ANIMAL PLANS

New Humane Society preparing to take over county animal shelter

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DAILY NEWS STAFF

STANTON — Just weeks remain before Montcalm County’s animal shelter will be taken over by the newly created Humane Society of Mid-Michigan.

As Montcalm County Animal Control Director Angela Hollinshed and Animal Control Officer Autumn DeVries prepare to transition away from their county jobs — as part of pending county budget cuts — to operate the new Humane Society, county officials are looking for a new Animal Control officer to fit within budgetary constraints.

During Monday morning’s Law Enforcement & Courts Committee meeting, Controller-Administrator Bob Clingenpeel recommended the county move forward with hiring an Animal Control officer under a new arrangement. The Montcalm County Treasurer’s Office would house and supervise the new officer.

The committee recommended the full board approve hiring the officer. The full board will meet at 6 p.m. Sept. 25.

Clingenpeel will determine whether an outgoing county employee will be hired for the job and whether the position will be part-time or full-time with benefits.

“We have some people that are most likely going to be losing their jobs due to budget cuts,” he said. “I think we need to pay attention to that. If there are potentially some people that are going to be losing their jobs, we could have that conversation with them, show them what the requirements are for an Animal Control officer and be sensitive to that before we hire someone off the street.”

Clingenpeel reported on meeting with Pollyanne McKillop, program manager of the Animal Shelter Regulatory Program for the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, to discuss Montcalm County’s state of uncertainty regarding Animal Control and the dog sterilization, including questions about kernel inspections.

“Based on our financial issues in Montcalm County, obviously we want to maintain some kind of ordinariness, but we need the bare bones approach knowing that we won’t have a lot of resources to track down a lot of extra stuff,” Clingenpeel said. “I just think there’s some things in there that don’t need to be in there and that was her (McKillop’s) impression as well.”

Clingenpeel emphasized the importance of hiring someone as soon as possible to start conducting a dog census. The county offered a dog license amnesty program throughout the month of August and has extend- ed that program until the end of September. A dog census is expected to begin in early October, which is the same time the new Humane Society will take over the county’s animal shelter.

“It certainly makes sense to move forward with hiring someone to at least start doing a census,” Clingenpeel said. “That’s an ongoing long term
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piece that we should have had someone doing all along every year. I don’t think it’s one of those things where we just say we’re not going to do it.”

Dr. Jennifer Morse of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department has been part of ongoing talks about the future of local Animal Control and she was in attendance at Monday’s committee meeting.

“I agreed that we do need someone to help with the census, but our hope is that the Animal Control officer can also help with Animal Control, when we have dog bites to help catch the biting dog and so on,” Morse said. “We just want to make sure everyone is safe.”

Leon, a 4-year-old pitbull/hound mix, is one of 22 dogs currently at the Montcalm County Animal Shelter in Stanton. Leon was picked up as a stray dog and is available for adoption starting today.

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