

County approves deal to reduce animal shelter fines

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

County commissioners ratified a deal to cut the state fines against the Forsyth County Animal Control.

The county animal shelter originally had \$5,200 in civil penalties resulting from state inspections in March and April, when staff couldn't produce the proper records for euthanasia and veterinary care for some animals at the shelter. The county has been negotiating and working with the Animal Welfare Section of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to lower the fines.

The county was able to produce most of the requested records, participated in a review process for the shelter and has made changes to its record-keeping processes. The changes at the shelter resulted in the state agreeing to cut the penalties down to \$2,100.

In the last few months, numerous residents have used the commissioners' public comment session to talk about animals that they said had been improperly



Marshall

New Central Library sneak peak

The American Heart Association will hold its campaign kick off at the Central Library site, 660 W. Fifth St., on Tuesday, Sept 20, from 4 to 6 p.m. There will be architects and library staff on hand to talk about the new library as well as numerous children's activities.

euthanized or that didn't receive proper care at the shelter.

After the meeting, County Commissioner Walter Marshall said he supported the deal, and that the penalties drew attention to a problem that the county has worked to fix.

"I think the state is right in doing what they did," he said.

Marshall said that, while he didn't believe every claim of mistakes at

the shelter was true, he did hope to see improvements at the shelter, which he said is short staffed.

County staff is currently looking at ways to increase call response time from Animal Control.

The commissioners voted on numerous other items including:

* Commissioners approved a contract with T2PM for logistical planning and implementation for the post-construction

move back into the Central Library building, which is expected to reopen in 2017.

The commissioners are scheduled to tour the construction site today. The public will get its own look at the site during an American Heart Association fundraiser that will be held there next week.

* Also ratified was a new policy that lets commissioners participate remotely in their meetings in case of illness, disability, work conflict, emergency situation or a conflict with other county meetings. It can only be used if a quorum of the board is physically present. Currently,

the county only has the ability for a commissioner to call into the meeting with no video accompanying the audio. The measure was requested by Commissioner Don Martin, who has had work conflicts with meetings.

* A 4-cent increase in the rate for garbage service for Forsyth residents in non-incorporated areas passed a first reading. The rate increase in the voluntary service used by 13,000 households is a result of increased tipping fees at the city landfill that the county's garbage collecting contractors must pay. It'll need to pass a second vote on Sept. 26 before it goes into effect.

Could Winston-Salem ban circus animals?

BY TODD LUCK
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The Winston-Salem City Council's public safety committee is considering banning circus animals from the city.

During the committee's meeting on Monday, Sept. 12, council members discussed the options when it comes to dealing with circus animals. Over the past few months, activists with Speak Out for Circus Animals have presented videos during the City Council's public comment sessions on the treatment of animals in the circus. They show the elephants chained and subjected to bullhooks at circuses. The videos also captured elephants lashing out and going on rampages; they had to be put down.

"It is foolish to expect or ignore that wild and exotic animals living under severe stress, confinement and abuse will never lash out or try to attack or escape," Speak Out for

Circus Animals co-founder Martha Cecil told the committee Monday.

The nationwide controversy over elephant treatment caused Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus to permanently end its elephant performances this summer. Field Entertainment, which owns the circus, agreed to pay \$270,000 without admitting wrongdoing to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for allegedly violating the Animal Welfare Act by chaining elephants and using bullhooks on them. Ringling still has many other animals like tigers, lions and camels. Other circuses, such as UniverSoul and Gardner Bros., still use elephants and other wild animals.

Public Safety Chair James Taylor said the safety of the public is a concern, since circuses often-times let children ride the elephants. Taylor said any ban would only be for circuses and would not affect

animals at the Dixie Classic Fair.

City staff found that it was within the city's statutory authority to regulate performance animals. With only one of two circuses, like Garden Bros, visiting the city a year, it was believed a ban would have minimal economic impact. Other cities around the country have banned wild animals in circuses. In North Carolina, Asheville is the only city to have such a ban. Other countries like Israel, Mexico, Greece and Austria have wild circus animal bans, too.

There are several possible actions the City Council could take. The city could ban all animal performances in circuses with exceptions for nature center exhibits, it could ban only wild animals in circuses or it could adopt rules for the treatment of animals by circuses in the city.

City Council Member Jeff MacIntosh said he was in favor of restrictions on

performance animals and felt constituents would appreciate them taking an "enlightened" approach to animal welfare.

Mayor Pro Temp Vivian Burke wanted to give more time for feedback from residents since the council had only heard from animal activist on the subject. The other committee members agreed and scheduled the item for the October meeting, when most likely they'll vote on an item that can be sent to the full council.

Cecil, who lives in Greensboro, started Speak Out for Circus Animals in 2012 with Colleen Smith after seeing a poster at a protest of a baby elephant being tortured. The group has regularly been holding its own protests when circuses come to Greensboro.

Cecil said the group has collected nearly 500 signatures in Winston-Salem and about the same number in Greensboro in support of action on circus animals. She said Winston-Salem

was the group's first time addressing a city council. She said if Winston-Salem passes a ban, she'll make the same appeal in Greensboro, which regularly hosts Ringling Bros. and UniverSoul circuses.

"We want to have success here just to show that it can be done and that the city will still be financially safe and secure," she said.

THE ELLISON

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