



Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Shelter critics aren't excited about panel

Ryan Jeltema
Assistant News Editor

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

STANTON - Some of the most vocal critics of the Montcalm County Animal Shelter don't believe they won a victory with Monday's County Board of Commissioners decision to establish an ad hoc committee to study whether to renew a contract with R&R Research in Howard City.

The business hopes to renew its five-year contract, which will expire in February and allows R&R Research to take live animals and sell them for research in exchange for disposing of euthanized animals.

On Monday the commissioners approved a six-month extension while the ad hoc committee looks into possible alternatives.

Sandra Carlton of Greenville, a member of Montcalm County Citizens for Animal Welfare (MCCA), has a pessimistic view of the move. She believes the commissioners forming a committee instead of voting on the contract extension was merely a ruse to let the heat die down before approving an extension.

Carlton said County Board Chairman and District 7 Commissioner Patrick Q. Carr is pushing to renew the contract "with some sort of modifications."

"The board had a chance to make a definitive move to change the shelter around and were either incapable or unwilling to do so," Carlton said. "Pet owners once again were betrayed and animals will continue to be victimized by the county government."

Jeanne Urbanski of Coral, a member of Concerned Citizens Coalition Montcalm (CCC), said the new committee doesn't spell defeat for the group's cause but certainly isn't a victory.

"We think it was better than no vote," she said. "We look at it as one more hoop to jump through before they vote "yes"" to renew the contract.

Urbanski added that the groups are not giving up, especially after Monday's turnout of more than 150 people opposed to the R&R Research deal.

"We're not disheartened," she said. "CCC and MCCA are not going away. We're at the top of the mountain and rolling down now. We're getting a lot of new interest and offers of help."

Neither Carlton nor Urbanski plans to volunteer to serve on the committee, which will contain seven to nine members, including Greenville veterinarian Dr. Randy Carpenter, Greenville resident Fran Schuleit and a yet-to-be-named county commissioner.

Urbanski's husband, Mike, has offered to serve on the committee, however.

Related stories

[Animal shelter foes: 'Here we are'](#)

[Expert: Large animal research still needed](#)

[A better image may stimulate more help Officials barraged by calls, e-mails](#)

Carr will name the panel's remaining members later this winter. County Controller-Administrator Chris Hyzer said a deadline for applications and a date for announcing the members has not been determined but he urged interested people to come forward "as soon as possible" by calling his office at (989) 831-7300.

During Monday's meeting, Carr said he hopes to select both people who support the R&R Research contract and some who do not. He cautioned that anyone on the committee needs to give up a hard-line stance either way.

"I'd like to caution anyone interested in being on that committee that it needs to have some give and take," Carr said. "We're going to need a group of people willing to work together in a civil manner."

He was unavailable for comment Tuesday.

The committee will report back to the commissioners at least every three months and will issue its final recommendations after six months.