



## **Replacing outdated animal shelter one step closer to November bond election**



A citizen's bond oversight committee recommended Friday that the Pima County Board of Supervisors consider asking voters in the November general election to overhaul the County's aging animal shelter on the Northwest side.

The unanimous vote by the Bond Advisory Committee reaffirmed an earlier decision by that body to include the shelter improvements in a future bond election.

The vote also affirms approval by both the Pima Animal Care Center Advisory Board and the Board of Health to move the question to the 2014 ballot because of ongoing and critical challenges with overcrowding for the facility, which cares for about 24,000 animals annually. The \$22 million project would cost the average homeowner about \$4 a year.

Noting that the building was constructed in the 1960s to serve as a "pound" and to serve a much smaller population, Deputy County Administrator Jan Leshar said the community expectation about how animals are cared for has changed in the ensuing years. It is also a financial consideration, she said. "Every day we keep the animals in the existing environment is costing us more money," Leshar said, explaining that overcrowding can heighten stress, aggression and disease transmission. "It is not just unhealthy and unpleasant for the animals, but it is expensive as well."



Cathy Neuman, a volunteer at the shelter, said while the adoption center is achieving all time record highs in saving the lives of more animals, the facility remains inadequate, with four or five animals sharing a kennel at a time. "There are not many bond projects that are a matter of life or death and this one is," she said.

To address critical overcrowding, Supervisors approved an overflow tent next to the shelter, but noted it would not be a permanent solution. The Board also invests \$220,000 annually into expanding spay/neuter opportunities to reduce, over time, the flow of animals into the shelter.

