

ANIMAL SHELTER COALITION FOR EL DORADO COUNTY

April 7, 2011

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Re: April 11, 2011 Board of Supervisors Meeting - Animal Services

Members of the Board,

On behalf of the hundreds of supporters of the Animal Shelter Coalition for El Dorado County, I urge you to consider the following as you review, again, Animal Services functions and the long overdue permanent Western Slope Animal Shelter project.

First, In July 2010 your Board authorized the permanent shelter to move ahead and directed staff to complete Phase 1 construction – the site improvements. That was the right decision. While we've seen no progress yet on Phase 1, we are hopeful that commitment will be carried out soon. The need for the permanent shelter has not diminished. There is no other shelter on the West Slope for the number and variety of animals housed. Shelter operations remain in an undersized, worn out rental building, four years after moving to this stop gap location. We are experiencing the best bidding climate public agencies have seen for years, your current lease will expire in 2013, and even if the building did not have clear shortcomings, the temporary shelter simply cannot remain in that location long term.

Secondly, we know that the need to shelter animals in custody arises in great part from the essential services and mandated activities carried out by Animal Services Officers as they enforce a variety of State Codes and local ordinances. They respond to thousands of calls each year, including loose animals, animal bites, aggressive dogs, and neglect complaints. Many of these calls result in animals in the custody of the Animal Services Division including mandatory stray/hold animals, potentially dangerous dogs, animals in protective custody pending court cases, and animals that must be quarantined.

Third, the Animal Services Division receives thousands of hours of volunteer support each year. We believe that should be recognized and valued. We also ask you to recognize that: 1) in order for these volunteers and the multiple non-profit animal welfare organizations to make their contributions to this County service, an adequate, appropriately sized and designed permanent shelter needs to be in place; and 2) the Division's field services, enforcement, and mandatory sheltering activities are appropriately carried out by trained Animal Services Officers and shelter employees.

Following this latest review of the Animal Services Division, we trust there will be a better understanding of the essential public safety services provided and the resulting need to shelter animals in custody, driven by those field services activities. Finally, as the need for the permanent shelter clearly remains, we hope to see progress soon on Phase 1 construction, as directed by the Board in July 2010, and we urge the Board of Supervisors to retain the project funds for their intended purpose.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lee, for
Animal Shelter Coalition for El Dorado County