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Task force gives report to county: Supervisors consider animal shelter reforms

Many of the suggestions being discussed today deal with a flawed operations and management structure

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Fido needs a license. But does Fluffy?

Maybe, maybe not, but the 10-member task force studying reforms to the county animal shelter wants the facility's leaders to at least consider "feline registration," as it is called.

Most of the hundreds of recommendations being discussed by the Board of Supervisors today focus on a flawed management and operations structure that has led to countless complaints and several reviews in the past two years.



A prisoner worker walks past the kennels where the dogs are being kept. Replacing honor farm trustees with paid workers is one of the hundreds of suggestions that a task force is recommending to the Board of Supervisors.

One of those was last summer's analysis by the Humane Society of the United States, which served as a jumping off point for the county task force.

The county evaluated the society's recommendations, then listed them in order of priority.

The controversial cat licensing suggestion, which the task force says "ranked at the lower end of the priority list," would bring in money — dog licenses will earn an estimated \$400,000 this year.

The shelter devotes much of its energy and time to cats, the task force notes.

However, it asks only that the county think about licensing cats, a proposal it concedes would have trouble gathering public support.

Its other suggestions have more urgency. First among them is hiring a full-time volunteer coordinator.

There has been animosity in recent years between some volunteers and the animal shelter manager, honor farm trustees and other volunteers. The hostility has at times become virulent, and at one point led to a volunteer being "fired." One of the recommendations is to "refrain from giving immediate credence to volunteer complaints."

PDF Read the report outlining recommendations for Animal Services

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The task force also advocated creating volunteer jobs that are meaningful. "If volunteers aren't made to feel like an important part of the agency, they will leave."

Clarifying volunteers' responsibilities and having a professional on hand to work with them would smooth things at the shelter, task force members said.

In addition, the report advocates documenting volunteer performance and keeping a record.

Volunteers also should be told exactly how euthanasia decisions are made, the report added.

Many of the suggestions have to do with management structure. Eric Anderson, the shelter manager, is also the veterinarian, a dual duty that has led to confusion.

The task force wants this cleared up, either by hiring two people to do the two jobs or, if Anderson retains them both, rewriting Anderson's job description "to reflect shelter