

County commission may lend a hand to Old Fella

By Diana Royal Staff Writer

Has Old Fella Animal Rescue made progress with Burke County's commissioners?

After Tuesday's meeting, the organization's president Richard Daniels seems to think so.

Daniels attended the commission meeting, along with more than 20 companions, most of whom were sporting matching Old Fella Tshirts. He addressed the commissioners in what he referred to as a "last ditch attempt" before budgeting for 2008 begins.

"We just need your help," he told the commissioners, adding that \$100,000 "is not a lot to ask."

Commission chairman Jimmy Dixon entertained the idea, asking Daniels whether Old Fella Rescue wanted a monetary donation or for the county to take over the mission.

Daniels responded that his organization would never turn down money but that Burke County needs to be involved in animal control.

"We could certainly use the money, but it would be selfish to just take it," he responded. Then Dixon asked about the possibility of the county contracting Old Fella to perform the animal control duties.

Commissioner Wayne Crockett said he'd like to see what the entire county's feelings are concerning animal control, adding that placing the question on the November 2008 ballot might be a good idea.

"We're almost at a point where development will force us to have animal control, but we're not there yet," he said, indicating that the commission will have a lot of constituents to answer to regardless of what decision it makes.

After the meeting, Daniels said he felt as though something positive had finally been accomplished in regards to abandoned animals in the county.

"I am looking forward to working with the commission either on a contractual or some monetary basis to help establish an animal control branch of government," he said. "I applaud their willingness to talk openly with (Old Fella) and look forward to further talks in the future ... I feel there will be an effort by the commission to assist in our goal."

County administrator Merv Waldrop said the commission does not want to operate a kennel. He did confirm that commissioners are considering making funds available; however, there are many options to mull over.

The commission could hire or designate an animal control officer to turn animals over to Old Fella. Then there's the issue as to whether there would be enough work to hire an employee for this purpose. Another option would be designating an Old Fella member as the officer.

Establishing animal control in Burke County has been a hot topic throughout the year, attracting the attention of several nonresidents as well.

Waldrop estimated operation costs of an animal control shelter to be approximately \$250,000 each year.