

Brookhaven officials tour Riverhead animal shelter

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Brookhaven Supervisor Mark Lesko and Councilwoman Jane Bonner visited the Riverhead Town Animal Shelter this afternoon, with Riverhead Supervisor Sean Walter leading the tour. Councilman James Wooten, the Town Board's liaison to the shelter, was also present.

The two towns are discussing ways they might be able to pool their resources, Walter said. That may eventually mean sending Riverhead's stray dogs to Brookhaven's facility, he said, but right now, Brookhaven doesn't have space to accommodate Riverhead's animals.

Brookhaven is looking into building a new shelter, Walter said. In the meantime, the two towns will see if something can be worked out between them that might involve Riverhead taking in some of Brookhaven's dogs in exchange for Brookhaven running the Riverhead shelter, the supervisor said. Riverhead might also deploy animal control officers in Brookhaven, he said.

"Everything is on the table," Walter said. "We're just working through some ideas. I think the economies of scale work better with the two towns working together. I'm very encouraged something good might come out of this," Walter said.

The supervisor said Riverhead currently spends between \$1,300 and \$2,000 on every dog it takes in. Pooling resources with the town's larger neighbor to the west would likely save Riverhead taxpayers money, he said.

Wooten was less optimistic.

"The concerns about the shelter have nothing to do with the shelter itself," he said. "They have to do with the management structure and personnel."

The idea to ship dogs to Brookhaven is "a little over the top" Wooten said.

"To me it's an easy fix," Wooten said. "Get a director up there who handles the shelter, coordinates everything, spends time with the volunteers and makes it a happy place so that people will want to come and volunteer," he said. "I realize it comes down to money. But maybe if you have a good director up there, you wouldn't need another kennel attendant because volunteers would fill that role."

"We agreed to meet again," the supervisor said of his discussion today with Lesko and Bonner. "I want to see if this makes sense."

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