

Hamden to build animal shelter in regional project with North Haven

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Author: Kate Ramunni | Section: News

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HAMDEN -- For the first time in decades, the town is dedicating funds to the construction of a new **animal shelter**.

The Legislative Council approved \$7.9 million town capital budget Monday that includes \$700,000 for the beginning costs for the construction of an **animal shelter**, something the town hasn't had in decades.

For many years, the town leased space at local boarding facilities, and for the past several years has leased space at the North Haven **Animal Shelter**. When that **shelter** is full, the town also has arrangements with other local shelters to use space there.

Both **Hamden** and North Haven officials have praised the partnership they have regarding the **animal shelter** and have expressed interest in the construction of a new regional facility that could eventually include other towns.

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The construction of a **shelter** also is a priority for many on the council, who held up approval of a different version of the capital plan last month because it didn't include funds for the **shelter**.

"I'm very pleased that we are seeking to allocate money for the **Animal Shelter**," Councilman Michael Colaiacova said. He likes the idea of the regional **shelter** with North Haven, he said. "We will see how that plays out," he said. "This has been a long time coming."

Mayor Curt Balzano Leng said the **shelter** was an important part of his plan.

"I'm very pleased that the funding for the acquisition and design of **Hamden's** first **animal shelter** was approved, which we plan as a regional cooperative project with North Haven," Leng said. "The regional effort will allow for lower operation costs and will increase the town's opportunities for grant funding

for construction.”

The capital budget also includes \$100,000 for the replacement of town vehicles, which is enough to replace four cars. The allocation isn't for emergency vehicles but to replace the town's aging fleet used by other departments. But because they're estimating the cars will cost about \$25,000 each doesn't mean they can't cost less, Councilman Harry Gagliardi said.

“I have concerns that we don't buy SUVs that have leather seats and Bose audio systems,” he said. “We should be buying basic cars that can get them where they have to go.”

When the town goes out to bid and puts the top price at \$25,000, that can lead to problems, Gagliardi said.

“They see \$25,000 and they come out with the leather seats and power everything,” he said, when other models with less features could cost less and save the town money. “We don't need [the extras] for town transportation.”

Councilwoman-at-Large Betty Wetmore questioned what happens to the cars that are being replaced. They shouldn't be given to others who don't have vehicles, she said, because it will just increase the amount the town is paying for its fleet.

“It seems like everyone in town government has a town car,” she said. But Finance Director Sal DeCola said the cars being replaced will be pulled off the road and sold.

“We are looking to take the older vehicles off the road,” Purchasing Agent Phillip Goodwin said. “Some of them have safety issues and some are not efficient, and many are more than 20 years old.”

The plan also provides funds for renovations at the Government Center that will allow the Board of Education's offices to move there from its Putnam Avenue site. It also funds improvements at Brooksvale Park, including a new greenhouse.

The plan “focused on much-needed public safety and public works vehicles and equipment, as well as a major investment in town building security improvements,” Leng said. “These are important projects and equipment and are true investments in the town's infrastructure.”