



City of San Marcos On Behalf of the San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter

October 20, 2021

On Tuesday, September 7, 2021, the San Marcos City Council Regular Meeting agenda included consent item number 5, asking members to approve a contract with Alpha Building Corporation through the Texas Buyboard Purchasing Cooperative for maintenance and repairs at the San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter in the amount of \$240,047.55. The renovations at the shelter are much needed, and necessary for the health, safety, and viability of rescued pets, shelter staff, volunteers, and potential adopters.

Upon approval of the contract, City staff began making preparations for renovations to occur at the San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter. Renovation work, to be completed in three phases identified as three 'wings' of the SMRAS facility, was initially slated to begin on Oct. 25 but may be delayed due to scheduling conflicts with the designated contractor. In preparation for the start of construction, shelter staff researched and explored options for creating additional housing in existing shelter facilities, including the option of splitting existing kennels using partitions or setting up additional temporary kennels, however none of the options presented were viable due to disease transmission risks, safety concerns, and temperature fluctuations. Staff also considered renting boarding space for animals, but the option would be cost prohibitive and exceed available budgets.

On September 12, a post about the improvements was made on the SMRAS Facebook and Instagram pages, detailing the upcoming work and encouraging individuals throughout Hays County to adopt and foster animals. Similar posts were made on October 15, highlighting specific animals in need of adoptive or foster homes and addressing the "need to clear some kennel space ASAP" due to upcoming shelter improvements.

In addition to public posts on social media sites, City staff began an aggressive campaign to clear kennel space. Significant discounts were offered on adoptions of all ready-to-go pets in an effort to encourage individuals throughout Hays County to come forward including \$25 adoptions on Sept. 18 during the annual Clear the Shelters event, and \$10 adoptions in the month of October. Staff also worked with community partners to schedule or host adoption events at locations throughout Hays County, including:

- Clear the Shelters, Sept. 18, San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter (San Marcos)
- Pet Fest, Oct. 16, Plaza Park (San Marcos)
- Yappy Hour, Oct. 22, Zelick's Ice House (San Marcos)
- Paws on the Ground Pub Crawl, Oct. 23, Downtown Buda (Buda)
- Pet Palooza, Oct. 24, Black's Barbecue (San Marcos)



Each individual event was promoted at least once, often multiple times, on the San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter Facebook and Instagram pages. Additionally, City of San Marcos staff reached out directly to communications partners at cities and towns throughout Hays County on Sept. 30 and Oct. 11, detailing capacity levels at SMRAS and asking for help promoting adoptions, fosters, donations, and upcoming events. Many of the events were successful in finding animals homes, including 24 dogs/puppies, 34 cats/kittens, two guinea pigs, and one rabbit that were adopted during Clear the Shelters.

In feedback presented to staff, local animal advocates and volunteers have consistently requested transparent and urgent communication regarding SMRAS capacity levels and needs. Staff sent an urgent plea via email on Tuesday, Oct. 19 for established rescues partners to come forward and assist with clearing enough kennels to begin the first phase of improvements. While the shelter's goal is to find homes for 35 dogs, eight of them are at an increased risk of euthanasia if alternative housing is not secured by Friday, Oct. 22, as they have a limited adoption pool due to bite histories, aggression to other animals, special training needs, or have been at the shelter for a long time relative to other adoptable animals. All eight dogs have been housed in a highly visible area of the shelter, most for many months, and have been promoted on the SMRAS social media pages or adoption events anywhere from two to six separate times since February 2021, but unfortunately have been overlooked by potential adopters for a variety of reasons.

It's important to note that no definitive decisions have been made regarding euthanasia of any adoptable animals as shelter staff continue to prepare for renovation work to begin. It's also important for everyone to understand that the upcoming renovation work only plays a small role in the ongoing capacity and resource limits plaguing the San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter. Since Oct. 1, 110 dogs have come into SMRAS including 69 strays, 9 seized or bite case animals, 6 adoption returns, and 26 owner surrenders. During that same time, only 39 dogs have been adopted, 26 were transferred to rescues, and 20 were returned to their owners.

Staff are actively working to fill vacant positions at SMRAS, including the Shelter Manager position. Even with the struggles of this past year and higher than usual intake, the shelter ended Fiscal Year 2021 with a 92% live outcome rate. Staff have been transparent to the public about capacity and resource limits at the shelter. The ultimate goal is to do what's best for every pet that comes into the shelter's care, but it is a community effort to reduce the number of stray and homeless pets by spaying/neutering and microchipping. Now more than ever, we need everyone across the county to step up and support SMRAS by fostering, adopting, or donating.