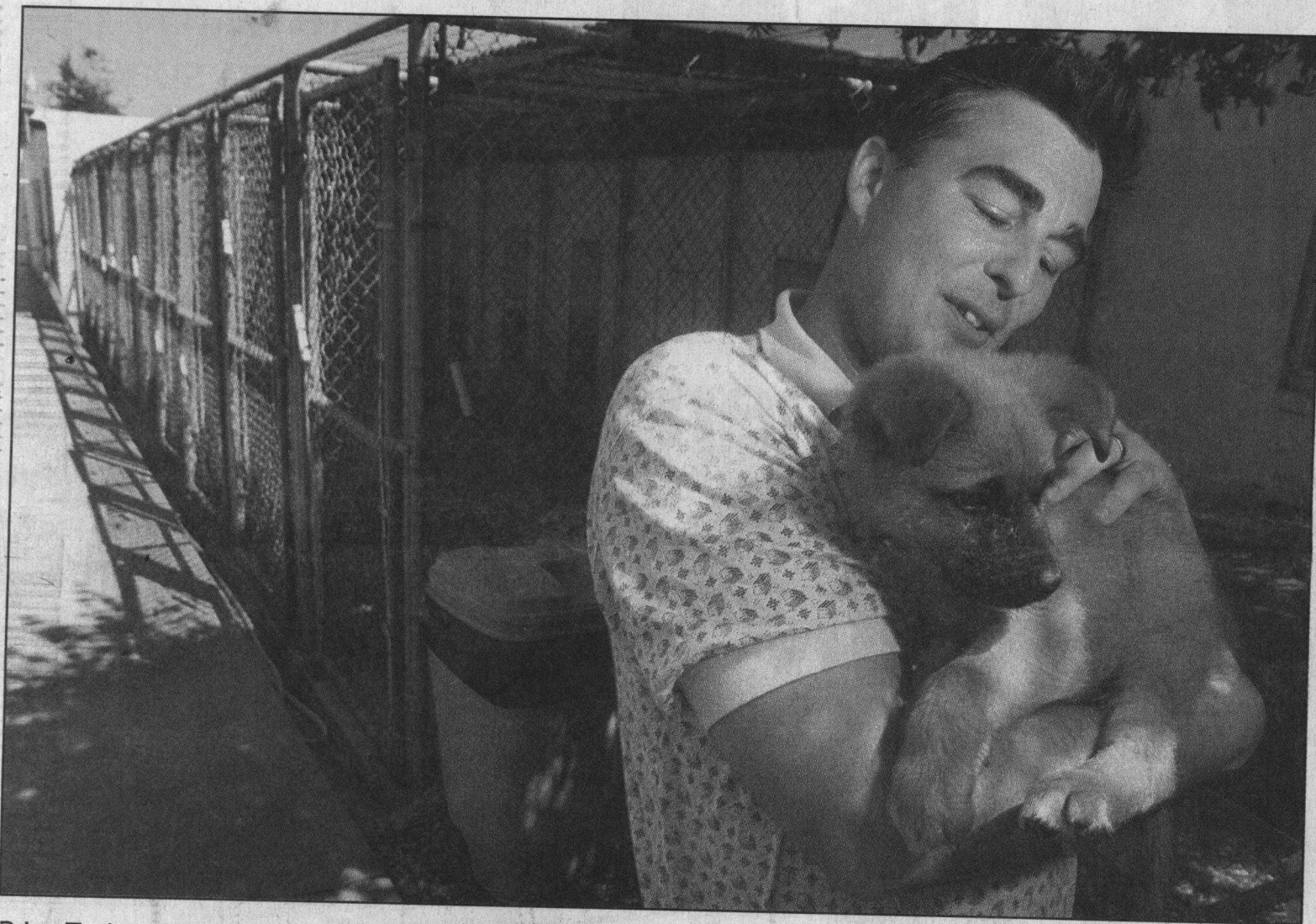


# SPCA VOWS to lock it up

Local governments refuse  
to pay their way for  
mandated services,  
animal control group says



Brian Taylor of the Santa Cruz SPCA spends some time with a client at the Live Oak shelter Friday.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Animal Shelters

Officials say  
they were  
blindsided by  
threat to close

By DARREL W. COLE  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The Santa Cruz SPCA threw a curveball at local public officials Friday by announcing it will phase out its government contracts by July 2000.

The organization provides animal-control services to Santa Cruz County and the cities of Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley. It also pro-

vides sheltering services for those areas and the city of Capitola, which operates its own animal control.

SPCA officials said the contracts must be canceled because local governments aren't willing to spend 50 percent more to help the organization satisfy a new state law requiring shelters to hold animals longer before euthanizing

them.

The news took city and county officials by surprise. They said they had not made any firm decisions about animal-control costs and were still willing to negotiate with the nonprofit organization.

The state law, written by state Sen. Tom Hayden, D-Santa Moni-

Please see SPCA — BACK PAGE

## SPCA

Continued from Page A1

ca, takes effect in July and aims to increase animal adoption by increasing the holding periods for animals to up to seven days. While the Santa Cruz shelter, like most shelters, attempts to hold on to most animals as long as possible, the previous law only required a three-day holding period.

The longer period, SPCA officials said, will crowd shelter spaces and mean that all dogs and cats, even those that are dangerous or otherwise impossible to place, must stay seven days and take up space that could be used for adoptable animals.

Because of the change, SPCA co-director Brian Taylor proposed that the government agencies pay 50 percent more, taking the total government contribution to about \$1.5 million. The additional money would be used for additional staff to train and prepare animals for adoption.

In the last budget year the county paid \$735,000 to the SPCA.

If the SPCA were to continue accepting animals under the government contracts and the new law, "We'd either have to build new kennels for our animals or increase the killing," Taylor said.

The SPCA now operates on a \$1.5 million budget, with about \$500,000 coming from private sources. Under the current contracts with local governments, it provides eight animal-control officers and shelter space, Taylor said. The shelter, at 2200 Seventh Ave. in Santa Cruz, has kennels for 60 dogs and 60 cats and areas for other animals as well.

The shelter houses about 8,500 animals each year and is usually full between April and October.

Taylor and co-director Jo Storsberg said they are serious about dropping the government contracts. After making requests for more money, they said, it became evident there was no money available or a lack of political will to commit additional resources.

Taylor said SPCAs in Monterey and Santa Clara counties announced plans earlier this year to drop their government contracts for similar reasons.

"If we would have wanted to take a hard-line stance, we would have done this at the same time as Monterey and Santa Clara," Taylor said. "We took the time to develop a proposal to be really proactive. Our goal from the beginning was to create a partnership and up to this week we worked hard to do so."

Santa Cruz City Manager Richard Wilson and County Administrative Officer Pat Busch said Friday they had no idea such a drastic move was coming.

"I'm stunned," Wilson said. "This is a big deal. But it's disappointing because it would seem to me ... they have some responsibility to the governments they have contracted with for so many years. I find it completely shocking."

Wilson said Taylor never approached him about the need for more money. Storsberg asked the Santa Cruz City Council to consider giving more money at two budget hearings, the most recent held Thursday night.

Taylor said the additional money also would be used to pay the medical and other expenses of animals cared for temporarily by "foster families."