

# Update finds animal shelter costs less than expected

By Nick Baptists / The Valley Springs News / January 31, 2025

It appears the cost for a new Calaveras County animal shelter could be less than the original estimate discussed last year.

In May of 2024, the cost for the new shelter was pegged at \$13 million when the board considered awarding a \$775,000 contract to LDA Partners, Inc. of Stockton for a preparation of design and construction documents for the facility.

But in a presentation Tuesday to the board, Eric Wohle of LDA Partners submitted a budget that came in at \$11,247,248 for total project costs.

Wohle said talks with local contractors offered “a very good understanding at where costs were coming in at.”

The budget was further broken down into “hard, soft and other costs.”

Hard costs included \$940,000 for utilities and site preparation, \$6.2 million for the building and \$1.4 million in construction.

Soft costs such as permit fees, design fees and inspection fees were determined to be \$1.7 million, while other costs, such as money set aside for contingencies and cost escalations, came in at \$982,589.

Lisa Medina, the county’s environmental management administrator who oversees the shelter, praised LDA Partners’ work on the shelter project.

“They build the best shelters in California,” she said.

She is looking forward to the project reaching fruition, saying, “All we want is something our animals will be safe in.”

District 1 Supervisors Gary Tofanelli expressed frustration that architectural and structural drawings for the project have not been completed at this time.

“When can we expect to see those so we can go out for a bid on this thing?” he asked.

He reminded Wohle the contract was finalized last May and “this just keeps dragging on. Can we just get it done...so we have a package to go get bids on so we can get this thing constructed because every day you’re waiting costs are going up.”

“I understand,” Wohle said. “This is one of our top priorities to get out the door.”

He said a month is probably accurate for completion of the documents for the county’s consideration.

The board has set aside \$4 million for a new shelter and will look for private donations, grants and state funding to bridge the gap. The existing animal shelter has been under grand jury scrutiny for nearly two decades and the county has set a timeline of 2025 to complete the facility.

The jury’s 2023 report entitled “Teaching An Old Dog New Tricks” said, “the shelter is understaffed, unsanitary, underfunded, overcrowded, as well as unappealing and in need of replacement.”