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Committee recommends county sign new animal shelter control

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SANTA CRUZ — It appears certain the animal control facility on Seventh Avenue is headed for another contract with the county — but this time under new management and a new name:

Following a five-month review of three separate proposals, a joint cities-county committee has recommended renewing the contract with the Santa Cruz County Animal Welfare SPCA and Humane Society.

The new executive director, Douglas Fakkema, has suggested shortening the title to the SPCA.

Fakkema hopes to carry the SPCA into the future, leaving behind its beleaguered past. The county Grand Jury and a group of animal welfare activists had criticized the operation over the past two years. The criticism prompted a search for a new agency to handle the animal-welfare services.

County Administrative Officer George Newell said two of the groups vying for the contract — the Humane Society and University Services Agency — couldn't find sites to shelter animals.

Although the two groups have expressed an interest in running the program for the county and cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley, Newell said in a letter to supervisors that their lack of facilities led to the committee's recommendation to stay with the current facility.

Also, Newell pointed to the new direction Fakkema is bringing to the Seventh Avenue facility as another reason

for staying with that program.

Fakkema has proposed a variety of changes, including adding education programs and revamping the county Animal Control Ordinance.

He has suggested a citizen's task force be appointed to revise the law. Specifically, he has suggested redefining the activities the SPCA can carry out and rewriting the law to carry an emphasis of protecting people and their pets.

Fakkema has proposed hiring an additional animal-control officer and shelter attendant/office assistant. Also, he has proposed spending \$18,500 on an education program to bring animal welfare to schools and the public. That money would be spent on hiring an education coordinator to write newsletters and coordinate in-house training programs.

Ultimately, Fakkema hopes to construct a new building at the site, with the purpose of becoming an education center for animal welfare.

Through his various innovations, Fakkema proposes to increase the number of pet adoptions and the care of animals taken in by the shelter.

Among other things, he proposes to initiate a better complaint process so public comment can be addressed.

CAO Newell has suggested the Board of Supervisors select the SPCA as the animal-control agency; seek a joint agreement with the three cities for services to be provided; and authorize a task force for revising the Animal Control Ordinance.