



# MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council  
Date: January 30, 2023  
From: Geoff Huff, Chief of Police  
Subject: Referral Response: Animal Shelter Concerns Letter

On December 20, 2022, the City Council received a letter from Dick Wilson with concerns about the Ames Animal Shelter. Dick is a volunteer at the shelter. The Council requested that staff provide a memo responding to the concerns raised. The concerns and staff's observations are outlined below.

1. **Offices:** The offices that the director and co-director have are very small. Their space is crowded and there isn't enough room to invite customers to sit down and discuss business.

*STAFF RESPONSE: The office space at the shelter is small and, therefore it is difficult to bring customers into office spaces for meetings or discussions. However, there is no specific standard for office space that indicates that they are substandard.*

2. **Laundry:** Keeping clean bedding is very important. The current laundry room is very small. The washer and dryer should be larger to accommodate the vast amount of washing and drying that needs to be done. They have temporary shelves that are stuffed with clean laundry. There is hardly room to walk around. A sink and refrigerator are also in this very small room.

*STAFF RESPONSE: The laundry space is small, but adequate.*

3. **Cage size for dogs:** The current cage size for keeping dogs is borderline adequate. They also don't have an efficient way to water the dogs. The inside play area should be enclosed for more privacy for potential adoptees.

*STAFF RESPONSE: The size of the kennels for dogs is adequate. The current kennels are relatively new and were ordered to fit the current space of the shelter. If someone surrenders a bonded pair (two dogs from the same household), space becomes an issue. The current kennels can be small for two dogs, depending on the size of the dog. Separating bonded pairs is not desirable as it increases stress on both animals. In some cases involving larger dogs, they must be separated due to the size of the kennels. Having a larger indoor, enclosed play area would provide a better environment for volunteers and potential adopters to work with the animals.*

4. **Outside run area:** Dogs need to be taken outside to do their business. They can only accommodate one dog at a time. A better facility should have a couple of running areas. They could also use a more efficient method of collecting the dog's feces.

*STAFF RESPONSE: The current configuration only allows for one dog or one bonded pair to be in the yard at a time. Multiple enclosed yards would be beneficial. However, staff is not having issues in cleanliness in picking up after the animals.*

5. **Volunteer space:** When I report for duty, there isn't a good place to hang my coat. I think the volunteers need a room of their own to receive messages, to wash their hands, and to check in for duty.

*STAFF RESPONSE: A designated room for volunteers would be desirable as the Shelter relies upon volunteers. Currently, this does not exist.*

6. **Small rooms:** The rooms that house the cats are small and need to be larger. There should be more space to play with the cats and check them out for adoption.

*STAFF RESPONSE: The Shelter only has two rooms for this purpose. When animal population is high, as it is now, this can be a challenge. Potential adopters may need to meet a cat/kitten in their kennels rather than a designated meeting space where both can interact to ensure a good fit. The standard for cat group housing is 18 square feet of floor space per cat in this type of setting. This is a standard developed by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians and other animal welfare industry leaders. Our current rooms and feline population do not allow us to achieve this standard.*

7. **Crowded hallways:** This is a serious problem. The hallways are narrow and because space is a problem, they put rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, etc. in the hallway. This overcrowding presents problems of mobility and cleaning up the cages.

*STAFF RESPONSE: The shelter does not have separate rooms for small pets/exotics (rabbits, Guinea pigs, hamsters, birds, etc.) so at times the hallways are used. This is not desirable, and these types of animals are coming to the shelter with increasing frequency. The current shelter configuration was designed to shelter dogs and cats and not necessarily other animals.*

*In addition, there is not enough storage for large donations of food. In hoarding cases when large numbers of animals (also an increasing problem) donations are frequently made. At times, the hallways become used for storage.*

8. **Storage:** The storerooms are very important because of the great amount of animal food and general supplies that are required to operate a facility like this. More storage is badly needed.

STAFF RESPONSE: Facility space is a major concern. Pet foods need to be stored in a climate-controlled environment. This would not allow staff to store these in pods and off-site storage is problematic and results in more staff time to transport.

*STAFF COMMENTS: Most of the concerns expressed above are related to space, and City staff shares the concern regarding many of the limitations that exist with the existing shelter. The facility is small and animal populations coming to shelter have been increasing in number for many years. All of these concerns regarding kennel size, animal segregation, storage, etc. could be addressed with the construction of a new facility. Staff is currently evaluating how to best accomplish building a new shelter to alleviate these shared concerns.*