

Under county, shelter running smoothly

BY DAN SCHWIND
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

It's been almost two months since the Animal Protection Society ceded control of the county's animal shelter to Orange County officials, and there's already a big difference from before — things are

going smoothly.

After more than two years of bitter feuds and legal battles between APS and its harshest critics, Elliot Cramer and Judith Reitman, things are finally calming down. The county has taken over the shelter, APS is moving to Mebane

and the court battle is over.

The court battle with Cramer and Reitman against APS was resolved earlier this summer when APS withdrew its lawsuit charging Cramer and Reitman with libel, defamation and slander.

The critics filed a motion to

force APS to cover Cramer's and Reitman's court costs, but the motion recently was dismissed, ending the legal battle.

Despite that, Cramer said he had hoped to take the trial to court.

"Certainly, I am disappointed," he said. "I would have liked to have seen this go to court."

Joe Pulcinella, director of the animal shelter, said the July 1 change of power went very smoothly and, though there have been some bumps in the road, has stayed that way.

Only small changes are being made so far, and shelter officials hope that will ease the transition.

"One of the things we wanted to do was keep things basically the same," Pulcinella said. "We wanted it to be minimally disruptive."

In fact, the only major change so far was not in policy or procedure, but in the budget.

"The county has a lot more

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JOE PULCINELLA, DIRECTOR OF THE ANIMAL SHELTER

resources (than APS)," Pulcinella said. "They're really committed to making sure this is a success."

He said the shelter plans to look at their current policies and procedures and consider which ones, if any, might need to be changed.

"The first month was all about just maintaining where we were," Pulcinella said. "Now we're looking towards the future. It's tough for things not to change."

Some changes also might be mandated by a county task force, appointed to examine and recommend changes for future shelter management to the county.

The task force is slated to review

and report on the current policies and procedures early next month.

Meanwhile, APS has moved out of Chapel Hill and is moving into its brand-new facility in Mebane.

Kay Flaminio, executive director for APS, said she is excited about the new facility, which she said unites operations that were previously spread across the county.

"All our operations are centralized now," she said.

The facility, which has two cat roaming rooms and 18 dog rooms to house 50 animals, has much more room to allow for all administrative needs, as well as facilities for dog training and spay and neutering programs.

"It's a little ways out there, but it's worth the ride," she said.

An open house for the new facility is temporarily scheduled for Oct. 16-17.

The Orange County Board of Commissioners voted in April to take control of the shelter from APS.

That came on the heels of a year of accusations of improper management by the organization, including a report by the Humane Society of the United States.

The report included complaints about such issues as sanitation, low adoption rates and how much room was available for the animals.

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