

## Western Slope Animal Shelter – March 1, 2011 Update

While we continue to advocate for the completion of the Western Slope Animal Shelter, and hundreds of you voiced your support, the project remains at risk. *The remaining funds will once again be a target in upcoming budget hearings and likely at an April 11 Board of Supervisors Workshop* on several Animal Services topics. **Your Supervisor will once again need to hear from you that safely and humanely housing stray, neglected, abandoned animals is a necessity and that the long overdue project to complete the permanent shelter must proceed.** We will update the sample letter shortly for your use, and are working to incorporate some recent developments.

In July 2010, after years “on hold,” the Board of Supervisors voted to move forward on the permanent shelter in a phased approach. Phase 1, site improvements, was to begin in the Fall of 2010. We were thrilled to report to the hundreds of Shelter Coalition supporters that progress was finally taking place. So we are quite disappointed and, yes, fairly frustrated, that seven months after that approval, nothing has progressed – we see no evidence of work to move Phase 1 forward. Meanwhile, temporary Western Slope animal sheltering operations remain in a 70 year old, worn out, undersized building with, among other deficiencies, no satisfactory outdoor exercise areas for dogs in the shelter’s care.

We are now informed that we can expect to see Phase 1 construction begin in the summer of 2011 and are hopeful that this latest schedule can be achieved. Meanwhile, however, the project funds are at risk. We’ve heard the complaint from some quarters that the funds set aside for the shelter should not be spent for that purpose, but rather used to plug the shortfall in the County’s Operating Budget. That course of action is clearly ill advised and many County residents and businesses have shared with decision makers the shortsightedness of that suggestion. (See the Mountain Democrat My Turn Column, on this News Page for a logical review of that issue). Now we are hearing another argument, questioning the provision by El Dorado County of animal sheltering at all and, we believe, that argument is indirectly aimed at the permanent shelter capital project.

Stay tuned to the Coalition website [www.newshelternow.org](http://www.newshelternow.org) and watch for email updates. We know El Dorado County homeless animals will soon, once again, need your voice.