

Society to reveal review of animal shelter tonight

Will cap months of scrutiny of APS

BY KATHRYN GRIM
CITY EDITOR

Months after the Orange County animal shelter came under attack, the Humane Society of the United States will release its full

evaluation of the shelter at tonight's Orange County Board of Commissioners meeting. The board requested the report in September after citizens protested administrative actions by the

staff of the Animal Protection Society of Orange County. The board plans to use the results of the report to determine whether to allow the APS to continue to run the shelter. The final report will evaluate the shelter's facilities and operations, its animal control and field servic-

es, and the organization of its management and administration, said Krista Hughes, coordinator of HSUS's Animal Services Consultations. The report will offer suggestions as to how the shelter might be run more efficiently and effectively. "It doesn't mean there's necessarily a right or wrong way," Hughes said. "It's a tool for positive change."

The report will be referred to the county manager and staff for evaluation before the board takes action, said board Chairwoman Margaret Brown. "There was a great deal of criticism, so we decided to call in a neutral party," she said.

APS renews its contract with the county for use of the shelter site annually. Board members said they might consider contracting the

shelter's operation to an outside nonprofit entity or revising APS's contract with the county.

Concern over the shelter's operations arose again in February when area residents Elliot Cramer and Judith Reitman began a campaign against APS executive director Laura Walters. Cramer and Reitman, who lead a nonprofit watchdog organization called the Piedmont Animal Welfare Society, criticized Walters for taking voting rights away from members of APS not on the executive board.

Cramer, Reitman and Walters will meet with a court-appointed mediator in the next couple of weeks.

Last month, the HSUS released part of its report, detailing improvements requiring immediate attention, such as its animal

processing and facilities cleaning procedures.

Walters said shelter staff have already begun implementing several of the report's suggestions.

In 2006, the shelter will be forced out of its location to make way for UNC's development of the Horace Williams tract. No decision has been made as to where the shelter will move.

Tonight's meeting will take place at 7:30 p.m. at the Southern Human Services Center at 2501 Homestead Road in Chapel Hill. Although they will not be solicited for feedback at the meeting, the public is invited to attend.

The board is scheduled to hold two public hearings on the matter on Sept. 15 and 18.

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Report shows local progress

BY SHANNAN BOWEN
STAFF WRITER

Local initiatives are moving forward thanks to effective interplay between the Chapel Hill Town Council, various municipal departments and public interest groups, according to the Town Council's quarterly report.

The report on the council's goals reveals progress on top priorities, including bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Chapel Hill Recreation Planner Bill Webster said minor projects, such as natural-surface trail construction and the paving and movement of existing trails, are under way.

But major projects can't start until a vote is taken on the Green Infrastructure Bond. If passed, the bond will provide funds for the safety projects outlined in the pedestrian/bicycle action plan.

"The bond we are wanting to float shows this is a priority," said council member Flicka Bateman. "We've been unable to put in a number of sidewalks because of costs."

The plan includes a comprehensive network connecting neighborhoods, businesses and the downtown area, said Gordon Sutherland, the principal planner and staff liaison to the Bicycle and Pedestrian

Board. "It will basically provide a way so folks can get around."

Greenways and open space development are additional priorities outlined in the council's comprehensive plan, but they are contingent upon additional funding, which likely depends on municipal bonds.

"People are very excited about greenways and recreational open space," said council member Dorothy Verkerk. "We are open space poor, and having these bonds will help us purchase them."

According to the quarterly report, council members and members of the Northside Neighborhood Conservation District Committee also have had productive discussions — something the council slated as one of its top priorities for the year.

Since May 15, the Northside committee has had several meetings with neighbors, student renters and neighborhood landlords to discuss issues pertinent to the area.

"The largest issue is still to keep the Northside neighborhood from becoming a student neighborhood," said committee member Estelle Mabry.

Mabry said the council has accomplished its goal of initiating

conversation and working toward alleviation of the concerns raised by many residents.

But she said the town could better enforce limits on the number of unrelated people living together.

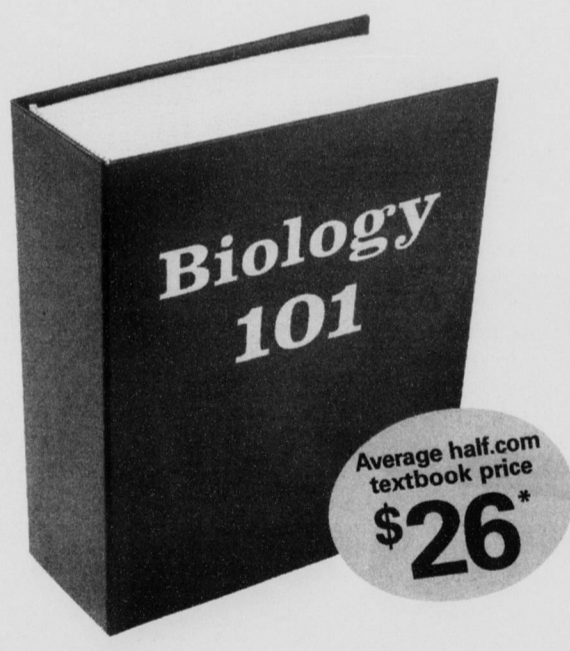
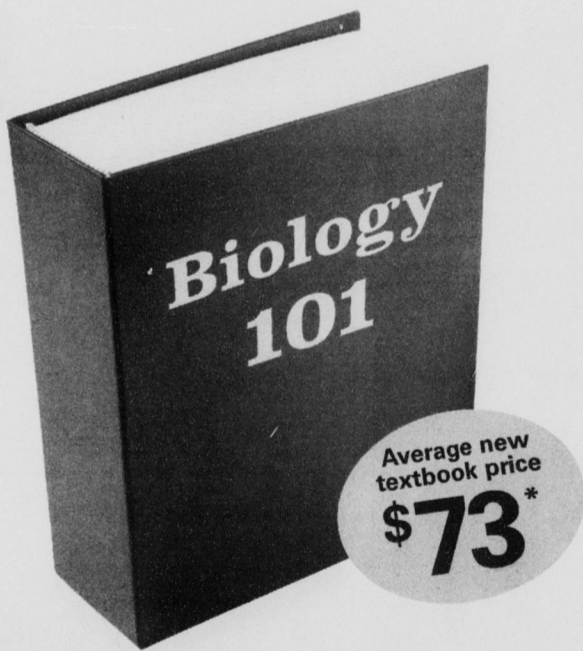
Bateman, however, said the council has enforced the duplex moratorium and rental licensing programs to address the concerns of the Northside community. Last June, the council extended the temporary ban on duplex construction in Northside an additional eight months.

Northside is one of the most pressing issues to consider this quarter, she said. "To be able to restore the character is something we want to achieve," Bateman said.

The council will take a step toward resolving this issue when it receives the status report from the Northside committee in September. Both council members and department leaders commented positively on the progress achieved in the past quarter.

"Once you get people cooperating and working together, things become a lot easier," Verkerk said. "We are actually moving ahead now."

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