

Letter to the Editor
01/24/11

It's been a long time coming. Fifteen (15) years, to be exact, if you use the Riverhead Shelter Volunteer Program (RSVP Inc.) as the starting point. The non-profit, 501c3 animal rescue organization, founded in 1996 has fought a long, hard battle, advocating reform at the Riverhead municipal animal shelter. But it hasn't been their battle alone. They simply gave it a voice. Many advocates, both residents and non-residents have recognized the need for change.

Veterinarian services that have been overlooked for years are being provided and there is talk of hiring a Director.

Hopefully, the town now recognizes that a good shelter begins with good management.

Hopefully, they understand that there are qualifications not covered in a civil service exam that are vital to the successful operation of a humane shelter.

And this holds true for the part-time Animal Control Officer (ACO) currently being sought and the full-time ACO which may soon be replaced.

In addition, it should be noted that a Director is not state mandated, does not have to be a union position and logically, all staff should report to him or her, including the ACOs.

Hopefully, there have been lessons learned after all these years and the *best possible candidates* for these jobs will be selected, and not dictated by minimal civil service requirements, patronage or convenient personnel (re)assignments.

The other hallmark of success is a strong volunteer program. And on that front, there is still the unresolved issue of Pat Lynch and Linda Mosca. Both were banned from volunteering by Chief of Police David Hegermiller, who by the way, authorized the euthanasia of Bruno, Butch and other dogs "dangerous and beyond rehabilitation" and has been managing the shelter for the past five (5) years. Why hasn't the Town Board, and in particular Supervisor Sean Walter and Animal Shelter Advisory Committee liaison Councilman Jim Wooten, intervened on their behalf?

And we have yet to hear the outcome of Jim's investigation of Bruno's death, the shelter dog euthanized on Dec 21st under questionable circumstances.

So, there are still important changes and corrective measures pending. Time will tell if we have turned the corner and are beginning a new era. Let's see what happens between now and November.

-Sue Hansen
Rocky Point, NY