



Seattle Humane Offers King County, Cities a Solution for Animal Sheltering

The Seattle Humane Society has offered to provide animal sheltering and adoption services for all stray, orphaned, and abandoned animals when King County Animal Care and Control shuts down on November 1, 2009.

King County Animal Care and Control has already stopped taking animals into its Kent shelter in preparation for possible flooding from the Green River, yet KCACC is continuing to take in revenue from 32 cities that contract with it for animal sheltering and control services. The need for another shelter to provide the community with animal sheltering services is urgent.

“The Seattle Humane Society Board and leadership have been working hard to develop plans for this possible transition,” said Seattle Humane Society Chief Executive Officer Brenda Barnette. “However, we are extremely concerned by the lack of progress in our negotiations with King County. The pace of these negotiations does not reflect the urgency of the challenges that the county and cities currently face.

“Seattle Humane Society is ready to step in and fill the void created by the closure of the Kent shelter and has begun planning for the immediate housing of all of the stray and owner-surrendered animals in King County,” Barnette said. “We are simply waiting for King County to proceed with the necessary negotiations to put a functional plan in place.”

The Seattle Humane Society has spent a great deal of effort exploring this issue since King County Executive Kurt Triplett announced in a press conference on Aug. 14, 2009, that he was going to halt county funding for animal care and control services.

In response to questions from the press after the county announcement was made, we said we were unable to take over because we had not been offered any additional resources to do so. Increasing our capacity from 6,000 to 16,000 animals annually would require substantial increases to our budget and improvements to our facilities.

Since then, Mr. Triplett’s staff re-opened discussions with the Seattle Humane Society and the county has since made a preliminary offer of a one-time capital investment of \$2 million to allow the Seattle Humane Society to make the immediate renovations necessary to increase capacity and services. The county also offered to provide Seattle Humane Society with parking on adjacent county land, and to give the nonprofit agency the use of the new trailers and cat cages that are currently located at the Kent shelter. In addition, the county has offered to work with Seattle Humane Society in negotiating separate contracts with each of the 32 cities that now depends on KCACC for sheltering services.

Such a rapid expansion to take an estimated 10,000 additional animals each year would be a challenge for any organization, but with 112 years of experience, a proven track record of providing high-quality animal care, and a proven ability to save 88.6 percent of the animals who entered the Seattle Humane Society shelter during the last fiscal year -- and more than 90 percent so far this fiscal year -- the Seattle Humane Society is up to this challenge.

In fact, according to Barnette, “Although we would not be legally bound by the King County council’s mandate to save at least 85 percent of the animals entering county shelters, we would commit to not only achieving this goal, but would make it our mission to exceed it.”

Should an agreement be reached, the capital investment offered by King County would provide the Seattle Humane Society with the opportunity to build a much needed new veterinary clinic to provide medical care for the additional shelter animals, and to expand spay/neuter services so that animals could be made available for adoption without unnecessary delays. If an agreement is reached, Seattle Humane would discontinue dog boarding services to the public, to immediately make room for additional dogs at the shelter. Seattle Humane has also drawn up plans to significantly increase its capacity for sheltering cats, to make use of the temporary trailers now used at the Kent shelter, and to ensure that cats are properly separated to prevent the spread of disease.

Last year, 3,001 animals from the Seattle Humane Society benefitted from home care with foster volunteers who provided life-saving care for underage kittens and puppies, nursing care for animals recovering from illness or surgery, and special training for dogs who needed extra training to become adoptable. The Seattle Humane Society plans to immediately expand this network upon arriving at an agreement with King County – welcoming in the foster parents who have been dedicated to providing care for animals at KCACC, and asking for more community members to join our network to help animals at this difficult time.

In addition, the Seattle Humane Society will work with every rescue organization and shelter in King County to develop a community model to answer the needs of King County's lost, abandoned, and orphaned pets, and to take advantage of grant opportunities to help all organizations in King County to save all healthy and treatable pets who enter county animal shelters.

The Seattle Humane Society has been serving King County for 112 years, with a mission to save the lives of all adoptable and treatable companion animals in the community and to bring people and pets together. Now, Seattle Humane Society is offering to develop a citizen-directed solution, not only to assist King County's effort to trim its current budget, but also to address the government's continued inability to provide adequate care and services for stray, abandoned and orphaned companion animals.

"As a private organization, and with the support of a compassionate community, we are confident that we can provide better services much more efficiently, and less expensively, than King County has been able to provide," Barnette said. "We can, and will, do better for the animals of King County, and we know that the compassionate members of the King County community will join with us in this effort."

Seattle Humane Society has been awarded the coveted 4-star rating by Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Founded in 1897 to bring people and pets together, Seattle Humane Society provides incredible companion animals for adoption 7 days a week, pet workshops and training, a pet food bank, a low-fee spay/neuter surgery program, humane teen club, a visiting pets program and more. Seattle Humane Society is located in Bellevue, at 13212 SE Eastgate Way. For directions and more information, visit www.seattlehumane.org or call (425) 641-0080.