

Pets in School Shelters

School Board Workshop

School District of Palm Beach County

April 26, 2006

Issues

- Most municipalities do not have emergency shelters that will accept pets
- During hurricanes in 2004 and 2005 it became evident that many people with pets and no place else to go will not leave their pets at home or in a pet shelter
- In 2004 approximately 100 dogs and cats were euthanized due to space limitations at Animal Care and Control

Issues

- Many mental health experts suggest that pets help relieve stress and provide comfort to their owners
- Currently emergency shelters house mixed populations which can be difficult to manage even without pets
- Current legislation is being considered at the state (SB 1484, HB 545) and federal level to require municipalities to provide pet-friendly shelters

Actions to Date

- Fall 2005 – Received Animal Disaster Plan, Pet-Friendly Shelter from PBC Animal Care and Control
- Winter 2006 – Contacted healthcare agencies and associations for input on the School District's concerns
- Winter/Spring 2006 – Meetings held with the PBC EOC, Animal Care and Control and Healthcare District
- Spring 2006 – Looked at facilities other than schools that could potentially be used as pet-friendly shelters

County's Proposal

- Animal Care and Control will direct and control all activities related to animals (Red Cross handles the people)
- Wellington Landings Middle
- Pre-Registration; registration limited to mandatory evacuation areas
- Animal Acceptance Guidelines (no dogs with bite history, no "dangerous" dogs, no aggressive dogs, proof of vaccinations, no feral cats, no exotic animals, no snakes, etc.)
- Owners retain responsibility for their pets
- Animals must be in a cage of good material to prevent escape

County's Proposal

- Plastic sheeting hung on walls and line floors of containment areas
- Treatment for fleas as needed
- Photo pets and photocopy owners' IDs
- Monitor owners and pets to ensure compliance
- House animals based on species, size and temperament
- Monitor and manage trash and debris
- Monitor animals for signs of illness and/or stress

County's Proposal

- Sanitation
 - Install HEPA filters and clean air ducts; REVISION - close off HVAC and bring in separate ventilation
 - Bag and seal animal waste and debris
 - Walk dogs off campus and pick up waste
 - Cover transit areas; stay on paved areas
 - Clean accidents with a bleach solution
 - Separate storage of bagged trash and debris
 - Handle all post-occupancy cleaning; disinfect

Position of the District's Staff

- We recognize the need to address this important issue.
- Many of us are also pet owners.
- While a handful of other school districts are allowing it (5), most (62) are not. Question is: "Why schools instead of some other facility?"

School District's Concerns

- Wellington Landings not built as a shelter
- Pet dander being a trigger for asthma
- High incidence of asthma among children
- Inability to assure separation of air flow between pets and humans
- Pet waste on campus
- Pregnant women around cats
- Delays with reopening schools for cleanup
- Lack of suitable long-term shelters for humans with pets after an emergency

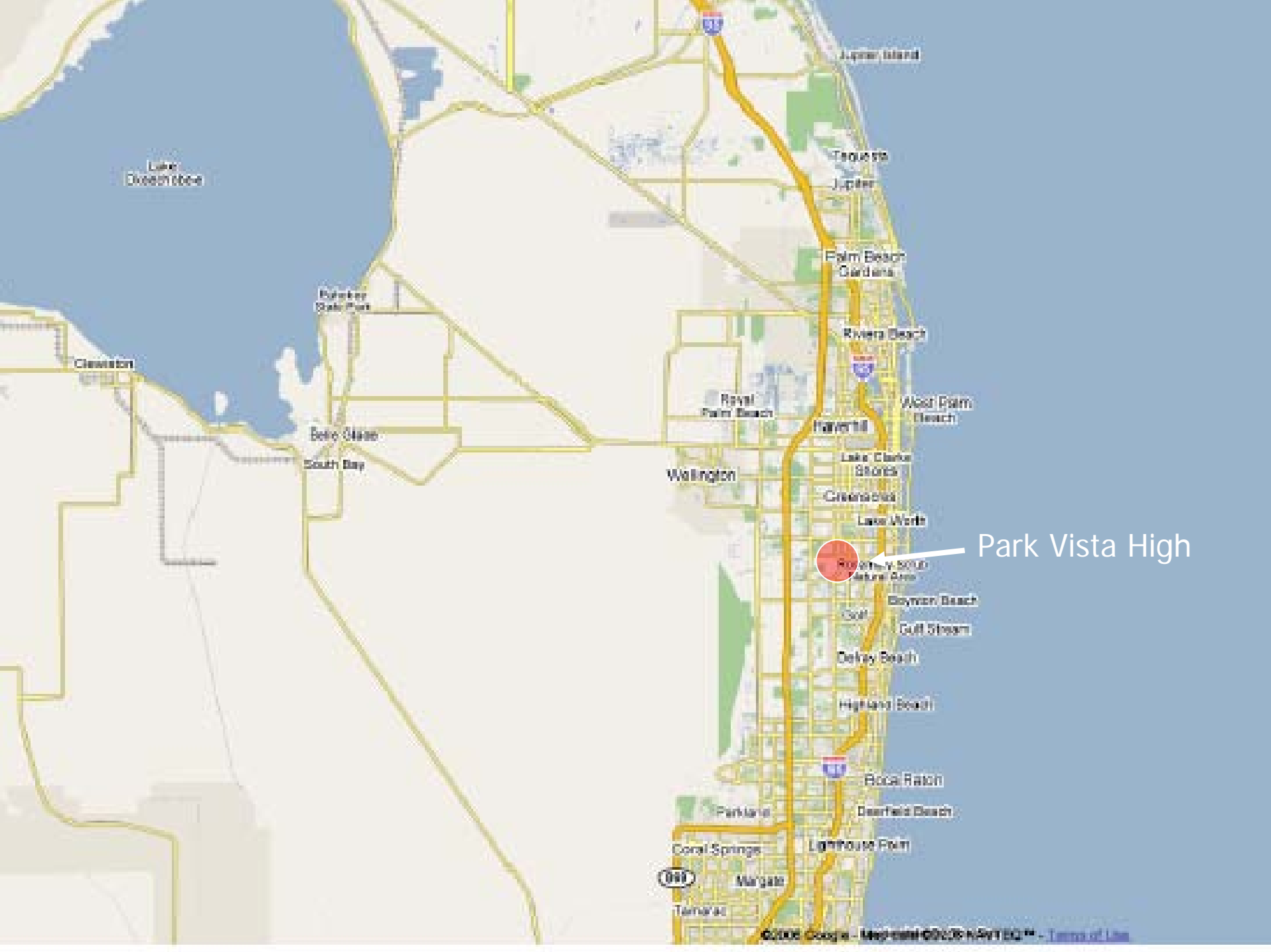
School District's Concerns

- Adding pets on top of challenging, diverse shelter population (homeless, elderly, addicts, gangs, etc.)
- Failure to complete shelter preparation prior to opening
- Lack of ability to care of sick animals
- Pets escaping from cages; lack of proper cages
- Inability or unwillingness to turn away unregistered last minute arrivals
- Animal bites and scratches
- Liability due to sickness or injuries due to pets

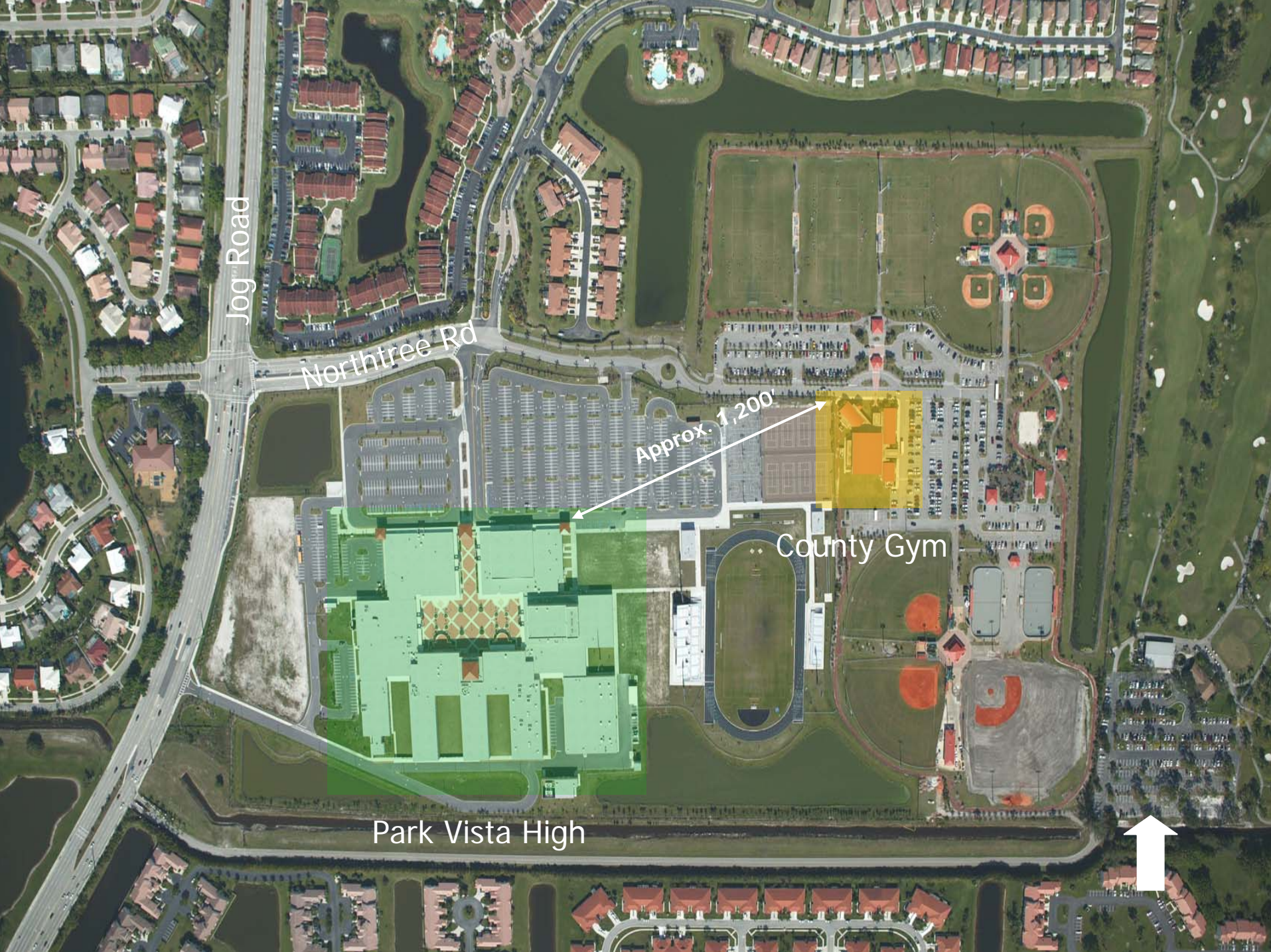
County's Pet-Friend Shelter Request

- One centrally-located facility (for now)
- Capacity for 1,200 people and 400 – 600 pets
- Located west of I-95
- Near easement for walking dogs off campus
- At or near facility acceptable to American Red Cross (ARC 4496) for sheltering people (Hardened for Cat 3)
- Available assembly areas for people (not small rooms)
- Safe room within pet shelter for staff managing pets
- Available for 2006 Hurricane Season (Note: Long-term the County is looking at other alternatives including constructing or modifying a County facility.)

School District's Proposal



Park Vista High



Jog Road

Northtree Rd

Approx. 1,200

County Gym

Park Vista High



Conclusions

- Park Vista High and West Boynton Beach Park Gym co-located site is:
 - Centrally located and west of I-95
 - Near easement and park for walking dogs
 - Provides ample capacity (4,376 people)
 - Pet owners and their pets can be close during the storm and together immediately before and after the height of the storm
 - Immediately available