

Supervisors agree to give new animal shelter another look

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / May 17, 2024

It appears construction of a new animal shelter in Calaveras County could be back on track.

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday directed staff to come back, possibly as soon as May 28, with an action item to approve spending \$775,000 with LDA Partners, Inc. of Stockton for the preparation of design and construction documents for the new shelter.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli said he was pleased the firm was able to reduce some of those costs.

The firm had two proposals before the board, the \$775,000 one for design and construction documents for the entire shelter, or a \$565,000 proposal for work on only the dog portion of the new facility.

District 5 Supervisor Benjamin Stopper floated the idea of getting the preliminary work done for the entire project and then completing the work in phases with the dog facility being in the first phase.

“Let’s get a section done before the prices go up,” he added.

Estimates are it will cost \$7 million for just the dog shelter and \$11 million for the entire project. The county has \$4 million earmarked for a new shelter.

Tofanelli agreed with Stopper and said it would be easier to get grants to cover the projected shortfall if the county had the plans and a “shovel-ready” project.

District 4 Supervisor Amanda Folendorf also supported Stopper’s proposal, and although District 3 Supervisor Martin Huberty voiced skepticism about getting additional money to cover construction costs, he agreed to bring the item back to the board for consideration.

“It’s hard to believe we can’t make the lives of dogs better for \$4 million,” Huberty said.

District 2 Supervisor and Board Chairman Jack Garamendi was the lone voice of dissent. He viewed LDA Partners’ proposal as not much different than the one the board considered on March 26.

He pointed out a quarter of the money the county has to spend on the project will go just to the plans.

“So we could build something for \$4 million, but it’s going to make everybody unhappy, but we’ll get something done, or we could spend a quarter of that total money on a plan that will be sitting on a shelf in a decade.”

He doubted the possibility of raising an additional \$3 million to fund construction of only the dog facility.

“Until we can bring this down to something we can actually afford to do, I don’t think this is a good idea,” Garamendi added.

The existing animal shelter has been under grand jury scrutiny for nearly two decades.

The jury’s latest report entitled “Teaching An Old Dog New Tricks” and released last June said, “the shelter is understaffed, unsanitary, underfunded, overcrowded, as well as unappealing and in need of replacement.”

The county had set a timeline of 2025 to complete a new shelter.