



## The Times

### Interest in regional animal shelter is renewed

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**SPECIAL TO THE TIMES**

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP -- Talk of building a regional animal shelter on a tract of land near Reed Road gained renewed momentum recently when township officials agreed to add the site to a list of properties being considered for sewer service.

In a recent decision, township committee members said the 46-acre tract, which the township is negotiating to buy from a private owner, should be in line for sewers if and when the lines are extended into the southern end of town.

"It's an area we've looked at developing for regional animal shelter for several years," said Committeewoman Vanessa Sandom, who raised the issue during a meeting last week. "Now we're talking about the possibility of bringing sewers into the area. We shouldn't exclude this tract."

Deputy Mayor Michael Markulec agreed.

"I think it's a great idea," he said. "We've talked about a regional shelter for some time."

That's good news for animal advocates who have long been clamoring for a regional shelter to address the problem of unwanted and stray dogs and cats in Mercer County.

"Obviously we wanted the sewers to be available to accommodate the shelter we have envisioned there," said Kate Tuttle, a member of the Ewing Animal Shelter Extension League, a nonprofit group pushing for the facility. "Without sewers you'd be talking about building the shelter with septic tanks, and I don't know if that would work."

The township is considering entering into a contract with the Ewing-Lawrence Sewerage Authority to provide service to some 375 homes and businesses around the Pennington Circle. The service would alleviate widespread septic failures in the area.

The township has identified a tract of land between Reed Road and Route 31 near Denow Road as a site for a regional animal shelter. Under the proposal, the township would purchase the land and designate a nonprofit group to build and run the facility. Ewing, Lawrence and other municipalities have expressed an interest in sharing the facility.

Although sales talks have stalled between the township and property owner have waned in the last year, talks may pick up again now that the site is in line for sewers.

"Having no sewers was always an obstacle," Sandom said. "This brings us one step closer to the development of a much-needed regional facility."

Animal advocates were pleased with the news.

"If this will help us get the shelter built, that would be great," said Dolores Ramsey, a Scotch Road resident

who has publicly supported the shelter proposal.

"It's a great idea," said Penny Branham, co-founder of the Animal Allies animal rescue group. "Hopewell Township animals, unless they go through us, have no forum for adoption. When your community doesn't have a shelter, your animals don't get seen. It's seven days (held as strays) and down for them."

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