Animal control issue strays from resolve

By LISA SYLVESTER and DONNA FONTE NOT Staff writers

Lafayette City and Parish efforts to consolidate animal control services have hit a stumbling block, leaving both sides uncertain of which direction to take.

The question is who will ultimately be responsible for picking up stray animals outside Lafayette city limits. The City currently does so, although its contract with the Parish for the service expired several months ago.

The City’s recent move to get out of the parishwide service is due to its problems getting insurance coverage for vehicle liability when working in rural areas.

The City has been charging a monthly rate to the Parish to pick up stray dogs and cats in the country.

The City has not said when it will discontinue the service, but City Chief Administrative Officer Glenn Weber recently sent a letter to Parish Chief Administrative Officer Barry Berthelot suggesting that perhaps the Parish should take over its own animal control responsibilities.

City calculations are that the Parish could do so for roughly $17,000, as compared to $108,000 “under a totally consolidated approach,” according to that letter.

The problem Berthelot had with the correspondence, he said, is that City officials did not discuss solutions which might lead to consolidation.

‘They never asked us to participate in a solution.’  

Berthelot

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City liability,” Weber said, adding that Berthelot was still informed afterwards in writing.

Berthelot and Parish President Walter Comeaux said they are “disappointed” with the City’s direction in this attempt at consolidation of services.

“I’m disappointed in the response and particularly disappointed that we did not sit down together to work it out,” Berthelot said. “Potentially they can find this kind of issue on a lot of consolidations. Because of insurance concerns we might not have any at all and that would be a shame.”

“In problems with consolidation, you need to go over reasons why they should work....There are more reasons why they should than they shouldn’t,” he added.

Comeaux said he has felt the City’s stance on consolidation of services in general has been “cautious in some ways. On some things I may feel they’re overly cautious.”

“Either we mean what we’re saying about consolidation or we don’t,” he asserted.

When Weber was asked about the seemingly anti-consolidation attitude, he said, “If consolidation means exposing the City of Lafayette taxpayers to liability out-

de of the city for which we have no protection, then, yes, we’re against the consolidation.”

He and Berthelot claimed that the City and Parish have worked well on several other consolidation efforts.

The Parish could consider assuming responsibility for animal control in city and parish limits, as the City was doing.

It would not have the same problem with its insurance coverage, which encompasses city limits.

Whether the Parish could afford to do so, and whether employees would remain under Civil Service, as they are with the City, would have to be dealt with, Berthelot and Weber noted.

Weber’s response to the parishwide proposal is that it is “a new twist, not yet entertained by the City, but certainly one the City is open to.”

He mentioned that the City ownership of all animal control facilities and property would also have to be resolved.

The animal control issue is on the Parish Council’s regular meeting agenda tonight. Weber said he is uncertain whether he will be able to attend.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. in the Parish Government Building at 1010 Lafayette St.