

# Hamilton's trial on animal cruelty charges postponed

## Witnesses' scheduling conflicts cited

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Forrest City Animal Control Officer Roy Hamilton was scheduled to have his day in court on Monday, but that date has been postponed indefinitely after Judge Joe Boeckmann, sitting in for District Judge Steve Routon, granted a continuance requested by the prosecution.

Hamilton, joined by his attorney Deon Wilson and Forrest City Mayor Gordon

McCoy, was in court for his scheduled 1 p.m. hearing, but the witnesses for the prosecution were not.

Michael Ladd of Wynne, who is prosecuting the case for St. Francis County Deputy Prosecutor Chris Morledge, told the court that the witnesses to Hamilton's alleged improper care for dogs at the Forrest City Animal Shelter had scheduling conflicts which kept them from appearing in court.

"Judge Routon contacted me

Friday and said that he had received letters from several witnesses saying they could not be in court today because they had vacations and other scheduling conflicts and wanted the matter continued. Judge Routon said he would work to reschedule and that he would also contact Judge Ron Hunter in Poinsett County to ask him if he could set aside a date to hear the case because of the conflict of interest," said Ladd.

Ladd also turned to the packed courtroom and asked if any of the prosecution witnesses

were present and there was no answer.

Arrest records in the file against Hamilton show five affidavits accusing him of improperly caring for the animals at the shelter. The affidavits against Hamilton were signed by St. Francis County Humane Society members Gayden Schwartz, Pat Hollowell, Kim Hudspeth, Aron Phillips and Steven Little.

Wilson told Boeckmann that he too had spoken with Routon and was told that the matter could be heard Monday.

"I also received a call from Judge Routon Friday evening letting me know of the same issues that Mr. Ladd spoke of, and then I received a second call letting me know that we could proceed as scheduled," said Wilson.

"So I have prepared several motions in regard to this case based on the constitutionality of it, and we need to have those motions ruled on before this case is heard," Wilson said.

"Well, at some point a judge is going to hear this, whether it's

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me, or Judge Routon or another judge, and at that point those motions can be presented and will be ruled on," said Boeckmann.

Hamilton was arrested in May by the St. Francis County Sheriff's Department on misdemeanor charges of cruelty to animals and impounding animals. The alleged offense occurred on April 4. The allegations were that Hamilton was not providing food or water

for extended lengths of time to animals at the shelter.

According to officials with St. Francis County District Court, Hamilton's original court date was set for Thursday, May 21, where he pled not guilty. A bench trial date of June 8 was set, but the matter was continued at Morledge's request to Monday, July 13.

Hamilton and McCoy both elected not to comment on Monday's court action following the hearing.