



# County of Santa Cruz

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## COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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Agenda: August 20, 2002

August 12, 2002

Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

### ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES TRANSITION

Dear Members of the Board:

On June 26, 2002 your Board directed staff to return with a status report on the transition of animal services from the Santa Cruz SPCA to the new Santa Cruz County Animal Services Authority (ASA). The new ASA, whose members consist of the County of Santa Cruz and the cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, and Scotts Valley took over the responsibility of animal control field activity on July 1, 2002 and animal sheltering services on August 1, 2002. This report provides you with a summary of activities to date regarding the transition of field and shelter services and the status of negotiations with the SPCA for lease and potential sale of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue property.

#### Animal Control Field Services

On June 30 seven (7) members of the SPCA animal control field staff transitioned to the new ASA organization, representing the first employees to provide animal control services to the member agencies. The staff are currently designated as Santa Cruz County employees until their retirement and health benefit status through PERS is finalized when they will become separate employees of the ASA. The field staff includes four (4) animal control officers, two (2) animal services assistants, and one (1) licensing clerk. Under the direction of the interim general manager of the ASA, uninterrupted animal control field services began on July 1. Field staff were located at the SPCA property at 2200 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue in a modular office trailer and utilized acquired animal transport units from the SPCA as well as a converted County cargo van. Sheltering of animals and certain licensing services continued to be provided by the SPCA during the month of July under a contract extension with the public partners approved by your Board on June 26.

The transition of field services from the SPCA to the ASA during the month of July was relatively seamless. Field patrols were dispatched on a targeted basis and were concentrated during peak times for patrol needs in various areas. Based on feedback from the ASA staff and interim general manager and the lack of any citizen complaints during this period, we believe the transition was

successful and resulted in appropriate service for the public. Additionally, during July, there was ongoing communication between the management staff of the SPCA and ASA to coordinate the field and patrol services provided separately by the two entities during that month.

Although it was anticipated that the new ASA field staff and the ASA shelter staff would continue to co-locate with the SPCA at the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue site after August 1, lease negotiations for the site were not completed by July 31 and the SPCA declined to allow the ASA to utilize the facility as planned. Therefore, the ASA Field Services and Operations staff were required to relocate on August 1 to a County owned facility at 1080 Emeline. This new location is suitable for the field services operation in the short term and has provided the ASA staff with a location from which they are able to continue managing the provision of animal care services as part of a short term decentralized shelter and care program. A longer term facility plan is under development and may include the purchase of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue site or an alternative location. A further discussion of facility negotiations with the SPCA and other options is provided below.

### **Animal Sheltering Services**

The transition of SPCA shelter staff began almost immediately after the July 1 animal control services transfer. The ASA agreement approved by your Board on June 18, 2002 provided for the majority of SPCA staff involved in animal care and client services to be transferred to County employment upon the ASA taking over animal sheltering responsibilities on August 1. There were sixteen (16) SPCA staff members slated for transition to County employment. The ASA agreement did not provide a guarantee for the former SPCA employees to have positions with the ASA, but rather, a commitment that allowed for their application to be considered for positions within the new organization. The ASA agreement required that all employees wishing consideration for employment with the ASA be required to meet the minimum standards required of the newly created ASA positions. These requirements included County health physicals, criminal background examinations and a one (1) year probation period. Of the sixteen (16) candidates desiring to join the ASA fourteen (14) successfully met the requirements.

Based on the anticipation of a lease agreement for the use of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue shelter, the ASA staff devoted their efforts to being prepared for full shelter operations on August 1. The most pressing matters were the transition of staff, implementing the management information systems, coordinating the telecom requirements and establishing relationships with vendors and suppliers needed for the shelter operations. The staff also developed a short term contingency plan for the shelter and care of animals in case lease negotiations for the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue shelter were not concluded in a timely manner. Arrangements were made for emergency boarding facilities at local veterinary hospitals, boarding kennels and the Watsonville Animal Control Shelter.

On July 31, at approximately 10:30 PM, the interim general manager was notified by the Executive Director of the SPCA that the ASA staff would not be allowed to occupy the SPCA shelter due to the lack of a lease agreement for the facility. Although last minute efforts had been made by the ASA representatives to avoid this disruption, they were unsuccessful. At 7:00 AM on August 1, ASA staff began to arrive for work and were not allowed access to the shelter or other buildings on the property with the exception of the modular trailer. At approximately 8:00 AM on August 1 the ASA received an eviction notice for the field service office trailer from the SPCA. As a result, the ASA relocated to the 1080 Emeline offices and were fully operational within twenty-four (24) hours.

The short term service plan that was developed by the ASA included a number of components. Animals requiring impoundment and care were immediately housed in the emergency facilities arranged prior to August 1 and animal control field services continued to be fully operational. The animals that were housed at the SPCA's 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue shelter as of August 1 continued to be cared for and managed by the SPCA. The ASA assumed responsibility for gradually implementing the short term plan.

As part of this short term plan, ASA staff are being fully utilized by having the animal control units serve as mobile animal shelters. Pre-impoundment vaccinations and other receiving requirements are being performed by animal care personnel who accompany animal control officers in the field. This activity reduces the expense at the veterinary hospitals by eliminating the need for these hospitals to vaccinate and health check incoming animals. Staff not directly involved in animal care and impoundment are arranging for the impoundment locations and providing support to the impoundment facilities being used. An example of this is the assignment of ASA staff to the Watsonville Animal Control Shelter where they can assist in the care of animals housed at this facility under the direction of Watsonville staff.

As of August 1 the ASA has been responsible for the impoundment and care of approximately forty-two (42) animals being housed at six (6) different locations within the County. Lost and strayed animals have been displayed on the County's website since August 3, with a number of these animals being reclaimed by their owners. In addition, on August 10 the first unclaimed animals that had been impounded by the ASA became available and were placed up for adoption. Of the six (6) animals available for adoption all were placed on their first day of availability. The August 10 adoption site was "Pet Pals", a local pet supply company on Soquel Avenue who had generously offered their location for this adoption site. A second adoption site was set up at Westside Veterinary Clinic in the City of Santa Cruz on August 11, again due to the generosity of this business.

The directive of both your Board and the commitment of the ASA Board was that all animals under the responsibility of the ASA were to be given the same care and advantage for placement as that provided under the care of the SPCA. This is a mandate that all ASA staff remain committed to and that is being implemented as part of the ASA mission.

### **Status of Lease Negotiations**

Lease negotiations between the ASA representatives and the SPCA began in earnest during the month of July. The goal was to conclude two lease agreements: a one month lease for the use of the modular trailer being used for animal control field services during July, and a subsequent three to four month lease with option periods for the entire SPCA property to serve as the ASA animal shelter, field services offices and administration. It was the intent of the ASA that the three to four month lease would allow sufficient time for appraisals by both parties and purchase negotiations for the acquisition of the SPCA property to provide a long term sheltering solution for the ASA. This was an understood goal of both parties prior to the start of negotiations. In addition, the ASA representatives had indicated their agreement with a co-location of the SPCA on the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue site for continued coordination of animal related services.

As previously discussed, lease negotiations were not successfully concluded during the month of July. The primary issues were economic, with the two parties significantly apart on the monthly lease rate. In addition, the attorney representing the SPCA indicated that there was no interest at that time on the part of the SPCA for the sale of the property as previously contemplated. A letter from the attorney representing the SPCA with a list of non-negotiable terms was received by the ASA Chair on June 28. The SPCA's letter included, among other requirements, that the disallowed contract costs previously identified by the Auditor-Controller and owed to the public partners be addressed by the ASA as part of the lease agreement. A response to the letter was immediately issued by the ASA Chair with an offer which was subsequently rejected by the SPCA Board. With regard to the disallowed costs, the response letter indicated that the ASA had no jurisdiction over these costs and the matter was outside the scope of the lease discussions. The SPCA's rejection of the ASA offer then precipitated the need to implement the short term contingency plan for the ASA operations on August 1 as described above.

In an effort to continue exploring all options for a suitable longer term site for the new ASA operations, discussions with the SPCA regarding a lease and potential purchase of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue property by the ASA are continuing. A time line has been established that provides for conclusion of the current negotiations by August 22, the next scheduled date for the ASA Board meeting. The negotiations are premised upon the continued interest of the SPCA to explore a sale of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue property. Towards this end, both parties have indicated their agreement to secure the services of separate MAI appraisers for independent appraisals of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue property. The parties have also agreed to utilize the services of a volunteer mediator identified by Supervisor Pirie. Discussions regarding the disallowed costs will occur separately based upon a time line established in conjunction with the Auditor-Controller. In a separate letter on today's agenda, the Auditor-Controller is recommending a report back date of October 22, 2002 on these issues. This time line will allow for these discussions to occur at the same time as the negotiations regarding the potential sale of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue property.

#### **Additional Facility and Operational Alternatives for Animal Services**

Concurrent with the lease negotiations, the Real Property Division is continuing to identify various other sites and operational alternatives for shelter services if the lease negotiations with the SPCA are not concluded successfully. In this regard, if negotiations cannot provide a solution that includes the ultimate use and purchase of the SPCA property on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue other options will be considered both for the interim and long term period. It is anticipated that either arrangements for an available boarding facility or other facility with portable kennels could be finalized shortly. Various facility options for animal shelter services have been developed by different jurisdictions that are serving as models for our evaluation of various options.

It is the intention of the ASA at this time to first secure an interim location for approximately a two to three year period with either the SPCA, or at another location. The ASA will also be engaging in discussions regarding the long term acquisition of the SPCA site, or alternatively, another permanent animal services facility that would house the animal shelter, animal control field staff and administration. The ASA members are exploring sites that may be suitable within their jurisdictions including publically owned facilities.

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**Summary and Recommendation**

The successful transition of the animal control field services effective July 1 and the animal care and sheltering activities on August 1 was primarily due to the hard work, dedication, and creative problem solving by the newly transitioned employees and the interim general manager of the ASA. In conjunction with various County agencies, the ASA staff was able to acquire the necessary equipment and outfitting of field staff to perform their field activities and was able to responsibly care for and shelter required animals through a decentralized, but well coordinated system of care. Cooperation and assistance was also provided by the Auditor-Controller, General Services including the County Radio Shop, Information Services Department, Parks and Recreation, the Sheriff's Department and the County Administrative Office during the transition period. Other public members of the ASA have been very supportive of the new ASA staff and the development of an efficient and effective service delivery system for animal care and control services in this community and we appreciate their excellent stewardship of the ASA during this most unusual transition process.

The public agencies that are members of the ASA are very appreciative of the staff that have made this transition a success. The public has been well served by the new agency and their continued commitment to animal welfare and public safety.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file this report on the transition of animal control field and sheltering services.

Very truly yours,



Susan A. Mauriello  
County Administrative Officer

cc. Santa Cruz County Animal Services Authority Board Members  
City of Santa Cruz  
City of Scotts Valley  
City of Capitola  
Auditor-Controller  
County Counsel  
Real Property Division of Public Works  
SPCA Board of Directors