

**Minutes of the Franklin County Humane Society Board
Special Meeting
January 7, 2020**

Board Members present: Fred Deaton, Billie Dollins, Leslie Driskell, Matt Freire, Leo Haggerty, John Hibbard, Keeuna King, Sam Marcus, Jaime Rice, Ray Smith, Rodney Williams

Board Members absent: John Hibbard

Officers present: Cheryl Broyles, Diana Taylor

Staff present: Kerry Lowary

Volunteers and guests present: Theresa Bennett, J.W. Blackburn, Marti Booth, Gae Broadwater, Jordan Hensley, Bill Klier, Betty L. Mauer, Lori Mcintire, Michael Mueller, Keith Parker, Jim Parks, Sharon Parrish, Nancy Sherrow, Scott Tippett, Huston Wells

The meeting convened at 5:35 p.m.

Board President Sam Marcus welcomed those attending and City Manager Keith Parker and County Judge-Executive Huston Wells. He provided a quick overview of the process to date regarding efforts to build a new animal shelter:

- Discussions have been ongoing in an effort to reach consensus among the Humane Society, city government and county government regarding support for the project.
- The Humane Society is working to scale back the project to \$4 million from its initial \$5.2 million cost and has amended its request to the city and county governments to seek \$1 million from each instead of the \$1.6 million initially requested.

Judge Wells' comments included the following:

- It is important that this be a community project and there is no question the Humane Society needs a new shelter,
- He acknowledged that the board had voted to ask the local governments for \$1 million each to support work on a new shelter at the Carpenter Farm location.
- He asked the board to reconsider the State Journal building as the site of the new shelter, saying the move could occur sooner (in two-to-three months) with the project being phased in until completion within a year. That compares to an estimated three to three and a half years it would take to build and move into a new facility.
- Additional points in favor of the State Journal building included its large size, acreage that could be fenced for animal pens, parking space and offices.
- Local elected officials, meeting in closed session to discuss the project, are not ready to commit \$1 million to the project.

City Manager Parker's comments included the following:

- The estimates of Humane Society's consultants on the cost of renovating the State Journal building were excessive and the consultants themselves acknowledged erring on the high side of the estimates.
- Additional comments on the attributes of the State Journal building and of support for the Humane Society obtaining a new shelter.
- There is not support for the \$1 million among local officials and failing to understand that means more time will be wasted. The goal is to "get to yes quicker."

Both officials strongly encouraged the board to visit the State Journal building before making a final decision.

A subsequent question-and-answer session with board members and attendees included the following points:

- The local officials don't know exactly what the possible level of government support for the shelter could be.
- The city and county continue discussions about how any monetary support would be divided between the two governments.
- The county attorney said it would be best for the governments to give the Humane Society the money to buy the State Journal building as opposed to buying it and deeding to the Humane Society.
- In-kind cost-sharing on the use of the State Journal building has a chance of gaining support from the city commission.
- City Commissioner Scott Tippet expressed the opinion that the city will support something the county endorses but doesn't want to get in front of the county on the issue.
- A board member questioned what the latest appraisal of the State Journal building concluded. The city manager subsequently emailed board members an appraisal of the building that was done last January.
- The city manager also followed up on a question regarding zoning. The State Journal property is zoned IC "Commercial Industrial District" which permits some types of commercial use.
- Regarding the comment that the consultants' renovation estimates were inflated, a question was posed regarding whether in-kind support from the local governments could be expected if those estimates were reduced. The officials said in-kind is easier to commit to, but it would depend on what is involved. Some possibilities include flat concrete work, cut curbs, forming concrete, laying asphalt and gravel, framing walls. Judge Wells emphasized that no commitment was being made on in-kind services.
- There was a lengthy discussion about what would be involved in phasing in the transition to a new building, if the State Journal building were to be used. This included staffing needs and service delivery.
- Concerns were expressed about the age of the State Journal building (20) years and what maintenance and repairs would cost over the long-term.
- Both officials strongly encouraged board members to tour the State Journal building, possibly with someone in the construction business who could express an opinion about condition and renovations.
- City Manager Parker said he thinks some elected officials would be more inclined to support the State Journal approach than providing cash to the Humane Society to support a new shelter.
- Judge Wells noted that there is a fear among elected officials that the \$1 million requested from each government would not be sufficient and that the Humane Society would ask for more support in the future.
- Both officials emphasized that the State Journal option would mean getting into a new shelter more quickly.
- President Marcus noted that the reasons for the board's decision not to use the State Journal building included the need for the shelter to separate intake and adoption areas; the remaining lifespan of the building; critical HVAC and internal zoning issues; renovation costs. Replacement of HVAC alone is estimated at nearly \$500,000. The total estimate of \$5,000,000 is in addition to the purchase price of the property, which is listed at \$1,590,000. Even if the feasibility study is somewhat high, the total project cost and purchase would be much more than the Carpenter Farm site and new construction. President Marcus noted that no funds had been expended by the city or county toward an animal shelter in the past. State law requires the county to provide animal control and a facility or contract with an agency to do so. Estimates for a city/county shelter are around \$2,000,000. He asked why local government wouldn't rather spend the same amount of money in partnership with the Humane Society.
- He noted that, if the local governments commit to the \$1 million each in funding, the Humane Society can raise its share in a year. He also committed that the Humane

- Society would not ask local governments for more funding related to the new shelter in the future if the governments would commit to \$1 million each including in-kind services.
- City Manager Parker pointed out that there are numerous other requests and/or demands for city funding and there is not support for a new \$4 million animal shelter at this time.
 - Judge Wells said he believes there is evidence that shelters in this part of the state can be built for less money.
 - Officials said the support for the new shelter among elected officials covers a range based on the official involved and that \$750,000 (previously discussed as a possible level of support per government) might not be the right amount.
 - Judge Wells said he was willing to meet with the Humane Society board again, have the board come to a fiscal court meeting, have a joint city commission/fiscal court meeting or use another approach to try to work through the differences.

At the end of the discussion, the board went into an executive session at 7:25 p.m. The session ended, there was no additional action taken, and the board meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.