

February 15, 2008

Dear Commissioner Marvin Norman, Kenneth Robertson, Stephen Johnson, R. Godfrey Williams, Sara H. Tice,

As a concerned citizen and taxpayer of Iredell County, I am writing in support of plans to improve the county's animal shelter. Building a new shelter is an important step but if vital changes are not implemented first, our county will continue to lag behind in animal welfare.

One issue concerns the number of hours the shelter is open to the public. Current hours make it difficult for someone to visit the shelter in order to look for a lost pet or to consider adoption. A comparison of neighboring shelters (available from the the NC Department of Agriculture) shows that the facilities with more public hours have higher redemption and adoption rates resulting in lower euthanasia rates. The shelter should add more weekend hours and stay open at least one evening during the week.

Another issue concerns euthanasia by injection. This method is considered the safest and least traumatic for shelter workers and the most humane for animals according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, The Humane Society of the United States , the National Animal Control Association , the American Humane Association and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It shocks and dismays me that our county continues to use a carbon monoxide gas chamber that is not only a health risk to employees, but also inhumane to animals. Changes in current regulations are being debated in the NC legislature that would phase out the use of gas chambers in our state over the next few years. Iredell County is one of thirty in North Carolina that still uses this barbaric technology. As a voter, I would like to know where you stand on the issue of gas chambers and what objections the county could possibly have for not adopting humane euthanasia.

I encourage you to commission an outside study of our county's animal shelter by a national shelter organization. Such an unbiased study would be the best way to determine what works with our current shelter and what areas need to be improved or changed.

Respectfully,

