

NEW ANIMAL SHELTER ISN'T GOING VERY FAR

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April 10, 2013

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SAN ANDREAS - It now looks like a new, modern Calaveras County animal shelter will rise just a stone's throw away from the dilapidated concrete block building that houses the present shelter.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday gave its informal endorsement of plans to build a new 17,000-square-foot shelter just to the west of where a \$46 million courthouse is rising. That site is just across Jeff Tuttle Drive from the existing shelter.

The Calaveras Humane Society is planning to raise the \$3 million to \$5 million cost to build a shelter complete with pet adoption areas and adequate kennels and cages. But while the Humane Society and county leaders have been negotiating for years on replacing the cramped and outmoded county-run shelter, they hadn't settled on a location.

Two years ago, the Board of Supervisors and Humane Society leaders had said their preferred site was a triangular parcel of land near where the Highway 4 Bypass rejoins historic Highway 4 just east of Angels Camp.

Humane Society officials said that site had high visibility and was on the Highway 4 side of the county where many prospective pet adopters live.

Fast forward two years and things have changed. Counting a new jail, courthouse and Sheriff's Office administration building, there are more than \$100 million in new facilities nearing completion on the north side of the existing Calaveras County Government Center.

That means that electrical, water and sewer utilities are in the ground and that the county already owns a suitable piece of land, said Brian Moss, who as director of the county's Environmental Management Agency oversees the Animal Services Division.

"You've got enough room down there to build a barn if you want," Moss said.

In fact, the Animal Services Division already installed some paddocks on the land for housing large livestock and has a dog exercise trail there.

The Animal Services Division had been managed by the Sheriff's Office until October, when Moss took over the management job.

Since then, progress on hiring staff and improving conditions has been rapid, said Humane Society members.

"The whole atmosphere up there is changing to the positive," said Debbie Beaufort, who coordinates volunteers for the Humane Society.

Beaufort said the society has 80 volunteers who contribute time at the shelter, whether by cleaning cages or evaluating animals for their suitability for adoption.

Those volunteers will be even more important a few years from now when the new shelter is built. Officials are hoping to turn shelter operations over to the nonprofit group.

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