

## **OTSEGO COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL ANIMAL SHELTER CONSTRUCTION PROJECT**

Otsego County Animal Control is in the beginning stages of planning a new animal control/shelter facility. We appreciate community input and want to make sure we can provide as much information as possible about the project. The most frequently asked questions are addressed below.

### The Current Animal Shelter

The current animal shelter is located at 200 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street in the city of Gaylord. It was constructed in 1974; at that time, a ninety nine-year property lease agreement was reached with the City of Gaylord. The current building is located on property that is less than one acre in size and the current animal control facility's square footage is approximately 2,220 SF.

### Funding

Animal Control is *not* asking for an increase in funding for this project; it will continue to operate on its current budget. It currently operates on a five-year millage of 3/10 of a mill; a homeowner with a home valued at \$100,000, pays approximately \$15 annually for animal control services. Animal Control has a building fund that was established to accept donations for the construction of a new animal control facility. The building fund currently has a balance of \$500,000 which includes donations and monies deposited from previous fund balances (animal control funds saved at the end of each calendar year). The current millage will be up for renewal in 2014.

### Locations

Various options and locations are being considered including expansion of the existing facility, which would require more land from the City of Gaylord, as well as renovating other facilities or building new. Several factors will have to be considered before settling on a plan. Building size, building layout, property layout, remodeling costs, construction costs, building maintenance, operational costs, environmental impact, and overall cost have been considered.

The animal shelter receives a lot of foot traffic including middle school students who volunteer after school. Most of these students walk to the shelter after school and earn volunteer credit hours. One of the goals was to make sure we were still accessible to these students and other volunteers who depend on the shelter being within the city limits. A lot of our foot traffic, thus, animal adoptions, occurs from people driving through town. A highly visible location is imperative to the success of our animal shelter. Barking and sanitary conditions are two factors that were also considered. The dog kennels, including the sanitation system, would be enclosed inside the building. There would be an outside dog run area that would be double-fenced with privacy fence. Dogs would be monitored when outside to limit potential barking issues.

### Expansion/Building Need

The current shelter has ten dog kennels, seven cat cages, and two free-roaming cat rooms to accommodate up to thirty cats. If we receive more animals than we have room

for, we are forced to double-cage dogs and to overcrowd the cats. This can not only cause behavioral issues, but is a catalyst for the spread of disease. This creates an increase in expenditures in order to treat or euthanize (in some cases) the medical conditions. At the same time, it inhibits our ability to adopt these animals.

There are specific requirements (such as sanitation, ventilation and building materials) set forth by the Michigan Department of Agriculture that animal shelters must meet. The current shelter would need to undergo significant upgrades in order to meet these requirements.

County Animal Control is not just a place to warehouse unwanted animals; it should be considered a business. Animal Control is in the business of serving the public by enforcing laws, providing safer environments and finding homes for unwanted pets. The public needs to feel safe and welcome when entering our facility and we need to make sure we provide a safe and disease-free environment to care for animals.

Over the past several years, in spite of growing human populations, Otsego County Animal Control has been able to reduce the number of animals coming to the shelter. There are spay/neuter programs in place for the community and also for those animals being adopted (all cats and dogs adopted from our shelter are spayed or neutered). According to state law, cats do not have to be regulated by animal control. Otsego County does assist the community in handling stray cats because the stray and feral cat issue would become an even bigger problem without assistance. The success of these programs is dependent upon the support of the community. There are several foster homes that will care for animals that are in need of special care such as pregnant cats/dogs or those needing special medical attention. It is difficult to keep up with the needs of these animals and without additional shelter space, many of these animals will have to be euthanized for medical reasons. For example, the survival rate for kittens born at overcrowded and poorly equipped animal shelters is extremely low. Additional space is needed for the continuance of a successful animal control and shelter program.