



## Renovations Coming for Oconee County Animal Services

Oconee County Animal Services performs the vital functions of managing and protecting the animal population in Oconee County, enforcing animal services ordinances, picking up stray and abandoned animals, rescuing sick and injured animals, and placing animals in suitable homes.

Last year 488 cats and dogs were adopted, 124 dogs and cats were reunited with their owners, and 277 dogs and cats were rescued or transferred. Animals housed at the Animal Services facilities receive appropriate vet care and socialization training, and staff is implementing a program of enrichment that focuses on creating a calming environment for the animals.

Animal Services staff answer emergency calls seven days a week.

The current Animal Services building, which was constructed in 2002, has suffered in the past from flooding issues during times of heavy rain, and is in need of updates to optimize the work of the department.

As part of the county's facility maintenance and improvement strategy, the Oconee County Animal Services building is slated for needed renovations.

Following our strategy for building maintenance and renovations ensures that we remain good stewards of the county's investments in our facilities. Other projects that have been completed recently as part of this master plan include the Bogart Sports Complex Improvement and HVAC replacement for the Oconee County Library.

Animal Services has already completed several improvements and upgrades over the past year and a half, including renovation of drainage structures to address flooding, removal of an obsolete structure on the property, and a renewed focus on creating a welcoming environment for potential adopters in the front lobby.

The Animal Services Manager has identified the following top four needs for the renovation project:

- Creation of a hospitable environment for animals in the care of Animal Services
- Quarantine area that is completely separate from the general animal population
- Larger area for potential adopters to visit with and get to know the animals available for adoption
- Larger staff and volunteer workspace and space for storage of supplies

Due to the outstanding ongoing efforts of staff and volunteers to place animals in foster care and permanent homes, the amount of space dedicated to housing animals at the facility will not need to be increased.

Staff is currently working with an architect on a concept plan for the renovation, which has a total budget of over \$600,000 that will be funded from the 2015 SPLOST.

Following this design phase and pending SPLOST revenue collection, a timeline for the project will be developed. We are pleased to be able to create a renovation plan that makes the best use of the current space available and expands the facility where possible in order to enhance the important work that Oconee Animal Services carries out for our community.

*County Talk Columns are submitted to the Oconee Enterprise and appear in the print edition on the date listed.*