

Animal shelter revenue half what was expected

By Steve Ramirez/Sun-News reporter

Posted: 04/01/2009 12:00:00 AM MDT

LAS CRUCES — Revenues for the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley are about half of what was initially projected, Beth Vesco-Mock, director of the animal center, told members of the Las Cruces City Council and Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners during a joint work session Tuesday.

"It's about \$105,000 less than what was projected," Vesco-Mock said. "We initially projected the Animal Services Center would be bringing in about \$1,400 a day in revenue, but it's only bringing in \$700 a day."

Vesco-Mock gave the council and commission a preview of statistics she will present to board of directors of the animal center, when it meets at 9 a.m. Thursday at the Doña Ana County Government Center, 845 N. Motel Blvd. She also told the council and commission that more than \$165,000 in cuts have been made to the center's operating budget, including reductions in salaries and benefits, phone and utility bills, and travel expenses.

Vesco-Mock added that public donations to the animal center are down because of an ailing economy and also because center officials have not been actively seeking donations.

"I know these numbers have shocked a lot of people," said Vesco-Mock, of the drop in revenues and budget cutting measures.

Vesco-Mock added that just as shocking are the numbers of animals that are brought into the center. She said 15,500 animals were brought into the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley last year.

That number becomes significant when comparing it to Albuquerque, whose population is five times more than Las Cruces and the number of animals brought into its shelter was 27,000.

"Our numbers are really outrageous," Vesco-Mock said. "We need to educate the public."

That will be Vesco-Mock's goal in the coming year. She said there will be more public outreach about spay and neuter programs to control the county's animal population. But even with a focus on those efforts, Vesco-Mock said it could be five years before there are significant changes in the county's animal population.

Commissioner Scott Krahling, board president of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley, said Vesco-Mock and the center's staff should be commended for their efforts.

"They're all doing a good job of addressing the needs and concerns of the public," Krahling said. "I'm optimistic of the direction we're going. ...We'll see significant changes; we're already seeing significant changes."

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If you go

What: Board of Directors meeting of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley.

When: 9 a.m. Thursday

Where: Doña Ana County Government Center, 845 N. Motel Blvd.

Information: (575) 382-0018

Looking for a pet?

The Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley will conduct two pet adoption events this Saturday for dogs and puppies, cats and kittens.

One of the events will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at Horse and Hound, 991 W. Amador Ave. Animals can also be adopted from 9 a.m. to noon at the Farmers and Crafts Market, at the north end of the Downtown Mall.

It will cost \$75 to adopt dogs or puppies, and \$50 for cats or kittens. The fee includes the first set of vaccinations, spay or neuter and microchip.

At both events, pet owners will be able to get animals microchipped for \$20.

For more information, call the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley at (575) 382-0018. People who are hearing impaired can call (575) 541-2182.