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City considers total break from Humane Society

Council adopts fees and regulations for demolishing, moving structures

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A complete break between the City of Forrest City and the Forrest City Area Humane Society was recommended to the city council Tuesday by Mayor Gordon McCoy.

The council also adopted ordinances dealing with demolition and the moving of structures, and heard first reading on an ordinance doing away with the Forrest City Municipal Airport Commission.

There have been numerous clashes between city workers and Humane Society members, and McCoy said he has had enough.

"Sometimes you've got to realize when some things are working or not working," McCoy said. "Recently we've had a lot of discussion between Forrest City Animal Control and the Humane Society."

He said the Humane Society has done a lot of good, "And they have some wonderful people who work with them. But unfortunately, you all know that sometimes there is a segment of any group that creates problems for all the members."

McCoy said there has been tension between the city and the Humane Society since long before he became mayor. He said he would like to work with city attorney, Alan Cline, on options for the city to separate itself from the Humane Society.

One option would be to let the Humane Society take over animal control completely. Another would be for the city to take over the shelter completely.

He said no city employees in animal control have gotten along well with Humane Society members.

Chris Oswalt, who in an earlier meeting had suggested the formation of an animal control committee, said that he still hoped the two sides could work out their differences.

"It may not be what both sides like," he admitted. "What I've always found is, try to come to

some kind of agreement. I'm a firm believer that you keep trying."

He also said it wasn't working on either side, and "I'm not blaming either side. We've got one of the craziest lease agreements I've ever seen in my life (the city owns the building and the Humane Society owns the land)."

However, McCoy said he was tired of it, calling it a power struggle.

"For two years now, I've been listening to it, all this stuff back and forth between the Humane Society and Forrest City animal control. I will not spend the whole year of 2009 listening to all this mess. I will not."

There were several members of the Humane Society present, and Henry Peacock suggested that they give their side. However, McCoy said he wanted to hear only from the group's president, Gail Carey, who wasn't there.

McCoy said he had asked a representative of the Humane Society to check with some other towns on what type of arrangements they have. He suggested that one possibility might be to contract out all of animal control to the Humane Society, although he said he didn't think the Humane Society would agree to that.

Glenn Shepherd suggested waiting until the next council meeting or the second February meeting, and seeing what the findings were from other municipalities.

McCoy reiterated what he said earlier, that he was tired of it.

"This is part of my job, but not all of it. I owe Forrest City more than that. I wasn't elected to spend all this time with animal control," he said.

No action was taken on the matter Tuesday.

In other action, the demolition ordinance and the ordinance on moving structures were adopted by all the members present. Both ordinances

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