

Edgewater enters verbal agreement with veterinarian

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EDGEWATER — The cat cages are stacked two high in a cramped room and the washing machine is on the fritz, but the cats and dogs in the city's makeshift animal shelter should be smiling.

That's because the city

and Dr. Ginger Bryant Hutchinson have established the framework for a contract where Bryant Hutchinson will become the city's veterinarian for animals at the shelter, City Manager Jon Williams said.

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Dr. Ginger Bryant Hutchinson (right) and Leslie Hutchinson give Lucy, a pit bull mix an entry wellness exam yesterday at the Edgewater Animal Shelter.

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A contract has not been signed yet, but Williams said yesterday he foresees that happening in the next month.

“We are very fortunate to be able to align ourselves with Glencoe Veterinary Hospital, Dr. Bryant and her staff and achieve some of the goals for our shelter,” Williams said.

Bryant Hutchinson, a veterinarian at the Glencoe Veterinary Hospital in New Smyrna Beach, will visit the shelter twice a week to care for and examine animals.

She will spay and neuter animals before they are adopted and offer low cost preventative medicine to people who adopt animals from the shelter.

The agreement allows the city to bring sick animals captured by animal control officers to Bryant Hutchinson’s vet hospital for care. The veterinarian will be available for emergency calls, train staff and volunteers and assist in fundraising activities.

“Now, basically, every animal that comes through this facility is touched by a professional,” Bryant Hutchinson said.

The potential contract differs from how the city treats its animals now. Animals are taken to several different veterinarians as appointments allow. This will streamline care for the animals and make them healthier, Bryant Hutchinson said.

“It’s a win-win situation,” she said. The agreement should save the city money too, Williams said.

“It’s very early to tell what the savings will be,” he said. “We believe taking this direction will set us closer to breaking even.”

The shelter has not been close to breaking even, Williams said, and this may allow it to even make money in the future. Bryant Hutchinson said she hopes the shelter becomes a wellness clinic for the animals of Edgewater. She will continue to operate her veterinary hospital in New Smyrna Beach.

Bryant Hutchinson graduated from Ross University in 2002 and first showed interest in becoming the city’s veterinarian in December.

Voters approved a special tax worth \$500,000 in 2004, to build a new animal shelter, but rising construction prices have hampered progress.

City officials wanted a veterinarian to step up to build and run a clinic next to the city-built shell and kennel.

Bryant Hutchinson answered the call, but later determined there was not enough money in the city’s budget to operate an animal rescue and adoption facility.

The 41-year-old veterinarian then submitted a proposal where she would become the city’s veterinarian. The agreement between the doctor and city is unique

and no other city has one similar, according to Williams and Bryant Hutchinson.

“From what we can tell this agreement can establish a benchmark,” Williams said.



STAFF PHOTO BY DAVID KENNEDY

Dr. Ginger Bryant Hutchinson says hello to Harmony, a 9-week-old black lab up for adoption at the Edgewater Animal Shelter. Bryant Hutchinson and the city have established the framework for a contract where Bryant Hutchinson will become the city’s veterinarian for animals at the shelter.