

County Animal Services Formally Abandons Plan to Lease Former SPCA's Live Oak Building for New Scotts Valley Location

Animal Shelter
by Michael Thomas

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Loading the Ark

The Santa Cruz County Animal Services Authority will move its operations to a new facility in Scotts Valley this winter, disappointing SPCA officials who hoped the County would purchase their now vacant animal shelter on Seventh Avenue.

The Animal Services Authority (ASA) was established this year to care for stray and lost animals after the County's contract with the SPCA expired amid controversy over unauthorized expenditures, back debt the SPCA owes the County and the on-going cost of providing animal control and shelter services.

The SPCA has acknowledged a \$230,000 debt to the County, and tied cancellation of the debt to a \$2.5 million sale offer for their Santa Cruz property. The County believed the sale price was too high. A subsequent offer by the SPCA that would have the County lease the facility was also deemed too expensive. The SPCA used to provide animal control and shelter services to the County, along with the cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley. The City of Watsonville maintains its own services and shelter.

No Permanent Plans Yet

ASA Coordinator Tricia Geisreiter reports that the Authority "will continue to consider purchasing the SPCA facility as a long term home."

But neither the proposed sale price nor a \$25,000 monthly lease option was palatable to the Authority, which signed a three-year lease for a large warehouse on Janus Way. At \$13,250 monthly, the building will cost almost half what the SPCA requested.

ASA General Manager Michael McFarland concedes that "The Seventh Avenue facility is slightly larger overall and the location is preferable for public purposes."

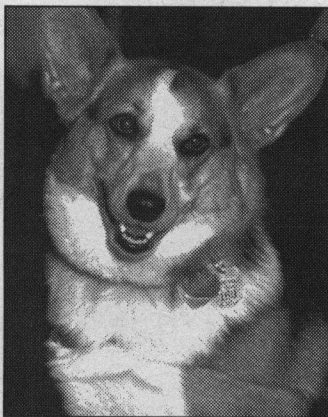
County residents who want to turn animals over to the Agency will now have to drive up to Scotts Valley.

McFarland said the decision made economic sense.

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In mid-December, the Authority will start moving animals to its new facility. The agency is currently responsible for about 175 animals, temporarily boarded in vet clinics and kennels throughout the County.

The agency has a wide variety



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— Michael McFarland,
ASA Director

Way building will cost \$230,000 [a year]," he said..

The agency will unpack its bags in Scotts Valley early next month and plans to spend \$120,000 retrofitting the building by mid January. The aging facility on Seventh Avenue would also have required significant improvements before the ASA could move in.

General Manager McFarland estimated that 30 percent of the retrofit expenditures will go toward equipment such as animal enclosures that can be transported to the ASA's permanent site when the lease expires.

of cuddly cats and dogs up for adoption this holiday season. In addition to cats, dogs, hamsters and rats, there's also an iguana and a pair of doves. No partridge in a pear tree, though.

The ASA is also holding a stray goat that was found wandering through Soquel. If it continues to go unclaimed, the goat will go up for adoption and could make a good "lawnmower" come spring.

Adoptable animals can be viewed online by visiting the County's website at www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us and clicking on the "Rescued Animals" link. □