



## Levy County Board of County Commissioners

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**To:** The Board of County Commissioners  
**From:** Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager  
**Date:** April 8, 2025  
**Subject:** Animal Services Facility

Commissioners,

The Levy County Animal Services Strategic Planning Workshop was held on November 19, 2024. The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) formally approved the plan on December 10, 2024.

Objective 3.3.1 in the Animal Services Strategic Plan is to: "Publicly share the actual costs of renovating the existing Animal Services Facilities and also the costs of building new Animal Services Facilities to meet both current and anticipated needs."

### Current Animal Services Facility

1. The building used as the Animal Services Office is a pole barn kit that the county purchased for \$15,505 in 2019. The County has done additional work on the building during the last seven years.
2. In the fall of 2024, the Animal Services Staff was removed from working inside the building because of health concerns about mold, animal feces, and dead animals.
3. The estimated cost for the animal shelter office building's contents, tear-out, and cleaning is \$85,000. The high price is attributed to the need for biohazard removal and cleaning, which requires heavy personal protection, detailed cleaning, and odor control. These are some of the key factors.
4. On March 17, 2025, the County was notified by its insurer, Public Risk Management (PRM) that "PRM must regretfully deny and fully controverts this claim in its entirety, including not only for the property damage and remediation of the animal shelter, but also for Levy County's submission for reimbursement of the 'extra expense' of renting portable temporary office trailers while the animal shelter is repaired. This denial, as set forth more fully below, is based upon Section I Property, Subsection IV-B, Exclusion 1, which excluded from coverage any damage or property loss resulting from 'vermin'. Furthermore, the extra expenses incurred in renting the temporary offices as coverage for 'extra expenses' are only covered when they arise from a covered peril.



### Commissioners

Charlie Kennedy, District 1

Rock Meeks, District 2

Desiree Mills, Chair, District 3

Tim Hodge, Vice Chair, District 4

Johnny Hiers, District 5

## Levy County Considerations

### Current Location

	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
<b>Considerations</b>	1. Renovations to the existing facility will be less expensive than constructing a new facility.	The new CD Landfill Cell being built behind the kennels will likely cause sand to blow across the cell and into the kennels and the dogs.
	2. Renovations to the existing facility will be quicker than constructing a new facility.	The noise and vibrations from the operations of the heavy equipment in the landfill make many dogs anxious and sometimes aggressive; this will be increased exponentially when the landfill cell behind the kennel goes into operation.
	3.	Rodents are an ongoing problem in the kennels because of the proximity to the landfill.
	4.	Kennel hours of operation are limited to when the landfill is open; if the kennels are open when the landfill is not operational, people enter the landfill and try to dump garbage.
	5.	The current kennel location is not convenient for people willing to adopt animals
	6.	The sound from the kennel makes it difficult for the Landfill office to conduct business.
	7.	If the BoCC is interested in pursuing grant funding, renovations are less likely to be funded than a new facility.

## New Location

The BoCC owns parcels of land throughout the county that could be used to relocate Animal Services if the board desires this.

	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
<b>Considerations</b>	1. A less remote location than the Landfill may result in adoptions.	Building a new facility will be more expensive than renovating the existing facility.
	2. Being separate from the Landfill will allow more flexibility in hours of operation for Animal Services.	Building a new facility will take longer than renovating the existing facility.
	3. While there is no guarantee of receiving a grant, a short search of possible grant funding opportunities revealed more opportunities for grant funding for new construction than for renovations.	
	4. Constructing a new facility would allow the County to co-locate all of the Animals and Natural Resources Offices (Animal Services, Parks, Recreation, and Mosquito Control).	
	5. Constructing a new facility would allow the BoCC to consider additional programmatic offerings such as a community center that could be used for meetings, animal education programs, summer camps, etc.	
	6. If the new facility were constructed near the schools that are used as shelters, Animals could be housed at the shelter rather than in the school, thereby allowing quicker shelter cleanup and animals to be housed in kennels instead of cages.	

## Costs

### Current Location

	<i>Description</i>
<i>Administration Building Renovations</i>	1. Removal of mold /biohazard material
	2. Rebuild of interior
	3. Addition of the operating room
	4. Seal and paint the exterior
	5. Remove the garage door and add double doors
	6. Repair the roof and add vents
	7. Install a Security system
	8. New flooring in offices
	9. New Air Conditioner
	<b>Estimate: \$362,000</b>
<i>Kennel Renovations</i>	1. Guillotine doors are not operational
	2. Concrete floors not pitched to the drain
	3. Inadequate number of locations of drains
	4. The septic system regularly fails as it is not set up to service an animal shelter
	5. The building is not fully air-conditioned
	6. The building is not fully heated
	7. The building is not adequately ventilated
	8. Inadequate water lines to kennels
	9. The automatic watering system is not used due to being inappropriate for dogs
	10. The building is not equipped with a water heater
	11. The building lacks a water filtration system
	12. Fencing and fasteners between kennels at the top of walls are loose and do not adequately keep dogs separated
	13. Concrete walls between kennels are not high enough; dogs often fight through the fences and are injured in the kennels
	14. There is too much space between the walls and kennel fence posts, allowing dogs to get through or get stuck
	15. The fencing is corroded
	16. Walkways in kennels are dangerously slippery and have resulted in multiple slips and falls
	17. Roof leaks into the kennels and puppy room in multiple places
	18. The building lacks a proper dog bathing area
	19. The ground behind the building is rapidly eroding and falling into the landfill.
	20. The current kennel has limited play yard space for dogs
	21. The current kennel is not enclosed or weatherproof
	22. A retaining wall must be built behind the kennel to stop the erosion into the landfill from undermining the building
	<b>Estimate: \$400,000</b>

## New Location

The following is a list of recent Animal Services Facility Construction Projects in Florida.

<i>County</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Cost</i>
<i>Highlands</i>	37 kennels	\$1.36 million
<i>Citrus</i>	25,000 square feet (110 dogs and 74 cats)	\$16 million
<i>Clay</i>	33,000 square feet	\$21 million
<i>Marion</i>	200 kennels	\$22 million
<i>Cape Coral</i>	19,797 square feet	\$8 million
<i>Orange</i>	123,419 square feet (265 dogs and 200 cats)	\$95 million

## Considerations

The BoCC will receive a presentation on Capital Projects during the April 22, 2025, Budget Workshop. As part of the budget process, I will seek direction from the BoCC on whether to budget to renovate the existing Animal Services Facility or to design a new facility. This discussion can take place over the next one to two months as the BoCC considers the other Capital Requests and learns what impact legislation passed this session will have on Levy County.

The following is Goal 3.3 from the Animal Services Strategic Plan.

<b>Goal 3.3</b>	<b>Solicit public input on renovating or building new kennels and administrative offices.</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>3.3.1 Publicly share the actual costs of renovating the existing Animal Services Facilities and also the costs of building new Animal Services Facilities to meet both current and anticipated needs.</p> <p>3.3.2 Develop an online survey to solicit public input about renovating the existing Animal Services or building new Animal Services Facilities.</p> <p>3.3.3 Conduct a workshop to share the results of the online survey and to allow in-person community input about renovating the existing Animal Services or building new Animal Services Facilities.</p> <p>3.3.4 Present a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners about renovating the existing Animal Services or building new Animal Services Facilities.</p> <p><b>Outcome: The Board of County Commissioners will receive public input before deciding on renovating or building new Animal Services Facilities.</b></p>

There is \$150,000 in the current budget that can be used to hire an architect and engineer to design plans to renovate or replace the Animal Services Facility. If the county is interested in pursuing grant money, shovel ready projects are more likely to be funded. I stand ready to organize an online survey and workshop if that is the will of the BoCC.