

FW: [EXT]SLO Board of Supervisors Mtg_Dec 10, 2019_Item 34 Animal Services Shelter

Debbie Arnold

Mon 12/9/2019 10:00 AM

To: AD-Board-Clerk <ad_board_clerk@co.slo.ca.us>

Please add to correspondence for item #34. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Micki Olinger
Legislative Assistant
5th District Supervisor Debbie Arnold

(p) 805-781-4339

(f) 805-781-1350

molinger@co.slo.ca.us

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

From: Jeff Carr <jdc.email@yahoo.com>

Sent: Sunday, December 8, 2019 5:27 PM

To: John Peschong <jpeschong@co.slo.ca.us>; Bruce Gibson <bgibson@co.slo.ca.us>; Adam Hill <ahill@co.slo.ca.us>; Lynn Compton <lcompton@co.slo.ca.us>; Debbie Arnold <darnold@co.slo.ca.us>

Subject: [EXT]SLO Board of Supervisors Mtg_Dec 10, 2019_Item 34 Animal Services Shelter

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Dear Supervisors,

I am writing to you regarding Item 34 on the December 10, 2019, SLO Board of Supervisors meeting--the approval of cost and contractor for the new SLO County Animal Shelter.

The county needs a new animal shelter of some type. The current shelter is in poor condition. However--from the beginning of look at this process, I've found the Animal Shelter project to be seriously lacking in oversight, scrutiny, and transparency. Public input is lacking--AND--costs have skyrocketed.

I urge the Supervisors to force a 'pause' in this project to review plans and costs with the public in a series of meetings at various locations in the County (2-3 locations covering from north to south). This is normal and a recommended method when taking on such a large expensive municipal project. In my view, the county has failed to show proper scrutiny over this project and to seek public 'buy-in' and acceptance. It should have been done years ago--but it's even more critical now.

I was actually shocked at your early board meetings to see how helpless supervisors were to get answers about the project and costs. Sadly--when asking if there was anything that could be done to lower costs, it was implied as I understood it, that the only available cost savings was to start limiting the stay of animals (i.e., euthanasia). I don't believe that for a minute and found the response lazy and unsatisfactory.

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 Presented By: Board of Supervisors Office
 Received and Posted: December 9, 2019
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When asked about multiple shelters, e.g, a separate north county shelter, the response was 'it wasn't practical' without providing any backup or explanation. It truly was an embarrassing moment for anyone expecting any level of scrutiny or review of the project by the county or the supervisors. Since then, especially with respect to this project, I've had a strange feeling of 'taxation without representation'. I don't like it.

Since the initial supervisor meetings, I have reviewed documents provided on the county website and requested additional information related to the shelter project. When reviewing employee surveys--I was surprised to read that some shelter employees never interact with animals, and some wanted 'an office with a view where they would not smell or hear the animals'. Overall, there seems to be an abundance of office space. Eliminating unnecessary office space--starting with office jobs that don't require interaction with the animals--would lower costs. Jobs not requiring interaction with animals could be located elsewhere or provided by other county departments.

What are the long term maintenance cost estimates for the new shelter. From what I've read, some of the increase in material/building costs are intended to reduce maintenance costs. Tell me by how much--and how much it will cost the county to maintain the facility?

The county refers to a 'Steering Committee' as some means of scrutiny or guidance, but I've found no information identifying the members of the committee, or any record of meeting agendas or minutes. I did see some records of very early meetings--but found them as primarily attended by county employees and saw no participation from contracting cities or other organizations.

In addition, I've searched for reporting information from Animal Services. As far back as 2008, the Humane Society criticized their reporting of animal intakes etc., and requested Animal Services put these reports on their website--emphasizing the benefits that can result from public transparency. At this point, I still don't find the reports on their site. ---- Sadly, I don't see the cities being any better at providing this data to their councils or residents.

Transparency of Animal Services activity--between governments and with the public--needs to be improved. I've spent hours of time over months in search of information, and have yet to get satisfactory results. The Animal Shelter needs to have coordination meetings with the contracting cities that include public participation and are open to the public--with public notices, agendas, and minutes. Cities need to publicly post their reported numbers--and more prevention activities have to be initiated and supported by the county and individual cities; e.g., spay and neuter promotions and clinics, low cost id 'chipping' of animals, dog and cat collar tags with owner contact information, pet ownership education. We need more emphasis on reducing the need for shelters.

Other areas of concern include-

Per documents, the use of special construction methods and materials for shelter walls that will limit bacteria growth--Are these materials used throughout the shelter or only in areas

where animals are housed? What has been done to limit these areas so the expensive materials do not have to be used throughout the shelter?

Transportation costs of animals--i.e., How much is being spent to transport animals from the north and south to the centralized animal shelter. The northern cities have been identified as the biggest users--do these transportation costs warrant another look at a separate north shelter? Why transport animals long distances if they have local owners that will need to pick them up?

Why does the shelter have two separate 'input areas' for animals; that is, one area for Animal Control Officers bringing in animals and a second area for people surrendering animals? Why not have all animals 'brought in' or 'surrendered' taken to the same area. It seems wasteful to duplicate the area, supply, and employee resources.

Why is there a separate 'euthanasia' area? How many total animals are euthanized per day or week over a year's time? Why not integrate this function in with the health care area or nearby room? When needed, can this be done in a dignified way for the animal without having a dedicated, separate area?

Why does the Animal Shelter need a large dedicated copy room? What shelter functions require paper copies--and how many copies are made per month in a typical year?

I'd be happy to discuss my questions and concerns further.

Jeff Carr
Paso Robles, CA