

Brand New Cornelius Shelter To Open Soon

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— Cornelius Town Manager Anthony Roberts

By Carolyn Steeves

The stray dogs and cats of Cornelius will soon have a new place to stay while waiting for a permanent home. The new Cornelius Animal Shelter will open in early September, with a ribbon cutting ceremony tentatively planned for Sept. 12.

The new shelter is roughly 3,600 square feet, with outdoor play areas for the animals. It is on the end of Meridian Avenue in Cornelius. The new shelter is a big step up from the old shelter – a collection of cages under a metal roof and tarp.

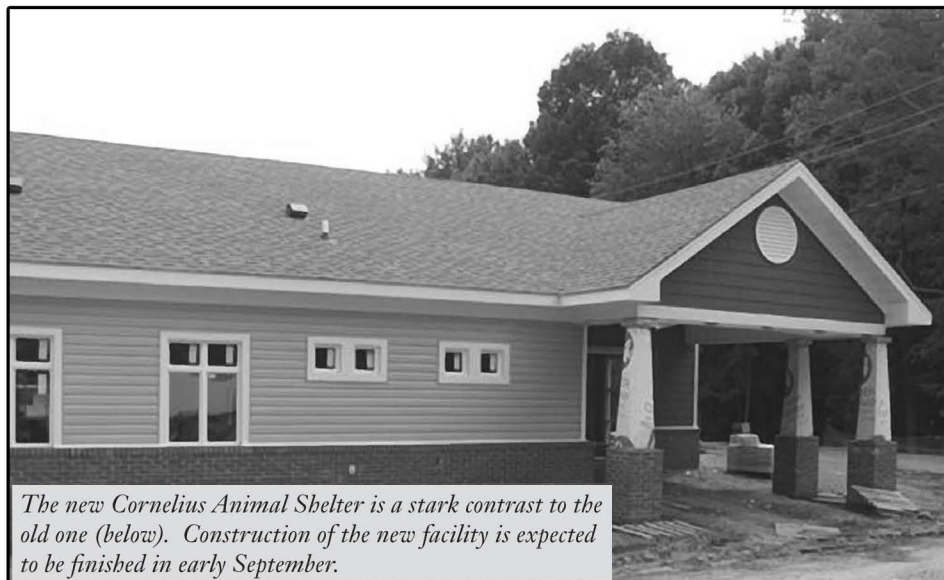
"If you've seen pictures of the existing facility, this is ten thousand times better than the one we have," Cornelius Town Manager Anthony Roberts says. The building has a residential feel, according to Roberts, which is what the board and the neighborhood wanted.

As with the old shelter which was run by the town with a lot of help from volunteers who visited daily to feed and care for the animals, the new shelter is the result of collaboration by the town, volunteers who helped raise funds for it and residents and businesses that donated to the project.

The construction bid on the new shelter was \$515,000, according to Roberts. The town of Cornelius put in \$200,000 and the rest of the needed money came from contributions and fundraisers. "It is amazing the various companies and individuals that have stepped up for the benefit of the animals, especially in this economy," says Roberts.

"It has truly been a community effort for five years," explains Jan Scere, with Friends for Life LKN. "The great thing about the Cornelius shelter is that the people and town cared about the animals and everyone chipped in to help ... with both the animals care in the old shelter and with fundraising to build a new facility."

As the town did with animals in the old shelter, it will do everything "within our power to adopt them out," says Roberts. But, in the case of an animal that is not adoptable such as one that is rabid or dangerous, the town would have to



The new Cornelius Animal Shelter is a stark contrast to the old one (below). Construction of the new facility is expected to be finished in early September.



find an alternative, such as sending it to Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Control.

The town board hasn't adopted a policy yet about how long the animals can stay in the shelter. The board will discuss how long animals can stay before they have to go into foster care or a permanent home over the next few weeks.

The number of animals the shelter will hold is based on state regulations – the number varies depending on the size

of the animal.

In addition to kennels and play areas, the new shelter has spaces for exams, offices and adoptions.

Currently, the shelter only serves the town of Cornelius. "That may open up at some point in time, but to begin with the board has said just Cornelius," Roberts says.

"It is too far for Cornelius citizens and animal control to utilize the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Control shelter daily, hopefully the

new facility will help alleviate some of the burden on the Charlotte animal control," Scere says. "I hope it will help educate the Cornelius and North Mecklenburg citizens on proper animal care and ownership."

The town police will run the shelter, Roberts says, but they will partner with volunteer organizations. Roberts mentioned the Cornelius Animal Shelter Alliance (CASA) as one of the organizations they would continue to work with to care for the

animals and find them homes.

Scere has big hopes for the future of the shelter. She hopes to see public education programs, affordable rabies vaccines, affordable spay and neuter programs and other services offered to the community.

Volunteers and builders are busy painting, paving, installing floor and putting the finishing touches on the building. Meanwhile, the animals in Cornelius' current shelter wait patiently for the new facility. 🐾