Written by George Browning
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To alleviate the pressing issue of the Salem Animal Shelter being understaffed, the county has been asked by the City of Salem to fund a part-time employee at a cost of $15,000 per year.

That amount is in addition to the $20,000 the county already pays the city for housing animals.
The county also pays the salary of the county's Animal Control Officer Randy Lee.
Commissioner David Brown was at the Washington County Council's regular meeting Monday morning to discuss the issue.
Brown said he has meet with a number of the parties involved in the local animal control issues.
"The city said that animal control and housing has been such a monumental task that they are going to work on an expansion program and the need is there to hire part-time employees," Brown said. "If we provide the $15,000 the city says that will take care of the issue."
Brown said. the Salem Animal Shelter operates on a budget of $72,000.
"We've been paying $20,000 a year since I don't remember when and we've never increased that amount," he said.
In 2011 there were 168 animals from within the city limits turned into the animal shelter.
In that same amount of time, in the county was more than 1,500 animals.
Brown said besides the $15,000 several options were considered.
He said the option to pay per animal was discussed.
"That means the spaying, neutering and all the stuff and that means a pretty big expense," Brown said. "Or, we can pull out of the city and build a county shelter.
"Right now, the only thing I suggest is that we find an additional $15,000 that we can start giving the city. That's the cheapest option I see."
Councilmen Ben Bowling attended some of the meetings and agreed with Brown that the $15,000 is the cheapest way to address the issue.
The problem with the amount is that there is no where in the county budget to get the money from.
"My question is how you going to pay for it," asked County Auditor Sarah Bachman. "I want to know where you're going to get $15,000."
Councilman David Hoar expressed concern over the operation of the animal shelter as did council attorney Mark Clark.
Clark said there were two dogs recently running around the parking lot at the sheriff's department that didn't get picked up for whatever reason.
Brown did not address the specific concerns, but rather went back to his initial assessment.
"My point is somebody has to clean the dog crap up out there and we have to pay somebody to do it," Brown said. ". . . It is great to have volunteers, but there is more needed (at the animal shelter) than going out and walking the dog for 15 minutes. Right now, we have only one person doing it in addition to the other stuff they have to do."
Bowling seemed to agree with Brown, asking what would the county's plan be if the city decided not allow any animals outside the city limits at the shelter.
"This is the cheapest avenue we have," Brown said.
The council did not take action, but did take the matter under advisement.
The council's next meeting will be Feb. 4 at the county government building.