

Cat shelter pilot project update 2024

Priorities Committee
September 17, 2024

Background

- Strathcona County Council launched the cat shelter pilot project initiative in July 2022 with a \$100,000 grant to the Greater Edmonton Animal Rescue Society (GEARS).
 - GEARS' program named "Sheltered Paws" provided care for abandoned cats and those found in distress in Strathcona County from October 1, 2022 until August 31, 2023.
- In November 2023, council approved \$160,000 in Budget 2024 to continue the pilot project for another year with the expectation GEARS would find a new storefront location in Strathcona County and continue providing services to county residents.

Shelter update

- After extensive searching, GEARS secured a location under a sublease at 8921-20 Street on March 5, 2024, with a possession date of March 15, 2024. The landlord subsequently withdrew their consent to sublease and the bid was vacated.
- GEARS secured another location at 244 Sioux Road on June 5, 2024, with a possession date of August 1, 2024; however, the terms of the lease and rental cost would have exhausted the grant and provided very little if any at all services to the community.

Shelter update

- GEARS elected to maintain their current warehouse space in south central Edmonton acquired in November 2023 and began providing shelter services in February 2024 to Edmonton area residents including Strathcona County.
 - Since January 2024, GEARS has brought into care 35 cats from Strathcona County including 29 cats sheltered at the Edmonton-based location.
 - To date in 2024, 16 county residents have accessed services from GEARS at this location.
- GEARS does not plan to open a storefront space in Strathcona County.
- GEARS intends to maintain their Edmonton location as a shelter and warehouse space with a goal to expand through renovations and upgraded cat housing.
- GEARS intends to continue providing enhanced services to Strathcona County residents under the program name Sheltered Paws.

Sheltered Paws

- GEARS has started a spay/neuter/return program for feral cats in Strathcona County found in rural areas and where property owners are willing to provide food, shelter and care.
 - This program helps to mitigate the overall feral cat population while freeing up space at the Edmonton facility as feral cats are challenging to place in foster care and get adopted.
- GEARS has partnered with a local veterinarian to hold their first Microchip Clinic in the fall 2024 for County residents.
 - A temporary facility application to the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association is pending approval to hold this event outside of a veterinary clinic.
- GEARS has also promoted Sheltered Paws on CTV news, shared several “Shelter Sunday” social media posts and held multiple craft markets at the Agora with funds going to Sheltered Paws.

Conclusion

- GEARS has sufficient grant funding to continue the Sheltered Paws program to benefit Strathcona County residents and cats, even in the absence of a local shelter space, throughout the remainder of 2024 and throughout 2025.
- To maintain services specific to County residents, it is recommended an ongoing grant relationship with GEARS be revisited in Budget 2026.

Questions?