

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FORM

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GROUP OR ORGANIZATION REPRESENTED: (If Any) -

AGENDA ITEM: (If Any) Consideration of a county animal shelter

(circle one): SUPPORT OPPOSE

ADDITIONAL COMMENT OR CONCERN: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature: Patsy Berry

NOTICE: This Form must be presented to the Court Clerk (or designated Court Assistant) prior to the presiding officer calling the Meeting to order. Failure to timely return this form will prevent you from participating in the Meeting.

Spoke @ 9:56

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## Johnson County Animal Shelter Resources – Where Do We Stand?

- The purpose of this presentation to the commissioner's court is to discuss the county's available animal shelter resources relative to need.
- It is our contention that there is a current shortage of animal shelter resources within the county and this shortage is rapidly escalating in-step with the growing population of the county.
- We've attempted to quantify this shortage both today and over the next 10 years as reasonably estimated with available data.
- We've also attempted to give the court a ballpark estimate of the cost of a county shelter as a solution to the growing problem.
- Thank you for allowing us this time to bring the issue to your attention.

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## Animal Shelter Needs – What's "Normal?"

- Johnson county currently has municipal city shelters in the cities of Alvarado, Burleson, Cleburne, and Joshua. In 2023, these combined shelters received 4,244 animals into their care.
- 'Is this intake activity typical for the underlying populations?
- To answer this question, we have to look at the available data. Specifically, we can look at national, state, and county population data available to us through published US census data, along with national, state, and county animal intake data available through various sources. We'll use the year 2023 as our base year, as it is the most current year of available census data.

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## Animal Shelter Needs – The Data and its Sources

- Nationally, the US had a population of 334,914,895. Per <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/sac-releases-2023-annual-analysis>, 6.5 million dogs and cats entered all US rescues in 2023.
- Statewide, Texas had a population of 30,503,301. Per <https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/animal-shelter-statistics/texas>, 568,325 animals entered Texas animal shelters with 343 of 378 shelters reporting, extrapolating to a total of 626,317 with all shelters reported.
- At the county level, Johnson County had a population of 202,906. Per all Johnson County reported city shelter intake numbers, we know that a total of 4,244 animals entered the Johnson County city shelters in 2023.

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## Animal Shelter Needs – What the Data Is Telling Us

- Determining animal shelter intake input as a percentage of the human population can now be calculated as follows:
  - ✓ Annual animal shelter intake **at the national level** in 2023 as a percent of the human population: 1.94%.
  - ✓ Annual animal shelter intake **at the state level** in 2023 as a percent of the human population: 2.05%.
  - ✓ Annual animal shelter intake **at the county level** in 2023 as a percent of the human population: 2.09%.
- *Note:* the percentages above are consistent with the lower-end published Shelter Planners of America 2020 report stating that “Nationally, the number of animals at local shelters annually is 2-3% of the human population.”

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## Comparing 2023 Johnson County City Shelter Expected Animal Intakes vs. Actual Animal Intakes

	<u>Alvarado</u>	<u>Burleson</u>	<u>Cleburne</u>	<u>Joshua</u>	<u>Total</u>
2023 population	6,225	55,220	36,209	8,901	106,555
Expected intake at 2.09%					
of the city's population	130	1,154	757	186	2,227
Actual intake	777	1,718	1,120	629	4,244

These actual intake numbers relative to the underlying city's population suggest that some percent of out-of-city stray populations are nevertheless landing in the available city shelters. But even this data is understating the reality of the city's current animal control challenges, as discussed on the next slides.

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## Current City Shelter Intake Numbers – Behind the Numbers

A discussion with the city's shelter management is indicative of just how lacking shelter space currently is within Johnson county, as illustrated here:

From the Burleson shelter management:

"Our shelter has been over capacity for over two years now. We have spayed/neutered, provided vaccines, microchips, heartworm tests, and treatments, and give them away for free, but we still cannot get under capacity."

"Johnson County does not have any recourse for its animals, as the Humane Society of North Texas is not taking in the number of animals that it use to and is also over capacity."

"All of the rescues and shelters are over capacity"

"From 2023 to 2024, we turned away \*1020 animals from Johnson County alone."

\* Roughly 35% of the total Burleson shelter animal intake requests, indicating Johnson County animal shelter needs likely fall closer to the higher - end range of the anticipated 2%-3% of the underlying human population.

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## Current City Shelter Intake Numbers – Behind the Numbers

From the Cleburne shelter management:

“Unfortunately, we have been at or over capacity for the last couple of years.”

“Every week we are reaching out to rescues to see if they can pull animals”

“We receive hundreds of calls a week from individuals who need to either surrender animals, have stray animals, or have aggressive animals that they need help with but, because they are not residents of the city, there is no help for them. They are told that they have to take matters into their own hands.”

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## Current City Shelter Intake Numbers – Behind the Numbers

The Police Chiefs from both Keene and Venus both expressed strong support for a county animal shelter. Which makes sense, as they currently do not have a municipal shelter to locate nuisance animals.

The Venus police chief noted that their go-to animal rescue organization, the SPCA in Waxahachie, is scheduled to close next month. And we’ve already learned that the animal rescue organizations in Johnson County have begun rejecting animal intakes because they are running at capacity.

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## Current Animal Shelter Capacity in Johnson County – Where Are We At?

- Let's review what we've just learned
  - ✓ City shelters have been struggling with capacity issues for several years now.
  - ✓ Significant numbers of animals are currently being rejected for intake.
  - ✓ The traditional role of animal rescue groups in relieving over-burdened municipal shelters and law enforcement with nuisance animals has been stretched past its ability to adequately respond to the need.
  - ✓ To date, no city in Johnson County has indicated an interest in building/expanding their animal shelter capacities in the near future.
- Unfortunately, these capacity issues will continue to expand as the population of Johnson County increases. Let's use known data trends to roughly quantify this expected expansion over the next ten years.

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## Johnson County – Looking Ahead

- Per <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/texas/johnson-county> Johnson County's estimated population growth between 2023 and 2024 was 3.65%.
- Per the same source above, it is estimated that the population of Johnson County will reach 250,000 within the next 5 years, or by 2030.
- Using a relatively conservative annual growth rate of 2.8% for years 2030 - 2035, the population of Johnson County would reach an estimated 287,000 in 2035.

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## Johnson County – Looking Ahead

- Using an animal intake ratio of 2.5% of the population growth, this translates into an increase in annual animal shelter intake numbers (relative to 2023) of roughly 1,200 animals by 2030 and 2,100 by 2035.
- We now need to adjust to accommodate likely city shelter transfers/referrals, as we know the city shelters have been at capacity for several years now.
  - ✓ We'll assume a 25% transfer/referral rate from the city shelter's 2023 counts.
- We can now say that a county animal shelter built for future growth can anticipate a rough annual animal intake number of 3,200 animals, with 2,100 animals attributable to future growth in the county and 1,100 attributable to today's existing capacity shortages.

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## Johnson County – Estimating the Cost of a County Shelter

- If the commissioner's court were to commit the resources to construct a county animal shelter, what would it cost? To answer this question, we must first determine what size shelter would be appropriate for Johnson County.
  - ✓ Counter-intuitively, bigger is not always better. Why? Because without sufficient animal adoptions, a shelter of any size will eventually reach capacity, with related increased cost of operations for the lingering populations being sheltered.
- To avoid future capacity problems, a shelter must proactively manage its population. A key tool in this management is to determine the shelter's "average length of stay" (ALS), or the average amount of time an animal is held in a shelter.

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## A County Shelter – Determining the Length of Stay (LOS)

Consider the following:

<u>Admissions per year</u>	<u>Avg admissions/day</u>	<u>Avg LOS(days)</u>	<u>Avg Daily population</u>
3,200	8.8	7	62
3,200	8.8	14	123
3,200	8.8	21	185

Note that, depending upon the average LOS in the example above, a shelter estimating annual animal intake of 3,200 animals would need a shelter large enough to hold either 62, 123, or 185 animals on any given day.

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## A County Shelter – Determining Square Footage

- Using a LOS of 14 days we can estimate an average daily animal count of 123 animals.
  - ✓ A survey of actual animal intakes at various Texas county shelters indicate a ratio of dog/cat intakes of approximately 67% to 33%, which is what we will use for our purposes.
- Using the Humane Society of the United States shelter design document found at [www.animalsheltering.org](http://www.animalsheltering.org) we can now calculate the desired sq. footage of a proposed county shelter.
  - ✓ This formula includes space for administrative offices, public interaction space, medical space, storage and support space:

80 dogs times 100 s.f. per dog	8,000
40 cats times 50 s.f. per cat	<u>2,000</u>
Suggested minimum s.f. of shelter	10,000

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## A County Shelter - approximating price per square foot

- Per <http://www.shelterplanners.com/blog/2023/4/3/how-much-does-it-cost-to-build-an-animal-shelter.html> the average cost of a shelter build ranges from \$400-\$550 s.f.
- Per <https://www.profitableventure.com/cost-start-build-pet-sanctuary/>, the national average (2024) for construction of an animal shelter is about \$475/SF)
- For a rough check on the cost estimates above, we were able to find a Grapevine, TX 2017 10,000 s.f. shelter build for \$3.8 million, or \$380/s.f. Adjusting for inflation at 4% per year, that is the equivalent of \$520/s.f. in 2025.
- *These estimates do not include the cost of land.*

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## A County Shelter - approximating price per square foot

- Why are shelter construction costs so high relative to residential construction? Per Shelter Planners of America:  
 “New animal shelters, properly designed, are much like hospitals. Sanitation is critical to the health of the animals. This requires expensive plumbing and HVAC systems to prevent both airborne and water borne transmission of disease. Finishes must be impervious to moisture in all of the animal housing and support areas, which is also expensive. Animal shelters include sophisticated equipment such as double-sided cat cages, double sided dog kennels, dog baths etc. Everything in the shelter must be sanitized on a daily basis so there is a great deal of wear and tear on walls and floors that are washed and sanitized daily. We use individual drains for each dog kennel. This assures no transmission of water borne disease. (Trench drains cannot do this and we have seen them transmit parvo in a shelter killing all the dogs within a week). Multiple HVAC systems are necessary to separate public areas from animal, separate species, well from sick and to enable progressive negative pressurization from well to sick so that air doesn't get contaminated when doors are opened, for instance.”

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## County shelter construction cost estimates – putting it together

- A reasonable estimate of construction costs can now be suggested as follows:

• Square Feet	10,000
• Costs per sq. ft.	\$500
• Construction costs	\$5.0 m

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## County shelter operating costs

- Annual operating costs among shelters typically include utilities, salaries, maintenance, medical supplies, veterinary services, kennel supplies, and food.
- We looked at annual municipal animal shelter operating costs per published budgets/annual intakes and the average annual operating costs were approximately \*\$475 per animal intake.
- Using our previously estimated animal intakes per year, this would translate into initial year's annual operating costs of \$500,000 per year and, once the shelter was fully utilized over time, \$1.5 million per year by 2035.

\*Budgets would by design have already taken volunteer resources into account

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## County shelter operating costs – sharing the costs?

- The commissioner's court could consider sharing the operating cost of a county shelter with its constituent cities, as they will benefit from the proposed county facility.
- If the county were to consider this approach, a cost allocation consideration might look like the following:
  - ✓ Municipal burden to the county – 50% (as a rough reflection of urban vs. rural JC population)
  - ✓ Municipal burden to the JC cities - 50% allocated based upon a factor such as relative population.

If such an allocation could be made, the county's annual operating cost burden would be cut in half.

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## A County Shelter - Takeaways

- We have a *significant* animal shelter capacity shortage in Johnson County.
- This shortage will escalate with the completion of each new housing development.
- No city council has indicated a willingness to address the problem.
- This may be a problem *only* the county is capable of solving.
  - ✓ Please don't kick the can down the road!

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*Thank you for your time!*

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