

1800 Gentian Circle
South Lake Tahoe, California 96150

March 31, 2011

**COPY SENT TO BOARD MEMBERS
FOR THEIR INFORMATION**

DATE 4-4-11

*Agenda Clerk
Public Health*

Supervisor Ray Nutting
El Dorado County Board of
Supervisors
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, California 95667

Re: Animal Services Division Essential Functions and Western Slope Shelter
Project

Dear Supervisor Nutting:

I urge you to retain Western Slope Animal Shelter project funds for their intended purpose – to complete the permanent shelter. Further, I urge you to recognize that the need to provide shelter for animals in custody arises, mostly, from the essential services and mandated activities carried out by Animal Services Officers. The public calls upon them to respond each year to thousands of calls, including loose animals, animal bites, aggressive dogs, and neglect complaints, among many others. In some cases, these calls result in an animal coming into the custody of the Animal Services Division, including potentially dangerous dogs, animals involved in court cases, strays taken in for mandated hold periods, or animals that must be quarantined.

Animal Services receives a great deal of volunteer support for sheltering duties that can be provided by volunteers, not to mention all the foster families housing and caring for animals at their homes, to provide care that's not possible at the County's facility. But the division's field services activities are appropriately performed by trained Animal Services Officers, authorized to enforce a variety of County ordinances and State Codes. And enforcement of those codes and ordinances results, at times in animals in custody. This is a County responsibility and an appropriate use of public resources.

In July 2010, your Board authorized the permanent shelter to move ahead and directed staff to complete Phase 1 construction – the site improvements, while retaining the remaining funds. That was the right decision. While we've seen no progress yet on Phase 1, we are hopeful that commitment will be carried out soon. The need for the permanent shelter has not diminished. There is no other shelter on the West Slope for the number and variety of animals housed. We are experiencing the best bidding climate public agencies have seen for years. Taking the project funds to temporarily close an operating budget gap does not solve the ongoing budget shortfall but does create another problem – the permanent shelter will continue to be needed and if project dollars are taken, there is no prospect of saving them again.

Please retain the project funds for the project, proceed as promised on Phase 1 and recognize the essential public safety functions carried out by the Animal Services Division. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Dehnen
Susan Dehnen

Supervisor Ray Nutting, District Two
El Dorado County
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

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Animal Services receives a great deal of volunteer support for the sheltering duties. I personally helped in construction of the spay and neuter clinic, which is currently in use. I also adopted a dog six years ago she was 7 at the time and lived to be 13 years old. Just last month I adopted another dog and am very pleased with the dog and the adoption procedures, Animal Services helped me with.

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