

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE:

City OKs shelter agreement; time for commission to act

By Mike Hainer/For the Sun-News

Article Launched: 08/10/2008 12:00:00 AM MDT

On Monday the Las Cruces City Council approved the revised Joint Powers Agreement that provides for operation of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley. At the same time, the city responded to the long-term outcry by animal advocates for a budget that supports adequate staffing, needed supplies and equipment, full-time veterinarian services and other essential resources to provide humane treatment and care for the overwhelming number of animals arriving each day. A budget of \$1.1 million was authorized by the city council. Now it is time for the Doña Ana County Commission to step up to its responsibility to support this same budget.

At least \$300,000 of this budget must be earned through adoption fees, kennel fees for animals returned to owners, and through pet registrations. This is an unprecedented figure, but is very do-able. Increase in adoptions fees can be achieved through customer friendly hours, with positive can-do customer service, with a simple customer-friendly adoption process, and by increasing the numbers that are adopted — rather than killed — through reduced prices and regular "sales" when the shelter is overwhelmed with animals. In short, our shelter must become the most convenient, affordable and customer-friendly place to get a companion dog or cat. Put the puppy-mills, back-yard breeders, and pet stores selling cats and dogs completely out of business. The increased number of altered animals from the shelter will also reduce litters, the costs of homeless animal collection by animal control and the cost of killing them for lack of space at the shelter.

The city of Las Cruces requires all of us to license our pets annually. Fees from registering our pets are a big part of the planned budget for providing humane care treatment at our shelter. It is very fair that those of us with dogs and cats should do our part to fund good care. But, it is more than a good idea. It is the law!

Be a part of the team of volunteers helping with pet exercise, telephone reception, adoption counseling and other valuable roles. Call ASCMV at (575) 382-0018. Volunteers are needed now for one or two visits per week at the HSSNM PetSmart cat adoption center. The HSSNM Annual Members Meeting is at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 21 at our new offices at 403 S. Melendres St. Ray Powell is our guest speaker. The public is invited to attend and have a good time. Go to www.hssnm.org for information.

Mike Hainer is president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico.