

Concerns voiced as county considers taking \$10 mil loan

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / March 20, 2026

Details concerning funding for a new Calaveras County animal shelter emerged at last week's Board of Supervisors meeting and drew some levels of concern from members of the board and the public.

The California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank Board recently approved \$10 million in loan financing for Calaveras County to construct the animal shelter in San Andreas.

County supervisors at their March 10 meeting heard proposed terms for the loan and considered whether they wanted County Chief Executive Officer Teresa Hitchcock to continue negotiating a final financing agreement.

Supervisors voted 4-0, with Supervisor Benjamin Stopper absent, to continue the negotiations and bring back the final agreement for their consideration.

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

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."

The proposed lease-purchase agreement calls for the county to pay \$605,221 a year at 4.39 percent interest for up to 30 years with no prepayment permitted for the first 10 years.

Hitchcock outlined the county has funding sources available at this time and in the future to cover the cost of the loan.

During the public comment portion on the agenda item, Vicky Reinke of Angels Camp questioned whether the county could continue paying the loan if a crisis were to occur.

"What happens when cuts have to be made?" Reinke said.

She also questioned whether the county was going for a "top notch project" or had considered a less expensive facility and why not go to the public with a bond issue to pay for the new shelter.

"I just want to assure you staff explored all of our options," said Jamie Andriol, principle analyst with the county's administration office. "The building you have in front of you just meets our needs and nothing more."

"I do have concerns about approving something that other boards in years to come will have to deal with," District 3 Supervisor Martin Huberty said.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli echoed Huberty's concern and said this was a difficult situation for him, especially the prospect of paying \$23 million on the \$10 million loan over the course of 30 years.

He was interested in knowing what would be the payoff number at the end of the first ten years.

Hitchcock said an amortization schedule would be part of the final financing package.

The financing is not ideal, "but it's where we're at," said District 2 Supervisor Autumn Andahl. She added the county needs to move forward on the project for health and safety reasons for not just the animals, but for shelter staff and volunteers.

"We've been kicking this can down the road for so long and we've got to make a decision and solve this," said District 4 Supervisor Amanda Folendorf.

Although it's not ideal, she said, "we have made excuses for way too long."

"You have to take risks in life and this is one I'm prepared to take," Martin said prior to the vote.

Tofanelli said the county needs a new shelter and he was willing to move forward with the negotiations and hoped some of the issues could be resolved.

Engineers have estimated construction costs at \$13 million for the 10,555 square foot shelter with an estimated funding gap of \$9.9 million from money the county has already set aside for the project. In addition, the county has completed plans for the full shelter buildout.

The California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank, Ibank for short, offers low interest loans through its Infrastructure State Revolving Fund Program. The animal shelter qualified as an eligible project under the loan guidelines and Calaveras County is an eligible borrower.

“This new animal services facility will support animal care, protect public health, and provide a safe space that serves the community for decades to come,” said Ibank Executive Director and CEO Andy Nakahata in a statement supporting the project.