

Council aims to solve stray animal problem

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Wednesday, 23 January 2013 13:52 -

After years of working to get an animal shelter in Holyoke, it appears as though the planning will finally come to fruition. During the Jan. 15 Holyoke City Council meeting, members discussed the future possibilities.

The planned shelter will be located on the east edge of town, just north of the gun club. By transforming the back 24 feet of the 60-foot-long storage building into an animal shelter, the city will be able to save tens of thousands of dollars. The construction of a new facility could have cost the city upward of \$100,000, but the early rough estimate for work to the existing building is around \$40,000.

As of now, the shelter is only expected to house dogs, but the pending cat ordinance may have an impact. After dealing with guidelines and regulations for years for housing dogs, the city may choose to avoid similar problems that would arise from accommodating felines as well.

Six kennels and two dog runs would be included, with the possibility for an expansion down the road. Dogs will be housed for five days before being sent to a no-kill shelter.

No time period has been set for when construction could begin as the city is awaiting approval from the state.

City ordinance for cats to be constructed

As concern for stray cats in Holyoke grows, the city council is in the process of drafting an ordinance to deal with the problem.

After a 4-2 vote last week, with David Churchwell and Scott Murray opposing the ordinance, it

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was decided that the document would be drafted. During the construction of the ordinance, the current Sterling cat policy will be used as a reference to help ensure a thorough document.

Although City Attorney Al Wall stated that cat ordinances are not always effective, most of the council agreed that one needed to be created.

“When you can’t enjoy your own backyard, it’s time to do something,” council member Brian Akey said.

His sentiments were echoed by Mayor Orville Tonsing, who added, “I think we need to do something. We have several areas in town that have a problem.”

Some sort of trap would have to be concocted to catch the strays around town, which means that any cat roaming the streets would be susceptible to being caught. Cat owners are encouraged to keep their pets indoors and could possibly face a fine or other punishment for not cooperating. Cat owners would also be required to license their cats as well as have them vaccinated.

It would be unlawful for any unauthorized person to catch a cat and deliver it to the authority. This would eliminate neighbors from taking the law into their own hands and causing more problems in the community.

A problem that may arise is that the city does not currently plan to house any cats that are picked up. This could lead to the possibility of someone’s pet cat being euthanized if they do not keep the cat indoors.

The ordinance will be reviewed at the next council meeting Tuesday, Feb. 5.

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Reports from city officials

Police Chief Doug Bergstrom delivered the end-of-the-year report for 2012. In that time, the department generated 1,667 calls for service, wrote 231 reports, handed out 51 citations, arrested 17 and gave out 254 warnings. The 231 reports total six more than in 2011. Out of the 46 that were written into municipal court, six are still in the court process and two were dismissed.

For Dec. 27-Jan. 9, the department had 57 calls for service, one citation, 16 reports and gave out seven warnings.

Other Business

In other business Jan. 15, the Holyoke City Council:

—approved the 2013 contribution to Northeastern Colorado Association of Local Governments for administration of NECTA County Express in the amount of \$1,330.

—approved the purchase request from the Holyoke Police Department to buy four gas masks, extra filters and carrying pouches at a cost of \$1,820.

—accepted an engagement letter from Lauer, Szabo & Associates, PC for the audit of the financial statements and the preparation of the local highway finance report for the year ended Dec. 31, 2012, not to exceed \$10,000 for the audit and hourly rate plus travel and other out-of-pocket expenses for the highway report.

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—agreed to reimburse Terri Biersdorfer \$100 for renewal of certification and reinstatement fee to the International Code Council.

—agreed to a 3 percent raise for all city employees on salary.

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