

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

First board meeting set for animal shelter

By Diana M. Alba Sun-News reporter

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LAS CRUCES — The first-ever meeting of a new board that will oversee the Doña Ana County-Las Cruces animal shelter has been set for later this month, city officials said Friday.

Some officials said the step is significant for the shelter, called the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley.

The meeting, set for Jan. 29, will take place nearly a year to the day after city and county officials first took over operations at the shelter. But it has taken this long to hash out a legal agreement between both governments and secure approval from the state.

The governing board will be made up of six public officials — three from Las Cruces and three from the county — as well as City Manager Terrence Moore and County Manager Brian Haines.

City Councilor Miguel Silva, one member of the shelter board, said the inaugural meeting is a "positive" step, but he thinks it's "slightly overdue."

The city council already has designated appointees to the shelter board: Silva, City Councilor Dolores Connor and Carol Horner, a designee of City Mayor Ken Miyagishima. Meanwhile, county commissioners are set to choose their designees Tuesday.

Moore said several housekeeping items will appear on the first agenda, including the ratification of the shelter's current director, Beth Vesco-Mock, and formal transfer of the shelter's budget from the city to the shelter board.

Vesco-Mock, since her hiring in April 2008, has reported to the city administrators. But come Jan. 29, she'll report directly to the animal shelter board. She said she's looking forward to working with board members, and she doesn't expect her goal of reducing pet euthanasias in the county to be changed with the new oversight.

"I know the direction I feel the shelter needs to go into," she said. "I've been here eight months —by the time this board convenes, nine months — working very hard toward that goal. We've made great strides getting infrastructure in place to meet that goal, and I have no doubt in my mind the commissioners and councilors are going to see the positive strides we've made and continue to support the forward direction we're all heading."

Connor said she's concerned the public will want the board to become involved in the day-to-day operations of the shelter. She said that's not something officials should allow. The board exists to set policy, she said.

"I'm hoping we'll stay away from being micromanagers," she said.

Diana M. Alba can be reached at dalba@lcsun-news.com; (575) 541-5443

On the Web

Doña Ana County: www.donaanacounty.org

City of Las Cruces: www.las-cruces.org

If you go

- What: inaugural meeting of Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley board
- When: 9 a.m. Jan. 29
- Where: Doña Ana County Government Center, 845 N. Motel Blvd.