

LT Humane Society board in disarray, fires staff

Updated March 23:

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Humane Society has gone to the dogs – in a bad way.

Now the board is backpedaling a bit on what is going on.

Board secretary/treasurer Sue Pritchett on Thursday sent *Lake Tahoe News* an email stating, “The comment on the closing of the Humane Society was premature. We are reorganizing and will be open on Fridays to give out pet food.”

She would not explain the reorganization and stopped communicating with *LTN* when we started asking questions.

Judy Brown, who was on the board for 14 years before being termed out in 2013 and then became the office manager, said she was told by Pritchett on March 21 to post a **note on the door** saying the nonprofit was closed. Brown was also told that would be her last day of employment.

But she wasn't given her last check, and she said the board is refusing to pay her her vacation and comp time.

Brown has been the acting executive director, at a pay of \$11 an hour, since last summer. This came on the heels of the former ED being fired for allegedly embezzling from the Humane Society.

“I was totally surprised by this. Apparently they had a secret board meeting on the 15th and decided they needed to sell the building and pay off the debt,” Brown told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The local Humane Society has been in operation for 51 years.

The other board members are Lorna Lefler, president, and Kim Stephenson. They with Pritchett were the board members when the alleged illegal activity occurred.

“I think the board should resign if they are so tired and they don’t want to hassle with it anymore,” Brown said. “Turn it over to people who are willing to make the organization continue. If it means downsizing, fine.”

Brown said the Humane Society runs the Disaster Animal Response Team for the city. After Hurricane Katrina the federal government said cities had to have a plan to care for animals during an emergency.

Acting City Manger Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* the animals will be cared for.

“In a disaster we would address that working with the county, Fish and Game, state of California OES and the Wildlife Care center. This would be a process worked through our logistics, planning and operations sections,” Meston said. “We had a successful animal evacuation shelter as well as people shelter last year with the floods and actually never used the Humane Society.”

As for the two house cats at the Humane Society, Brown took them to her home and is finding people to adopt them.