

City of Wynne

206 S. Falls Blvd.
Wynne, Arkansas 72396

Jennifer Hobbs, Mayor
Email: jhobbs@cityofwynne.com

Phone: 870-238-0027
Fax: 870-208-1111

October 3, 2019

To the Citizens of Wynne,

As your mayor I would like to clear up any misconceptions about animal control and our contract with the Wynne Friends of Animals. First of all, the City does not own nor operate the shelter/Wynne Friends of Animals. The decision to close the shelter is solely Wynne Friends of Animals (WFOA). The City of Wynne was under a contract with WFOA to perform animal control as well as care for the dogs in the city shelter. The contract allowed for the WFOA to take any animal they felt they could relocate after the state required 5 day holding period. For that contract the city paid \$62,000 plus expenses which total approximately \$75,000 a year.

Prior to WFOA providing animal control for the city, WFOA contracted with the city for kennels to hold dogs picked up by the City of Wynne as well as provide food and assist with the adoption of unclaimed dogs taken in by the City of Wynne animal control officer and did so for a fee of \$1000 per month. Prior to that they were assisting in the adoption of the animals for \$1 per year, so beginning the negotiations at an offer of \$1200 per month did not seem unreasonable.

I want to be perfectly clear the city has no issue with the operation of the shelter. Our issue is with animal control only. The Mayor's office, as well as the police department, have received numerous calls and visits throughout the year with complaints about the lack of response from animal control. This is the issue we were addressing because we have heard the citizens of Wynne and we take each complaint seriously. We have been paying for a service that was not being provided. The director of WFOA could not distinguish what was spent on animal control and what money the shelter used. It is the mayor's responsibility to keep the city government running properly. This includes enforcing city ordinances and making sure that the residents receive maximum benefits and services for the taxes that they pay.

As far as funding for WFOA, they are a privately owned and operated facility and it is illegal for the city to donate funds without a service in response. Article 12, Section 5 of the Arkansas Constitution prevents municipalities from donating or appropriating money to private corporations, associations, institutions, or individuals. However, monies that are spent on items that benefit the entire public may be authorized under the common law public purpose doctrine. This is what we have been doing through a contract for animal control. We can contract for a service, but we cannot just give money to the shelter so they can operate. The City of Wynne has in years past agreed to make a donation above and beyond the animal control contract and were cited in the annual audit for making the donation to a private organization.

We have people asking what our plan is for the future. We have had one unsuccessful meeting to try to negotiate with WFOA to help rescue unclaimed animals picked up in the City of Wynne. The meeting resulted in the director saying they are unwilling to partner with the City in any way. We have tried to schedule a second meeting to attempt again to find a resolution, but at this time we have been unsuccessful in getting that scheduled. We are advertising for an animal control officer and have found a facility to operate as a pound if necessary. It has both indoor and outdoor options to house dogs along with heat and air conditioning. The city does not plan to operate a full shelter. We are gathering as much information as possible about what is required and allowed. The city has talked to veterinarians as well as rescue groups. It is our desire to find some shelters and rescue operations that will be willing to partner with the City to take healthy animals. It is not our desire nor plan to euthanize healthy animals. At the end of October, I am sure you will begin to see a lot of Facebook activity from the Wynne City Hall and Wynne Police Department Facebook page with pictures of animals whom we are trying to find the owner or a new home.

I know there has been a lot of negativity and untruths on Social Media about the Mayor, the City Council and the entire animal situation. We will not argue on social media. As always, any citizen is welcome to call or visit me, your mayor, at Wynne City Hall and/or your council persons whose numbers are on the city website.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Hobbs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Hobbs

Mayor, City of Wynne