

AP to merge shelter with other communities

By

Times-Herald Newspapers

– May 19, 2012 **Posted in:** [Stories](#)

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Sunday Times Newspapers

ALLEN PARK – The city will move its animal shelter services into a regional shelter based in Southgate as early as this year, but the current shelter still must be repaired.

City councilors voted Tuesday to join Downriver Central Control Animal Shelter, which is set to open in Southgate as early as December and will be built with a state grant.

The city's current shelter depends on its agreements with Melvindale and Lincoln Park to run, and both have agreed to join the new shelter.

The shelter is to be built next to Lions Park on Superior Street in Southgate with a \$143,000 grant, reduced from the original \$235,000, for half the cost of the shelter. Control officers at the shelter will respond to animal control complaints in all involved cities, much like the current Downriver Central Dispatch system used for 911 calls.

Wyandotte, which voted to join the efforts two weeks ago, will provide their current shelter for overflow.

Allen Park will pay \$15,000 to enter into the agreement, money that councilors said can be taken from drug forfeiture funds.

"This will alleviate our ordinance officer of having anything to do with the animal shelter," Councilman Bob Keenan said. "He can go out and enforce high grass and noxious weeds."

But the current animal shelter must still be brought up to code to house the city's animals until the new shelter can be built.

A Michigan Department of Agriculture inspection in November found issues including a porous floor and the lack of a separate area for sick animals, the cost of which threatened to close the shelter until councilors suggested alternative methods of meeting the codes, such as epoxy instead of sandblasting and a shower curtain instead of a separate room, that were approved by the state.

Keenan said the materials have been purchased and renovations can start soon.

The city had plans to ask to house its animals in Dearborn's shelter during the renovation, but Southgate Animal Control Officer Aaron Bertera, who visited the meeting to discuss the matter, offered his free of charge.

"I just want to make sure that the animals are being taken care of and that as future partners I contribute my facility to help you guys out," he said.