Animal Services Managers Susan Klein-Rothschild and Carrie Topliffe gave the presentation that said things at the shelter are going really well and the Oversight Team and volunteers and staff are improving shelter conditions by leaps and bounds. However, the OT ends in June but the County recognizes that the work has not been finished and is going to continue the team as an Advisory Board with 9-12 members and similar composition. The biggest difference between the AB and the OT is that the AB will hold public meetings.  So the County will continue to be a majority in the group. I believe some of the current members of the OT will stop going as the topics they were most concerned about have been addressed. The County envisions the Advisory Board to have 2 yr terms.

They said there was no consensus on the OT for an independent Animal Commission as ASAP and Angela Rockwell and the County Staffers were set against it. Angela submitted a letter to the Board and also used her 3 mins of public comment time to say it wasn't needed and people were too negative. Linda Greco said that the AB or Commission had to have productive members because in her experience negative members could cause problems in the group. Lisa Kenyon used her 3 mins to let the Supes know what a great job the three shelters and staff and vols were doing. Phil Seymour made good arguments for a Commission.

Janet Wolf spoke first  after the comments and was against a commission and said that the presentation showed how well things were going, so why was it needed? Lavagnino and Adam and Williams referred to the fiscal constraints they are under which would  make the formation of a new commission less likely. Adam said that should all learn to play nice with each other. Williams asked Carrie why she thought the Animal Commission would cost that much more than the OT staff time and costs (estimated at $150K through July of 2016) and SKR  said the reporting costs were more burdensome. Williams said that rather than having the County say that there was no consensus on the Commission, he wanted to see an up or down vote from them on the Commission and the AB to see what support existed for it. Hartman added to that and requested that the County commit to coming back in 6 months to report on the additional progress made by the AB. That will allow us to have another chance to lobby the Supes if there is something specific that we want at that time.

So the upshot of today is that nothing will change anytime soon unless the fiscal stuff causes them to stop funding the shelters at their current level. The budget the County has submitted for next year is the same as this year, $5.2M. That is actually a little tight as there are annual increases in salaries, benefits, and other stuff, so there will be some cost cutting internally in some areas.

The other lesson that I took away is that if community groups want to impact the political process, we have to organize in advance of the Board Meeting and get 3 supes to agree to bring a motion for us for what we want. We can't expect the County to propose motions that they don't want. So as next October approaches, if you see that there is anything that we should address, you should bring up it to your shelter friends and get the ball rolling.