Public meeting provides information to local residents on animal control issue

Written by By Ava Barlow, Staff Writer
Thursday, 19 May 2011 15:35 -

May 12, 2011 - Judge Spanky Carter held a meeting in the Leonard City Hall on Tuesday, May 3, at 7 p.m. to address the animal control issue of Fannin County. Judge Carter opened the meeting by saying "On May 23 (in the Commissioner Court meeting) we will make a decision on whether to build a facility in Fannin County."

Thoa Allen, who lives on a county road north of Bailey, addressed those attending with the proposal of a 20-dog kennel to be built, which will also include a 16-unit cattery. Fannin County planners for this facility currently have in hand $175,000, which is enough to build the facility that she displayed, but will leave no funds for operating the animal shelter on a year-to-year basis. Allen and other animal enthusiasts are encouraging the commissioners of Fannin County to put in the county budget the amount needed to pay one animal control officer who will be in charge of collecting the stray animals, quarantining animals who need to be, and handling the general maintenance of the animals and the facility on a daily basis. The facility will be a kill facility as a 20-unit kennel is not large enough to meet the need in the county. The facility will provide spaying and neutering through the services of at least two vets in the county for the animals collected. It is also a possibility a microchip will be placed in each animal, a log kept of animals on-line for adoption and recognition purposes, and provide prices on-line for services.

Precinct 2 Commissioner Stan Barker spoke to the concern of the source of financing. At one time, when he was mayor of Leonard, this issue came up and Leonard, as well as other towns, set aside an amount of money to go to the county to support this type of facility. The old plan showed Fannin County paying $44,800, Bonham paying $32,000 and all other towns splitting the $36,000 needed. Butch Henderson confirmed what Barker statedand added that after budgeting it for a few years and it never being used, the city councilpersons in Leonard decided not to budget it anymore. Bonham also does not want to support the facility.

Richard Glaser spoke up to inform the people he is for the issue and was the first person to donate $100 when the issue first came up. He further revealed that he has also given a second $100 toward the proposed facility. Glaser feels that taxes would have to be raised to support the maintaining of the facility.

Judge Carter revealed that Savoy has pulled their support away from the project as they do not wish to spend $1,000 a year for the ten dogs a year that is picked up in their town.

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Precinct 2 Commissioner Barker said, "I am hesitant to say yes because of the problems incurred with the ambulance service in the county. The first year we began, we budgeted $144,000 to start the program and this year we had to budget $522,000 for the same program. The costs seem to keep going up."

A woman who identified herself as Angela spoke up to ask Judge Carter if the county was going to have to pay $173,000 for the empty jail in September of this year. When the answer was yes, she further asked if the money set aside for the jail could be designated for animal control if the jail is filled and begins paying for itself? No definite answer was given either way.

Allen encouraged the commissioner and Judge Carter not to compare the animal shelter with the EMS program or any other program.

"That dance is 20 years old," she said.

The final consensus among the attendees was summed up in a statement by Glaser.

"There is a stray animal problem in the county but where are the funds going to come from to maintain such a facility. People in Fannin County will have to pay, either by higher taxes, or by donations to maintain the facility and the wages of employees that go along with it."