



RiverheadPatch

GOVERNMENT

Pick of the Litter Leaves Pit Bulls Behind

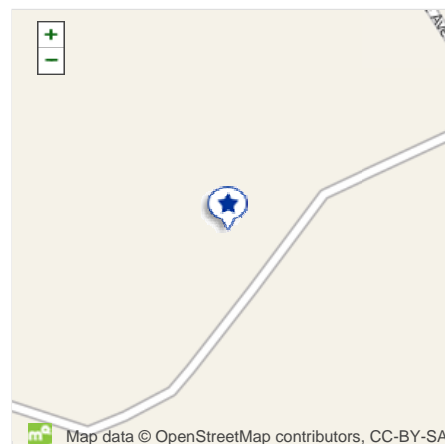
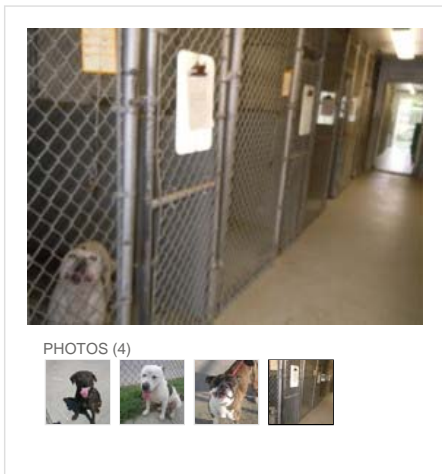
Board members debate on what to do with unwanted dogs; Wooten to propose third, more specific, RFP for shelter privatization.

By **John Stefans** October 4, 2010

In addition to the [proposed personnel mix-up at the animal shelter](http://riverhead.patch.com/articles/supervisor-one-of-six-proposed-full-time-layoffs-will-hit-animal-shelter) (<http://riverhead.patch.com/articles/supervisor-one-of-six-proposed-full-time-layoffs-will-hit-animal-shelter>), officials are debating what to do with the surfeit of pit bulls and pit bull mixes that many families and private shelters refuse to accept.

According to Councilman Jim Wooten, the Town Board liaison to the animal shelter, the shelter now houses at least 15 dogs, most of them pit bulls and pit bull mixes, some of which have been at the shelter for six months or more.

"We work closely with Kent Animal Shelter and other shelters around that take our adoptable dogs," Mr. Wooten said on Monday. "So they take the pick of the litter, so to speak, and we wind up with all the pits bulls. We're no different than any other town on the east coast."



The issue of when and for what reason to euthanize what's left of the litter was the topic of a lengthy discussion at last Thursday's Town Board Work session, but without resolution.

"I don't say this lightly," Walter said at the meeting, "but my opinion is that the more humane thing is not to leave them in a kennel for another six months. I think the Town Code gives us a certain amount of time to hold the dog and after that we euthanize the dog." He also said that, as supervisor, he would be willing to make the tough decisions.

It turns out, however, that the Town Code is silent on the issue of timing. It says only that "a dog may be offered for adoption immediately by the dog control officer or euthanized at the discretion of the dog control officer."

A Town Board resolution dated November 15, 2005 is more expansive on the issue, spelling out the procedures that must be followed before a dog is allowed to be euthanized. It says a town-approved veterinarian must agree with an animal control officer's recommendation to euthanize the dog and, if there still is doubt, a town-approved animal behaviorist must be brought into the decision.

Wooten wants to make a distinction between what he calls the two animal control functions – one, the state-mandated responsibility to take in stray dogs, wounded dogs and dogs whose owners surrender them to the pound; the other being the actual management of the shelter.

He'd like to see the town hire a kennel director who would operate separately from animal control officers. "I think going with a private shelter director on a non-union level, like a department head, is the way to go," he said on Monday, admitting that budget constraints could be a problem.

He noted that requests for proposals have gone out twice seeking suggestions for running the shelter. But, he said, one response came back each time – each from Riverhead Shelter Volunteer Program - and that it didn't make the grade.

Now, he said, he'd like to issue another RFP that is clearer in spelling out how much financial support the town would give such a director. "The RFP should be very specific about what we want and what we would be willing to give them to do it," Wooten said.

As for the discussion at last Thursday's work session, Wooten expressed frustration. "It went every where but where I wanted it to go," he said. "I don't know what to do from here on out, but I want to change the whole make-up of the animal shelter. I want to change the whole management of it."

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Supervisor: One of Six Proposed Full-Time Layoffs Would Hit Animal Shelter

COMMENTS (1)



Ashley Wilbourn

1:37pm on Tuesday, October 5, 2010

This is clearly not about what is "humane" as Walter wants us to believe. It's about money. The town doesn't want to pay to keep these dogs up. He has five dogs to take care of? Most shelters and rescue groups have many many more - check out NFAWL or Kent or LCARF.

And I don't believe for a second that the town has reached out to pit bull rescue groups and said "We are going to euthanize these dogs if you don't take them." And that in response the pit bull rescue group said "No thanks."

This is clearly a matter of money over morality. And the town should be outraged if this plan goes through. Pit bulls are great loving dogs too and they need homes too - not death sentences.