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B SECTION

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County to enlarge animal shelter, adding 12 dog runs

Lengthy discussion ensues regarding budget overruns

By Dominik Stallings

The Douglas County Board approved an architecture agreement with Utz and Associates for the animal control shelter's new add-on. The vote was not considered until after a lengthy discussion about the animal control shelter and its budget. Board member Phillip Morris pointed out that 61 percent of its accounts were already over budget.

"The committee [budget and finance], felt that it would be good to get a better understanding of the animal control department, to bring the budget and expenses into line with each other," said Morris.

Board member and chairperson of the animal control subcommittee, Bibby Appleby, said that vet bills have tripled over the last several years. Animal Control Manager Michael Jones said that spaying, vaccinating, and microchipping costs around $400 for a female dog, while males are slightly cheaper.

County Clerk and Recorder Judi Pollock added that the budget for animal control hadn't been turned in for four to five years, so the budget has remained the same for all those years.

Board member Ed Carleton said that delaying the add-on for the animal control building wouldn't help much with the shelter's budget. The new add-on will give the shelter 12 more runs, giving more space for staff to work with animals, which can save valuable time.

Appleby said the shelter would also receive hot water and commercial air conditioning. Currently, two of the runs available are rusted out, forcing the shelter to use only two runs for the dogs.

Appleby said the original architect hired didn't fulfill his job, so they switched to Utz and Associates.

The Board brainstormed some possible solutions to tackling the rising veterinary costs. Board Member Dan Henry said working with the Shelter Medicine Program through the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine could potentially reduce costs to $50 per animal.

DOUGLAS COUNTY Farm Bureau President Jeff Young (left), presents Douglas County Board member Gary Luth with an "Allies in Agriculture" plaque. The Board previously passed a resolution in support of the Farm Bureau.

According to the program's website, funding from grants such as PetSmart Charities allow them to provide low-cost spay and neuter surgeries and other common services. Dr. Laura Frazier, who leads the program, could not be reached to confirm the program's costs.

In the past, a veterinarian from UI came out to Douglas County to provide services; however, a low amount of animals and eventually the COVID-19 pandemic, stopped the agreement altogether, said Appleyby. Right now the shelter uses an Arcola veterinarian that provides services to the shelter. To help save costs, they also are able to give vaccines, besides rabies.

The Board also discussed the fees surrounding animal surrenders. Right now it costs $200 to drop off an animal at the shelter. However, they are currently at capacity. The Shelter is also "no-kill," and only euthanizes animals too sick to treat.

"I think it speaks well for us that the longest animal in the shelter has been nine months. I'm kind of proud of that. They leave pretty soon," said Appleby.

Even with animals staying less than a year, intake at the shelter has increased by roughly 200 percent, according to Jones.

Going forward, the policies, procedures and budget for the animal control department will also be reviewed, to bring the department's budget into order.

In other news, the Board approved the Douglas County engineer's salary of $143,246. A 2.8 percent increase, as well as an additional $10,000 for

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Mennonite Relief Sale Aug. 25-26 at Otto Center, Arthur

The 61st annual Arthur Mennonite Relief Sale will be held Aug. 25–26 at the Otto Center, a half mile south of Arthur.

The activities will begin Friday at 4:30 p.m. with a pulled BBQ pork dinner and the auction starting at 6 p.m. On Saturday, a pancake and sausage breakfast runs from 6-10 a.m., with the auction beginning at 9 a.m. The silent auction is from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

The children's activities begin Saturday at 9 a.m. and feature a train ride around the grounds. The children's auction will begin at 10 a.m. featuring toys, books and even some pets. The kids do the bidding with the parents supervising, of course. A featured activity for the children will be a petting zoo and pony rides.

Lunch items will begin to be served at 11 a.m. including a chicken dinner, butterfly pork chops, bacon burgers and river fries. Other food offerings include a full lunch stand, peadros (taco salad), hot homemade pretzels, lemon shake-ups, fried pies, ice cream, slushies, root beer floats and a variety of baked goods. Be sure to take home some of the homemade yeast donuts, tea rings and cinnamon rolls made fresh both days.

The auction features a variety of handmade quilts, locally crafted Amish wood furniture and many other items. The proceeds from the auction are distributed with 80% given to Mennonite Central Committee and 20% remaining in the local community.

For more information concerning the sale, please contact Glen Rhodes (217-273-5026) or visit the website at http://www.arthurreliefsale.org/.