACC.

It doesn’t matter how often I hear that I’m “better off without them.” It was never about *me* being better off. It was about the animals.

 Hannah Carl