



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

## Community leaders call for investigation into gross misconduct at Niagara County SPCA

MARK GRISANTI January 3, 2012

### *Local governments question contracts with not-for-profit agency, demand accountability*

Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane), Senator Mark Grisanti (R-Buffalo), and Assemblyman John Ceretto (R-I, Lewiston)-state leaders representing Niagara County-joined a host of elected officials today in denouncing the reprehensible allegations of widespread animal maltreatment at the Niagara County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

Recent media reports have detailed unprecedented amounts of dog and cat euthanizations and horrifying charges of medical maltreatment in recent months.

The officials called upon the Niagara County SPCA Board of Directors to immediately determine the veracity of charges of mismanagement leveled against its executive director, John Faso, by former staffers, some Board members, and volunteers. The officials said the Board should call a special meeting as soon as possible to begin a thorough investigation into these allegations. The Board should also hold a open meeting to answer questions from concerned citizens and community leaders.

“These reports make me sick,” Senator Maziarz said. “The SPCA is supposed to be a place of shelter and refuge for animals in need. When we read about these companions being stuck in

a cage and not getting the medical care they need, it is just shameful. Someone needs to be held accountable, and the Board cannot wait weeks before it meets again and discusses this. This is a crisis situation that warrants an emergency meeting. The public has a right to know what has been going on, and we deserve to know now.”

“Too many animals are being killed unnecessarily, and that must stop,” Senator Grisanti said. “This neglect simply cannot be tolerated. There have been repeated warnings from staff, board members, and volunteers, and the warnings seem to have fallen on deaf ears. The leadership must be called into question.”

Assemblyman Ceretto said, “These reports coming out of the SPCA are very troubling. A full investigation is needed to get to the bottom of this. To those with pets, this story is especially horrifying. I consider my pets family members and these reports anger me. The SPCA has a responsibility to investigate these allegations as soon as possible and I join these local officials in calling for one in an efficient, transparent manner.”

Furthermore, a litany of Niagara County cities and towns that contract with the Niagara County SPCA to house lost or unclaimed pets have called into question their relationship with the organization. The following leaders have announced they will withhold their payments to the Niagara County SPCA unless a complete and satisfactory review is completed in a timely fashion:

- Mayor Michael Tucker, City of Lockport
- Mayor Robert Ortt, City of North Tonawanda
- Supervisor Wright Ellis, Town of Cambria
- Supervisor Marc Smith, Town of Lockport
- Supervisor Timothy Horanburg, Town of Newfane

- Supervisor Steve Richards, Town of Niagara
- Supervisor Jim Riester, Town of Pendleton
- Supervisor Merton Wiepert, Town of Porter
- Supervisor Robert Cliffe, Town of Wheatfield

Others that do not even contract with the Niagara County SPCA are standing united with their fellow townships in demanding answers. These include:

- Supervisor Ross Annable of the Town of Hartland
- Supervisor Steve Reiter, Town of Lewiston
- Supervisor Jennifer Bieber of the Town of Royalton
- Supervisor Daniel Engert, Town of Somerset
- Supervisor Joe Jastrzemski of the Town of Wilson

“Until this matter is cleared up, and any wrongdoing is put to a stop, these communities are indicating that they cannot in good conscience do business with the Niagara SPCA,” Senator Maziarz added. “If the charges are true, the SPCA has betrayed the public trust in a serious way. I commend these communities for holding the SPCA accountable to their taxpayers.”