

6/15/09

Mayor: No more phone for local SF Area Humane Society

David Nichol
T-H Staff Writer

Mayor Gordon McCoy said actions he has taken are the beginning of the break he wants between the City of Forrest City and the Forrest City Area Humane Society.

An e-mail was received at the Times-Herald office on Friday, saying that McCoy had notified the Humane Society that as of July 1, the FCAHS phone line at

the shelter would be disconnected.

When contacted, McCoy confirmed what the e-mail had said.

"The city pays it, and the city doesn't have to pay it," said McCoy. "This is the beginning of our separation from them."

Not surprisingly, since there is almost always a disagreement involved when the city and the Humane Society are mentioned in the same breath, and there are

conflicting points of view.

According to the e-mail, one of several which were received from Humane Society members, the lease agreement between the city and the FCAHS states that the city will pay utilities, including the telephone.

However, McCoy disputes this.

"I'm going to be kind. Do they honestly think the city is responsible?" said McCoy. "The city made a mistake of building a

city humane shelter on private property. But we certainly didn't make the mistake of signing something so we'd be paying their bills."

McCoy continued, "We're not trying to put them out of business, but we're not going to run their business on the backs of the taxpayers of this community. When did they start thinking the taxpayers were supposed to pay for their phone service? It's ludicrous. I never

heard such a thing in my life.

"If we're going to pay their bills, why don't we pay King Disposal's bills?" he said. "I don't think the taxpayers would appreciate that. Why don't we pay everybody's bills? I support what the people at the Humane Society do, but no longer will I support them from this standpoint."

In a related development, McCoy confirmed that FCAHS

See SHELTER on Page 2

SHELTER

(Continued from Page 1) members will no longer be able to have dogs euthanized at city expense. Only city employees will be allowed to do that in the future.

The FCAHS has taken exception to that ruling.

"Since it is our goal to save as many dogs as possible, the only time the Society initiates euthanasia is when an animal is suffering," one e-mail stated.

Another e-mail stated, "Since (former mayor) Danny Ferguson,

and including (former mayor) Larry Bryant, the Humane Society has had the ability to have injured or sick dogs euthanized for the City when necessary... No questions were ever asked."

McCoy said that now, the Humane Society can have as many dogs euthanized as they want, as long as the Humane Society pays for it.

"They can take whatever they want up to the veterinarian, as long as it's in the name of the Humane Society," said McCoy. "But they will not do it in the name of the City of Forrest City. They want to go out and have the dogs killed and then bill it to us."

One e-mail stated that both animal control officers would be gone this week for training, leaving no city employees at the humane shelter.

"That's part of the madness," said McCoy. "They try to tell the public that we're going to walk off and leave dogs. We have two employees, and we are smart enough to send only one to training at a time."

A later e-mail acknowledged that only one animal control officer would be gone.

City employees have been accused by the Humane Society of handling dogs roughly, leaving them in the kennels while hosing them out, getting the dogs wet and contaminating food and water, and not giving the dogs sufficient food and water.

On May 11, animal control officer Roy Hamilton was arrested on charges of animal cruelty, on allegations made by members of the Humane Society. He has pled not guilty to the charges and is

scheduled for court July 13.

That is what prompted McCoy's comments to the council at the May 19 meeting. At that meeting, he said anything less than a complete break would simply continue the problem.

"It will never be corrected, it will never be an environment where our employees can work in peace, as long as we continue to operate the way we are. There is nothing you can say to convince me of any other way. I have witnessed time and time again. It's not what I'm being told. It's what I see," said McCoy at the time.

In the meantime, Humane Society members have not backed off on their claims of abuse.