

# THE DAILY TIMES

FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO

**SUBSCRIBE NOW.**  
**MISS A DAY. MISS A LOT.**

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

March 5, 2006

Section: Viewpoint

Article ID: fdn27251766

Page: B2

## Editorial: Our pick for mayor: Standley over Fischer

*(Editorial Board) The Daily Times*

Farmington has a clear choice for mayor: incumbent Bill Standley or challenger Mary Fischer. Essentially, it's a choice between status quo and change.

But in The Daily Times' endorsement for mayor, we are going to fudge a bit and opt for both.

We often like what Fischer has to say and appreciate her independent voice on the council, yet we are endorsing Standley for a third term.

We are in favor of the status quo because Standley has done just about everything - from ribbon-cutting to improving relations with the Navajo community - that anyone could ask of a mayor.

But note the words "just about."

Here comes the call for change. While we recommend Farmington stay with Standley, the mayor must become more of a leader at council meetings.

He should wisely follow Fischer's advice and use the gavel when councilors or council meetings get out of hand, which seems to be occurring with increased frequency.

Unfortunately, Standley has said he sees no problem with the way council meetings are run now.

There lies the problem. Either Standley is half-blind or biased, allowing Councilors George Sharpe and Tommy Roberts to personally attack Fischer and/or members of the audience who might have a differing opinion.

Mr. Mayor, if you want to be a leader - lead.

If Standley takes this advice in the intent given, we see no reason for a change at the top. The mayor is up on all major issues - from traffic to crime to growth. He just needs to follow through to ensure a high level of decorum and professionalism at public meetings. It's as simple as that.

For the record, we have nothing against Fischer. In fact, we agree with her many times on many issues - especially on public records and police accountability.

To us, endorsing the mayor is a way to keep the best of both worlds and two differing points of view - Standley and Fischer, who will retain her seat on the council should she lose Tuesday.

Fischer's voice is appreciated and needed on the council. And someday it very well may be the voice of Farmington we want to hear, as she also learns to work better with others.

Farmington is fortunate to have two candidates for mayor the caliber of Standley and Fischer. We'd like to keep both.

In District 4, **Jason Sandel**, Pamela Weese and Benjamin Elias Sanchez are vying for the city council seat vacated by Tommy Roberts.

Weese has a lot of energy and obviously cares about the future of the community, but we feel she could benefit from more government involvement before being elected.

Sanchez had some interesting ideas and definitive opinions, and we admired his strong stance on open policing and open government. However, we feel his focus may be a bit narrow.

Sandel has clearly done his homework. He appeared to be the most well-informed of the three candidates with a clear understanding of the issues facing the council.

The Daily Times endorses Sandel. We think he would bring a fresh perspective to the council that would be conducive to getting things done

in an efficient, but well thought out manner.

In the District 3 city commission race three candidates are running, incumbent George Sharpe, Gary Horner and Peter Hayden.

While George's constant infighting with Mary Fischer over the past few months has made for interesting city council stories, it has not made for efficient city government.

In interviews and forums, Sharpe seemed more focused on the problems with Mary Fischer than on the problems facing Farmington.

Since Peter Hayden has not responded to requests for interviews or attended any candidate forums, we really don't know enough about him to logically back his candidacy.

In candidate forums and interviews, Gary Horner has brought some fresh ideas. We must qualify that by saying that yes, Gary does have a personal relationship with Mary Fischer.

That being said, The Daily Times endorses Horner.

The race for full-time municipal judge pits Bill Stevenson and Keith Smith against incumbent Bill Liese.

Stevenson's running for all the right reasons, he wants to crack down on DWIs. However, the fact he hasn't even sat in a courtroom before was a little disconcerting for us for a guy who wants to decide the fates of others.

Smith is a teacher in Shiprock and an obviously intelligent guy who has cited DWIs and racing, as well as a methamphetamine treatment program, as his top concerns.

Liese has the most experience of the three candidates as he has a combined 14 years as a municipal judge, two years as a Magistrate Judge and 21 years on the police department.

The Daily Times endorses Liese. When the fates of others hang in the balance, a knowledge of the law is paramount and with a law degree not being a requirement (none of the candidates possess one), Liese's experience gives him the nod.

Copyright (c) The Daily Times. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

March 8, 2006

Section: Front page

Article ID: fdn27383800

Page: A1

## Mayor Standley reelected / Incumbent Sharpe narrowly wins Council seat; Sandel joins him

*Debra Mayeux The Daily Times*

The Daily Times FARMINGTON - It was a big win for Mayor Bill Standley in Tuesday's municipal election, with the incumbent easily besting challenger Councilor Mary Fischer by more than 1,400 votes.

"I've been very pleased with the response that I got (while campaigning), and I'm happy the voters are allowing me to represent them for another four years," Standley said.

The mayor, who will serve a third four-year term, collected 3,620 votes. Fischer had 2,155 votes when the votes were counted late Tuesday.

Standley said he believes the win came from his accomplishments over the last four years. But he wasn't gloating.

"I don't think there's a loser in the mayor race. Mary retains her council seat, and I retain the mayor's seat," he said.

Fischer, who will continue to represent District 2, did not share in Standley's optimism.

"I just am concerned for the future of the community. It is very disappointing, but I will continue to fight the fight and do what's right and speak out for the little guy," said Fischer.

Her longtime boyfriend, Gary Horner, also came up short in his second quest for city office.

Despite a strong showing, Horner's attempt at securing a City Council seat in District 3 again was quashed by George Sharpe.

Sharpe, who will serve a second term, said he realized his narrow victory was anything but a mandate. Sharpe received 720, just 121 votes more than Horner's 599.

As incumbent, Sharpe benefited from a three-way race, with stealth candidate Peter Hayden - he refused to do newspaper interviews, candidate forums and debates - receiving 115 votes that could have gone to Horner.

"There's a message there for me," Sharpe said, acknowledging Horner's numbers and his reputation for sparring too much with Fischer and citizens in attendance at council meetings.

"There's a significant amount of people who want me to stop being ornery. I appreciate the people who voted for me, and the people who voted against me. I will do my best to represent all my constituents and the entire community over the next four years," he said.

Farmington resident Jim Doerr, who lives in District 3, was at City Hall Tuesday night, watching election returns. He was not happy with the results.

"This is a disappointing night, it looks like," Doerr said, adding that he would like an investigation into what he believes to be corruption in the leadership at City Hall.

Jack Fortner of Farmington said the results were not surprising, but encouraging.

"The voters said, 'We like what is happening in our city, let's stay the course,'" Fortner said, adding the great thing about Farmington is that "tomorrow people again will work together" for the good of the community.

In another three-way race, **Jason Sandel** won in District 4 by what he called a "mandate." He received 1,446 votes, while challengers Pamela Weese earned 919 and Benjamin Elias Sanchez received 157 votes.

"There is a clear mandate for focusing on the future of the community, and I'm excited to get to work," said Sandel.

Sandel worked hard on his election by spending money on advertising, placing signs throughout the community, printing up flyers and going door-to-door. He learned about campaigning from his father, former state Rep. Jerry Sandel, D-Farmington.

The hard work paid off and earned Sandel the respect of long-time Republican Don Brumbaugh, who shook Sandel's hand and told the 31-year-old candidate that he was the first Democrat Brumbaugh had ever cast a vote for.

"He was working so hard at it," Brumbaugh said.

Sandel vowed to stay in contact with his constituents.

"I want folks to call me and keep in touch with me," he said. "I want to hear feedback from the district."

Sandel has the support of his predecessor, Tommy Roberts, who did not seek reelection.

"I think Jason will do a very nice job," said Roberts, who predicted a "learning curve" for the new councilor, but "I expect that he will perform very well."

Roberts also commended Weese for running a "progressive and positive campaign."

Weese said she was relieved the campaigning was over with.

"I'm very happy for Jason. ... We're still pals," she said, adding that she plans to run for another office in the future. "I feel like the city will have a great time with a fresh perspective."

Weese's campaign manager Bob Culpepper did not hide his disappointment.

"I think the best man lost, and I think she did a really grand job," Culpepper said.

Sanchez was unavailable for comment.

City Manager Bob Hudson said the votes showed that the "track record of the folks involved speaks for itself."

He said that while there is bound to be change in the city over the next four years, those elected will be able to "meet the challenges that are before us."

The final vote won't be officially declared until after the canvass, which is set for Friday. Winners will be sworn in March 13.

- By Debra Mayeux

Copyright (c) The Daily Times. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

March 9, 2006

Section: Front page

Article ID: fdn27940870

Page: A1

## Passing the baton / Farmington council ready for work

*Nathan Gonzalez The Daily Times*

The Daily Times News Analysis

Pull quote: 'I'm not interested in alliances. I'm not interested in the politics of personality. I'm interested in sitting down and discussing the issues of the community.'

**Jason Sandel**, Farmington City Councilor-elect.

FARMINGTON - To the untrained eye, Farmington City Councilor-elect **Jason Sandel** appears to be following in his father's footsteps.

Sandel admits he's learned much from his father Jerry, who was once rooted firmly in his seat as a 30-year veteran lawmaker in Santa Fe. That was until the elder Sandel was unseated by former Rep. Nick Tinnen.

But has the 30-year-old, newly elected city councilor set his sights on a higher office? The younger Sandel says no.

"My aspirations are to get things done for the city of Farmington," **Jason Sandel** said. "I was elected last night and given a vote of confidence from the people."

**Jason Sandel** received 56 percent of the popular vote to represent District 4, which includes the northern section of the city. He replaces Councilor Tommy Roberts who did not seek re-election.

Voters also opted to retain Councilor George Sharpe and Mayor Bill Standley, who was challenged by Councilor Mary Fischer. Despite losing the mayoral race, she will retain her seat as councilor for two years.

Standley, Sharpe and **Jason Sandel** will be sworn in March 7. But while the new council, including Councilor Dan Darnell, whose term did not expire this election, looks to move forward with **Jason Sandel**, Fischer said the city is facing "tremendous problems" and added that in two years she'll step aside.

"Quite honestly, I'm tired," Fischer said. "That's it for me. Everybody I talked to said they wanted a change. Apparently that wasn't the case. I tried my best for this election."

Fischer said city officials have sat idle on a lawsuit involving the city's share of water stored at Navajo Reservoir. She said the city is in danger of losing water rights because of inaction.

"I think our water situation is going to be critical," she said. "I don't see the city addressing it at all. The city has been sitting on the sidelines."

Standley said he would have to meet with the new council next week to determine what issues officials should focus on.

**Jason Sandel** said he plans to ask the council to enact a set of rules of order to quiet the at-times heated debate amongst councilors. Darnell said he would support such a measure, however, Standley said such rules were not necessary.

Fischer said the behavior of the council has been an "embarrassment" in past meetings. She criticized Mayor Standley for allowing personal attacks on fellow councilors.

"I think a code of conduct would be quite nice," Fischer said. "It all hinges on whether the mayor would use that gavel. He hasn't thus far."

Standley said such a measure could hinder constructive debate and one was not warranted. Although, he added if the council found it to be an issue, he would consider Sandel's proposed rules of order.

While Fischer, Sandel and Darnell support a code of conduct, Sharpe sided with the mayor.

"I don't think there is any big problem. When we disagree on issues, we take our time to talk about them. I don't see a big need for changes," Sharpe said.

One issue that has prompted discussion of the rules of order was a previous verbal disagreement with Sharpe, who told Fischer to move out of town during a council meeting. However, minutes after the comment was made, Sharpe apologized, Standley said.

"I have never needed to use a gavel. No one has ever been out of order. If it ain't broke, don't fix it," Standley said. "It was never an issue until election time."

Regardless, the council appears ready to move forward and depending who is asked, the city is heading in a positive direction.

"I'm not interested in alliances," Sandel said. "I'm not interested in the politics of personality. I'm interested in sitting down and discussing the issues of the community."

"The job of elected officials is to do the people's work without personal attacks and without extraneous issues," Sandel added.

Each councilor was confident Sandel, who is treasurer and vice president of health safety and environment with Aztec Well Service, would represent his district well.

"Jason will be a wonderful addition to the council," Darnell said. "He brings new blood in terms of energy."

Fischer said she hopes Sandel will be a positive addition to the council and that he will "conduct himself in a positive manor," as does Sharpe.

As for Sandel, he said he's just ready to get to work.

Nathan Gonzalez: [ngonzalez@daily-times.com](mailto:ngonzalez@daily-times.com)

Copyright (c) The Daily Times. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

March 9, 2006

Section: Viewpoint

Article ID: fdn27989813

Page: A7

## Editorial: Voters want change via the status quo

*(Editorial Board) The Daily Times*

The voters have spoken. And elected officials would be wise to listen to what they have to say.

Farmington City Councilor George Sharpe, for example, narrowly won his reelection bid Tuesday by just 121 votes out of 1,434 ballots cast.

This is the same Sharpe who brazenly urged rival Councilor Mary Fischer to "move" away from Farmington.

This is the same Sharpe whose bravado sometimes boils over at council meetings - even at the expense of citizens in the audience.

This is the same Sharpe who is the golden boy of mighty Merrion Oil & Gas Corp., one of the most powerful industry firms locally.

"There's a message there for me," Sharpe said after just barely beating out challenger Gary Horner, who ran a low-key campaign. "There's a significant amount of people who want me to stop being ornery. I appreciate the people who voted for me, and the people who voted against me."

If it hadn't been a three-way race, with stealth candidate Peter Hayden - he refused interviews and candidate forums - capturing 115 votes for change, Sharpe would have been in some real trouble.

But it sounds like Sharpe is listening. His out-of-control antics no longer will be tolerated, and he knows it.

Fischer, who lost handily in the mayoral race to incumbent Bill Standley, doesn't seem to be listening. Her lopsided loss can be attributed to her bouts with Sharpe.

It takes two to tango, the voters said through their ballots.

In capturing his third term, the mayor was gracious in victory.

"I don't think there's a loser in the mayor race. Mary retains her council seat, and I retain the mayor's seat," Standley said Tuesday night.

Fischer had a real opportunity here to congratulate the mayor and vow to work together toward building a better Farmington.

Instead, she offered just gloom and doom: "I just am concerned for the future of the community. It is very disappointing, but I will continue to fight the fight and do what's right and speak out for the little guy."

We would rather have seen Fischer extend the olive branch to the mayor and promise to wipe clean the rivalry slate with Sharpe. That would be leadership.

Besides, with Councilor Tommy Roberts stepping aside, making way for newcomer **Jason Sandel**, the Farmington City Council could have a very different look and feel come Monday, when the swear-in takes place.

Fischer could find herself teaming up with Sandel on social issues - and winning. But she will have to use finesse on Sandel instead of a mallet.

"I'm not interested in alliances," said Sandel, emphasizing his own-man stance. "I'm not interested in the politics of personality. I'm interested in sitting down and discussing issues of the community."

He also would like to bring some rules and decorum to the council. No more free-for-all fights.

"The job of an elected official is to do the people's work without personal attack and without extraneous issues," he said.

If Sharpe and Fischer can keep from fighting - granted, that's a big "if" - and if Mayor Standley can exert his leadership to ensure personality conflicts are kept to a minimum, this council has the potential to tackle many key issues, including water, meth, downtown redevelopment, growth, traffic and air transportation.

No doubt Councilor Dan Darnell will continue to seek innovative ways to keep underprivileged youth off the streets and away from gangs and drugs. He will find likely allies in Sandel and Fischer for this cause.

So there is change on the council in membership and makeup, just as there is representation of the reliable status quo in Mayor Standley.

If these individuals can learn to work as a team, instead of against one another, the community could turn out to be the real winner in Tuesday's race.

If not, the fur will continue to fly in a cat fight and Farmington will end up like a shaved feline, embarrassed, confused and left out in the cold.

Copyright (c) The Daily Times. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

March 20, 2006

Section: Front page

Article ID: fdn29061362

Page: A1

## Farmington researches meth program

*Nathan Gonzalez The Daily Times*

The Daily Times FARMINGTON - It has been documented that 90 percent of the methamphetamine heading into the San Juan County region comes from Mexico, but one Farmington city councilor is hoping to reduce the vast number of users with the help of the community.

As his first official act as city councilor, **Jason Sandel**, who was sworn into the position March 13, recommended that the city study whether the community could benefit from implementing a Community Meth Watch Program.

"Through this private and public partnership, we are raising the awareness of the community regarding meth and also letting users know that meth isn't acceptable here," Sandel said.

Following a town hall meeting sponsored by The Daily Times and the city in January, Sandel said he learned how much of an intense issue combating meth here really is.

"Immediate action regarding meth use, distribution and abuse is what the public is asking for," he said.

A similar meth watch program began in Kansas and has since spread across the country. Last week, officials in Deming installed signs leading into the town to inform community members to call police if they notice suspicious drug activity, particularly relating to meth.

One goal of the program is to reduce crime and other activity related to the drug market.

According to the second quarterly Fiscal Year 2006 Trends Report released by the city, drug-related crime and arrests are down from spring 2003.

However, the dollar amount of drugs seized by narcotics task force agents between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, 2005, rose sharply to just over \$300,000 worth of drugs from about \$90,000 seized between July and September 2005.

The report states the number of cases investigated have dropped, while the number of arrests stayed constant at about 75 arrests by narcotics agents, between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, 2005.

Overall, the number of drug investigations, arrests and search warrants issued by the District Attorney's Office have steadily declined after spiking between Jan. 1 and March 31, 2005. As of Dec. 31, 2005, six arrests, about 90 cases and 11 search warrants were issued in drug-related cases, the report states.

City Councilor Dan Darnell said he supports implementing the meth watch program, but added it should only be one piece of a larger puzzle, incorporated into the city's Safe Streets Initiative.

"Bottom line, it's important that the community get behind a total immersion of the problem. You are never going to get behind any problem without attacking it on all fronts," said Darnell, a retired Farmington Police veteran.

Darnell said there are six crucial steps to combating drugs and violence in the region including teaching drug prevention to youth then focusing on community education. The third component includes talking with law enforcement officers, probation officers and others to determine the best way to combat issues.

In the fourth step, Darnell said officials would begin to search what implemented programs are working in other regions of the state. The final two steps involve law enforcement and providing drug abuse treatment so users don't re-offend.

"We need treatment. Treatment is so vital and important," Darnell said.

With about \$1.35 million in capital outlay funds from the 2006 state Legislature, a combined local DWI and meth treatment center may be on its way.

San Juan County officials are hoping to move forward with plans to renovate the now empty County Detention Center in Aztec into a meth treatment facility.

In a previous interview, County Commissioner Tony Atkinson said the ultimate goal is to have the county's DWI Treatment Facility in Farmington and the proposed meth treatment program under one roof inside the old jail, which has sat idle since the new facility opened last fall in Farmington.

State funds approved by Gov. Bill Richardson will be used toward the county's substance abuse facility and the construction of the meth treatment facility.

City Councilor George Sharpe said researching whether a community meth watch program could prove beneficial here is definitely worth a look.

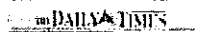
"I like anything that will help move us forward in addressing the meth problem. I think it adds something to the mix to discuss," Sharpe said. "It can't hurt. Those people making meth are bad dudes."

Nathan Gonzalez: [ngonzalez@daily-times.com](mailto:ngonzalez@daily-times.com)

Copyright (c) The Daily Times. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.

# THE DAILY TIMES

FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO

**SUBSCRIBE NOW.**  
  
**MISS A DAY. MISS A LOT.**

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

June 15, 2006  
Section: Local  
Article ID: 3943215

## City approves final budget

*Nathan Gonzalez The Daily Times*

FARMINGTON — With concerns of rising costs and expenditures among a split City Council, Mayor Bill Standley cast the deciding vote Tuesday, approving the city's final budget. The budget, which now heads to the State Department of Finance and Administration, outlines how the city will spend nearly \$48.4 million in revenues.

But with an expected \$49.1 million in expenditures, City Councilor **Jason Sandel** said the city will be spending \$747,036 more than incoming revenues.

"We should not recommend a budget that recommends spending non-recurring money on recurring expenses," Sandel said. "That's something I believe will lead us to a problem in the future."

However, there is a "fail safe" to keep the city from going broke, City Manager Bob Hudson said.

The state recommends entities save 8 percent of their funds in a reserve account — for Farmington, that's \$3.9 million. Hudson said the final budget sets aside \$10.7 million as a "savings account."

Historically, Hudson said the city banks at least \$7 million in its general fund. When that, and a beginning 2007 cash balance of \$14.1 million are factored in, the city's ending reserve cash balance is \$10.78 million.

However, Sandel was against spending the city's reserves to fund growing government expenditures.

"We are taking from that savings account," Sandel said. "I have a very difficult time spending up. My concern is not this year, it is the years that will come where we are building in recurring (expenses)."

State officials have credited Farmington's increase in gross receipts revenues to the price of natural gas, he said. Although gas prices are high now, projections indicate the price is expected to drop.

Hudson said the city typically spends 89 to 92 percent of its entire budget and added that as the year continues, it will be altered.

"This is not etched in concrete. We do work on it on a quarterly basis," Hudson said.

Included in the budget is \$488,045 for 19 new employees including seven police officers, seven firefighters, one fire training officer and one contract administrator, a welder/fabricator, an assistant park superintendent and one animal control officer.

Being that many of the positions will begin half way through the year, they won't have a full impact on the city's budget, Hudson said.

The city has also budgeted more than \$2.5 million in capital projects including funds for a south side community center and funds for two fire stations.

Hudson said money for those projects will not be spent unless the required revenues are present.

One capital project that should be given priority is using general fund money to replace approximately 100 miles of old water lines, City Councilor Mary Fischer said.

The city has proposed raising water and wastewater rates over the next four years. Fischer said the city should fund the water system improvements first rather than increasing expenditures and increasing rates on the public.

"Are we providing the services that our citizens are entitled to?" Fischer asked. "We are getting to a point where we have painted ourselves into a corner and we only have a couple of options."

Those options, she said, include raising taxes or a cut in city services.

"Neither of those options thrill me to death," Fischer said.

City Councilor George Sharpe, who approved the budget along with Councilor Dan Darnell, disagreed and said water system upgrades are a requirement. Sharpe said he wasn't willing to cut the new positions.

"I think we can afford it. I'm on both sides of the fence. I support the budget we have," he said.

Sandel reiterated that the city should just be mindful of its growing expenditures.

Nathan Gonzalez: [ngonzalez@daily-times.com](mailto:ngonzalez@daily-times.com)

Copyright (c) 2006 Daily Times, The (Farmington, NM), a MediaNews Group Newspaper.

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

July 23, 2006  
Section: Local  
Article ID: 4087304

## Animal advocates: Shelter not up to code

*Cory Frolik The Daily Times*

FARMINGTON — Gus, a Stafford Shire Terrier cross, routinely gets his wound flushed out and receives Phenobarbital for his seizures and Rimdyal for his pain, said Pamela Weese, Gus' new adopted owner. Weese, a member of the Humane Society of the Four Corners, said she adopted the black and white dog after finding it injured and "suffering" at the Farmington Animal Shelter during a surprise visit.

In response to complaints made by members of the Humane Society about operations at the the Farmington Animal Shelter, Farmington City Councilor Mary Fischer arranged the surprise visit.

"I wanted the assessment to accurately portray our strengths and weakness," Fischer said. "An impromptu visit gives a better reflection of what is actually happening."

Weese, Traci Fletcher, vice president of the Humane Society of the Four Corners (HS4C), Debbi Hunsicker, HS4C president and Claudia Roll, of the Animal Protection of New Mexico (APNM), all toured the Farmington Shelter in mid-July.

In an interview after touring the facility, Roll said she was still preparing a formal evaluation to present to Councilor Fischer and did not want to comment before finishing the report.

"I will say that there are strengths and weaknesses, as with any shelter, and there are a lot of aspects I was impressed with and there are weaknesses," Roll said.

Roll would not elaborate on what those weaknesses were. Other members of the tour, however, said the treatment of Gus was an example of the shelter's problems.

Fletcher said the group was examining the dog cages outside when it spotted Gus. He was lying down, facing the front of the cage, with a "huge open wound" on the right side of his nose, she said.

"It was horrible, you could tell he was just in a daze," Fletcher said. "I was about in tears. All of us were."

Barbara Yarborough, shelter administrator, met the group of evaluators and defended the decision to not seek treatment for the dog, according to Fletcher and Weese.

Fletcher said Yarborough was convinced that the wound was not life threatening and did not need treatment. City ordinance states that animals with life threatening injuries must be treated, Fletcher said.

Yarborough could not be reached for comment.

Dr. Lloyd Lillywhite works at the San Juan Veterinary Hospital where Gus was treated.

"Oh, it was very severe and it was deep and large," Lillywhite said. "It was life threatening in that who is going to adopt them when they look like that?"

Lillywhite noted that animal shelters cannot invest hundreds of dollars in each injured animal. Animal Control Rangers who work at the shelter said it usually comes down to a judgment call on the ranger's behalf.

To HS4C administrators, neglecting an injured animal was just one example of a much larger fault with the shelter, Fletcher said.

Weese and Fletcher said employees at the shelter have the attitude that "why should we treat them well when they are going to die anyway?"

"I have never seen a shelter worker petting a dog, holding a cat. I never see any love or compassion. I do it and I know they are going to be put down," Weese said. "Part of their job should be to be compassionate. If they can't manage that they should get a different job."

Weese said stray dogs held in kennels outside did not have water bowls until last week. Instead the animals had to rely on water spouts, which some did not understand how to use. Cleanliness problems, she added, has plagued the shelter.

Virginia Jim, the Animal Control Ranger who found Gus, said the criticisms made against the shelter are unfair and inaccurate. She said every animal control ranger does the job because of a love of animals and such a love is reflected in their behavior.

"Each and every one of us tries our best to do what we can," she said.

Fischer, who said she has spoken briefly with Roll, said nonetheless that change is on the way.

"I think we really need to roll up our sleeves and start talking about how do we make this the best shelter in northern New Mexico," she said. "(Shelter workers) are underpaid, overworked, and certainly over stressed and we as a city council have been negligent in funding that shelter to the degree that it should be funded."

Fischer and the HS4C said the solutions will not occur overnight.

"There are steps that need to be done short term and long term. For short term, we have to enact that every animal has a water bowl, bedding, and see that there is segregation by size," Fischer said. Long term goals include reducing the euthanasia rate and working on spay and neutering programs.

Councilor **Jason Sandel** said that if there is going to be changes made they must not be off the cuff.

"We need to have a thoughtful review of what is going on the animal shelter and come up with some long term solutions," he said. "They need to sit down and talk about the facts rather than hearsay and ... just throwing bombs."

Sandel said too often the wrong things get emphasized when discussing how to better the shelter.

"What is a travesty is that so many (animals) are being euthuanized," he said. "We need to be looking at the influx of animals rather than focusing on a clean room for ethuanising them."

Farmington Shelter took in 978 animals in July so far. Of that number, 797 were killed, according to information provided by the shelter.

Photo: Pamela Weese adopted Gus, a Stafford Shire terrier mix, after finding it injured and "suffering" at the Farmington Animal Shelter during a surprise visit.

Copyright (c) 2006 Daily Times, The (Farmington, NM), a MediaNews Group Newspaper.