

# Hamden urged to build animal shelter

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**HAMDEN** - Ardent dog lover Dolores Giannini says that the black-eye awarded the town when the **animal** control officers dumped nine dead animals off a cliff at the transfer station could have been avoided if the town had an **animal shelter** of its own.

Giannini, president of the Happy Tails Foundation, is urging the Legislative Council and Mayor Craig B. Henrici to put the **animal shelter** project on the front burner.

Giannini also has asked Henrici to give serious consideration to creating a commission to oversee the **shelter** once it is built.

**Hamden's** strays are now kenneled at the North Haven **Animal Shelter**, a place that isn't always roomy enough for both towns' strays.

Besides raising money for **animal shelter** programs, foundation members also are placing animals for adoption on petfinder.com.

"It's important to get the **shelter** running so the foundation, with its many volunteers, can do some good work," she said.

The independent investigation into why the approximately four dead dogs, three dead cats, a dead mallard and a dead coyote were dropped off the cliff and not buried, is a "shining example of how desperate we need a commission" to oversee the activities of the **animal** control officer and future **shelter**.

"Many of the things in the report never would have happened with a commission," Giannini said.

To date, there is no state money available for the **animal shelter**, which is estimated to cost \$1.2 million, Henrici said.

Despite the fact that the 36-page report by attorney Andrew Houlding pointed out miscommunication among **animal** control officers and the Police and Public Works departments, no town employees were disciplined for their roles

in the way the animals were disposed, and then not immediately buried once transfer station employees were made aware that they were there.

Houlding's rate was \$200 an hour. He has submitted a bill to the town that is "being negotiated," Henrici said.

In September, the longstanding policy that called for the cremation of all unclaimed animals except deer was changed so that they could be buried at the transfer station.

Former Public Works Director John Busca and public works employees claimed to be unaware of the policy.

Nonetheless, once the dumping was brought to light, Police Chief Thomas J. Wydra rescinded the policy that called for the dumping of unclaimed animals at the transfer station, going back to the longstanding practice of cremating them.

Legislative Council members have mixed beliefs over whether discipline should have been imposed to either of two **animal** control officers, public works employees or both.

"Obviously some mistakes were made," said Councilman Gabe Lupo, R-2, but he thought to have to pay for a report was "a big waste of time and money" when the council got the same information at a meeting in February.

Councilman Michael Colaiacovo, D-7, stands by his earlier belief that **Animal** Control Officer Christopher Smith should have been disciplined for his "inhumane treatment" of the deceased animals.

"We corrected the problem, but it was embarrassing to the town and somebody should be disciplined."

But President Al Gorman, D-at large, said discipline is not necessary.

"I think that the parties involved are embarrassed enough and learned to act more responsibly and to communicate with everybody more appropriately." Gorman said that a town **Hamden**'s size should have an **animal shelter**.

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