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Vote 'yes' for a new county animal shelter

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Contributor

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Editor's note: One of the issues in Galveston County's bond election next month is the replacement of the county animal shelter by a much larger facility capable of providing both shelter for stray pets and adoption services. The Joe Vickery Animal Shelter, an award-winning pioneering concept when constructed 15 years ago, was built only to provide temporary shelter for strays — and for a much lower number than require such shelter nowadays.

The Joe Vickery Animal Shelter (our county animal shelter), located at 3412 Loop 197 North in Texas City, was built in 1993 to house about 4,500 animals per year.

Built as a stray-animal holding facility, the shelter was designed to house pets for no longer than three days to permit their owners to reclaim the animals, after which any unclaimed animals were put down by lethal injection.

Now, 15 years later, the county's human population has grown to almost 300,000 people and the animal population has grown as well.

This year, more than 10,000 pets will go through the doors of an animal shelter designed for only 4,500.

This creates extreme overcrowding, with resulting sanitation problems, stress for pets and the people who care for them and, sadly, tragic disease problems.

Today, the Joe Vickery facility serves the county as an animal shelter and pet-adoption facility.

The shelter staff valiantly tries to find a good home for the adoptable dogs and cats.

Unfortunately, the original building design didn't plan for proper drainage, air ventilation and isolation of so many incoming animals.

That makes it difficult for the shelter staff to control the deadly diseases parvo and distemper, which are spread by water and air.

Sadly, many young dogs that find a loving family to care for them die because of these deadly diseases.

Because of the overcrowding, the life or death of an animal is a daily decision.

When there is no room, the staff must decide which animals to euthanize.

Many are adoptable animals that could have made a great pet.

The solution to this problem is a modern, efficient and effective animal resource center.

On Nov. 4, the county's voters will have the chance to approve a \$5 million bond issue to provide the kind of care the animals of the county deserve.

A "yes" vote for the facilities bond issue will:

- Increase the total number of dog kennels from 38 to 120;
- Increase the total number of quarantine kennels for vicious dogs, dogs on police hold and possibly rabid dogs from eight to 24;
- Provide a separate cat holding and adoption area;
- Provide an attractive, sanitary, efficient building that will encourage pet adoptions and control the spread of deadly disease;
- Provide a safe environment in which stray pets waiting to be reunited with their owners can stay without succumbing to disease;
- Assist with the recruitment and retention of shelter volunteers, thus reducing the need for new employees;
- Provide adequate storage for hurricane-evacuation supplies to permit compliance with federal mandates on pet evacuations; and
- Improve public health and safety by providing a healthy place for the public to visit to choose an adoptable pet.

I implore everyone to vote “yes” for Proposition 3, the facilities bond issue, on Nov. 4.

Mike Franklin is a volunteer with Shelter Buddies, a rescue group that helps the county animal shelter find homes for its adoptable animals.

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