

County commissioners consider fate of recycling

Eliminating county recycling collection and making it mandatory among options discussed

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Will Forsyth County's household recycling collection end or could it become a mandatory service? Those two very different options were discussed by county commissioners during their Thursday, Sept. 1 briefing.

The county offers voluntary recycling collection

service in the unincorporated parts of Forsyth for a fee. Its current recycling collector, Waste Industries, is not renewing its contract, which will run out at year's end. It's the second recycling provider to not renew. Low participation and a downturn in commodities have made it hard for these companies to make money.

Minor Barnette, director of Forsyth's environmental assistance and pro-

tection office, looked into the possibility of combining recycling with its more popular voluntary garbage collection service for one fee. Of the 22,000 houses in unincorporated areas, 13,000 use the garbage service but only 2,600 subscribe for recycling. However, Barnette said that he felt the combined price was too high and might cause the services to lose subscribers.

"I'm worried it'll drive people away from using garbage service if we combine recycling and garbage together and the cost is more than they're willing to pay for both," he told commissioners.

Barnette said he wanted



to look into the possibility of ending county awarded recycling franchises and deregulating the service. This would allow recycling collection companies to negotiate fees with subdivisions that they would provide service to. The county would still require the service providers to have a license or permit to make sure the recyclables were being collected and delivered properly.

This would leave some

households, particularly those not in subdivisions, without service and would require those residents to take the recyclables to collection centers themselves.

County Commissioner Gloria Whisenhunt supported exploring that idea. Others voiced different opinions.

County Commissioner Walter Marshall repeated his support of mandatory recycling paid for with taxes, similar to what the City of Winston-Salem does.

"The environmental health of the county is worth us taxing to pay for it," said Marshall.

County Commissioners Dave Plyler and Everette

Witherspoon were also interested in mandatory recycling. Plyler said he'd had constituents tell him they'd be willing to pay what it took for recycling collection.

Witherspoon said that this is an issue they've been dealing with for years and it's time for the commissioners to finally solve it with mandatory collection. He said it should also help with the county's problem with people illegally dumping garbage and recyclables.

"If you have a recycling bin in every yard, it disincentives them to dump," said Witherspoon.

County, state agreement may cut animal shelter penalties in half

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth County is close to ratifying an agreement to reduce the state civil penalties on its animal shelter from \$5,200 to \$2,100.

The penalties originated from inspections made by the Animal Welfare Section of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. While the shelter passed its annual state inspection in October, the state also does random inspections, which were conducted in March. That inspection was marked "Disapproved" when the shelter couldn't produce records for four stray animals that were euthanized within 72 hour of arrival.

Inspectors returned in April, in response to a citizen's complaints, and the staff couldn't produce records of several more strays that were euthanized within 72 house of arrival. They also couldn't produce documentation for some sick animals to prove they got veterinary care before dying.

The state's Animal Welfare Act has a 72-hour hold for strays to allow time for owners to claim them. Animals can only be euthanized before then if they have serious illness or injury, or if the shelter operator determines the animal is unsuitable for adoption due to its health or temperament.

Deputy County Manager Damon Sanders-Pratt said after 72 hours, healthy strays could be euthanized to make space if the shelter becomes full.

These numerous violations resulted in \$5,200 in civil penalties levied in April. Since then, the county has been working with the state to try to lower the fine. Sanders-Pratt said they produced almost all the records that were asked for. He said the records existed, but shelter staff was confused about finding them in the way they were asked.

"Staff do a better than adequate job of keeping records, we had instances of them having trouble locating them in the way that they were being asked, but the operation in and of itself is a good one," he said.

The shelter has also gone through a review process and made changes to bring its ability to find records in line with state regulations. The agreement notes that the penalties were reduced by \$1,000 because the county produced records of veterinary care for one of the animals involved in a violation. The agreement attributes the rest of the reduction to the improvement in shelter procedures.

Animal Welfare Director Patricia Norris said that penalties are meant to bring about improvement at a shelter and, if that is done successfully, then the penalties may be reduced.

"The whole goal of this entire process is to get a facility into compliance," said Norris.

There were some mistakes the county admitted wrongdoing on. There was a cler-



Forsyth County Animal Control's shelter has made changes after state inspections found violations.

ical error that resulted in some cats being euthanized within 72 hours. There was also one owner surrender form staff couldn't locate, though they had other records of the surrender.

Sanders-Pratt said he expects the agreement to be ratified in the next county commissioner's regular meeting on Sept. 12. He said staff is also currently working on a request by commissioners for proposals to improve response time at animal control, which has 27 employees. By state mandate, animal control deals with vicious and rabid animals. The county also charges it with animal abuse cases. Things like rabies are priority calls, while a call about a regular stray may take days for a response. There's also consideration of adding a county ban on tethering unattended animals.

In recent months, numerous residents have used the public comment session at county commissioners' meetings to talk about animals that they say were improperly euthanized or who didn't receive the care they needed.

Sanders-Pratt said the shelter has the ability to hold about 215 animals, but receives more than 8,000 animals a year on average. That means that sometimes difficult euthanasia decisions must be made.

"Difficult decisions have to be made and sometimes members of the public are critical of the county for having to make those difficult decisions," he said.

In the commissioners' Aug. 22 meeting, several residents talked about a stray they called Sweetness. Sweetness was found by city workers at Washington Park and was given to Angeli Bhalla, who took her to Ard-Vista Animal Hospital and the Humane Society. She said they noticed Sweetness had a leg injury, but that it did

not seem serious or painful. A smartphone



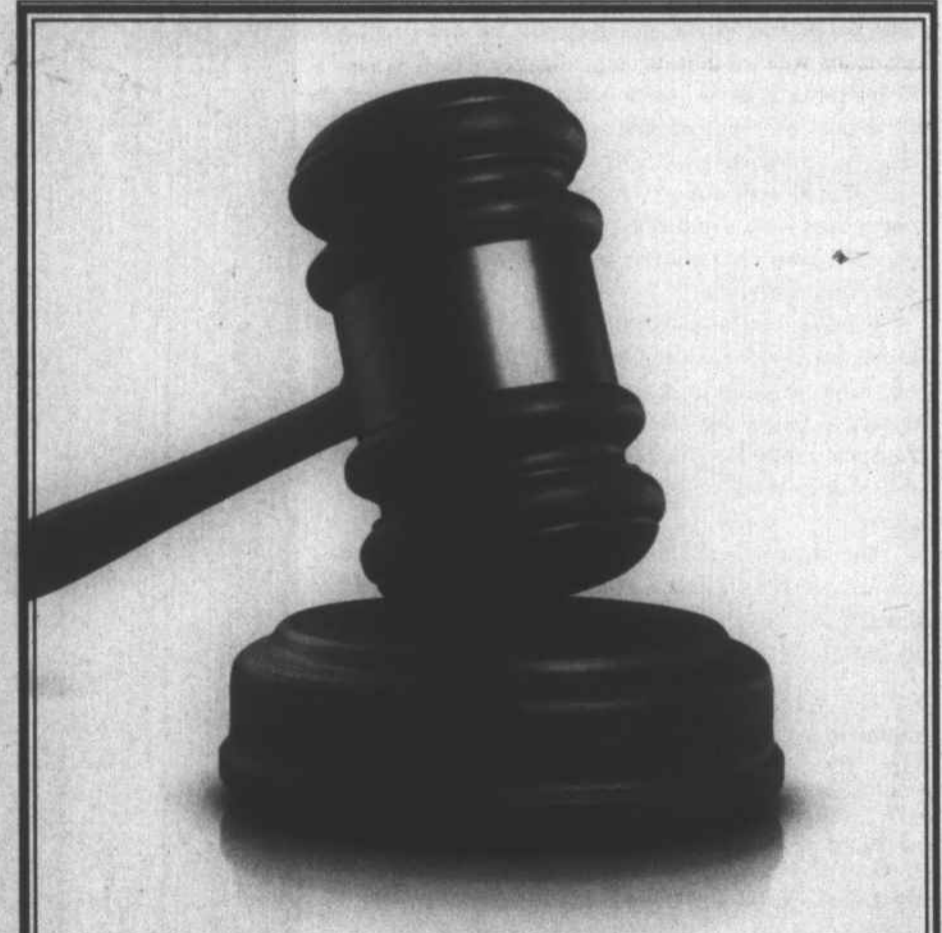
video of the seemingly happy Sweetness playing with Bhalla's pet dog was shown to commissioners. Sweetness was turned into the animal shelter and was euthanized that evening.

Bhalla was told when she called the next morning that the dog's leg was dangling and that it was in pain. She said she didn't believe that, considering the condition the dog was in when she dropped her off. The dog was not examined by a vet while at the shelter. The incident was reported to the state who found the paperwork on the euthanasia was in order.

Bhalla told commissioners she believed if the shelter had a full-time vet on staff it would help in such cases.

Sanders-Pratt said the shelter currently contracts with a veterinarian, who staff can contact when he's not there. Animals are also taken to animal hospitals for care when needed. He said by statute, euthanasia decisions are made by the shelter manger.

Sanders-Pratt said he believes the shelter is well run. He said that the amount of adoptions and owners reclaiming their lost pets are up, while euthanasias are down.



The Case for a New Forsyth County Courthouse

With the safety of the judiciary and the public at the forefront of our concerns, the Forsyth County Bar Association has partnered with judges, attorneys, clerks, and law enforcement to demonstrate the pressing need for a new, standalone, modern, secure, and user-friendly courthouse.

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to hear from judges, court administrators, lawyers, and your fellow citizens who support this project. When you have heard our case, we hope you will contact our County Commissioners to register your own verdict.

Fairview Moravian Church thanks District 1

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

The members of Fairview Moravian Church came together this Labor Day to give thanks to officers with the Winston-Salem Police Department who serve District 1.

Nearly 100 community members gathered in the parking lot of the church located on Silas Creek Parkway for the end of summer cookout designed to show appreciation for local officers. Complete with live entertain-

ment and games for the children, and of course lots of food, the occasion was fun for the entire family.

During the event, each officer who works in District 1, which serves and protects communities in the northern portion of the city, received gift cards and other special surprises from local businesses. According to event coordinators, more than 70 local businesses wanted to help.

"With everything we have going on today, we

just wanted to take a moment to thank the officers and their families," Fairview pastor Rev. Scott Venable said.

Venable mentioned the idea for the event was presented in February. He said finally seeing the event come to life was very exciting.

"We were hoping we would have a good response from the community and we have," he continue.

Winston-Salem Police Foundation board member Rod Back, who helped

coordinate the event with his wife Candice, said putting everything together was a labor of love.

After accepting his token of appreciation in the form of an engraved plaque, Chief Barry Rountree said he was delighted to see the community show their support.

"This means a lot to all the members of the Winston-Salem Police Department, all 763 employees, both sworn and non-sworn. We really appreciate this."