

Elbert County Response to Recent Events at Lion's Gate Sanctuary

Kiowa, Colorado, April 26, 2017 – Elbert County Commissioners were saddened to learn of the decision made by the owners of Lion's Gate Sanctuary to euthanize their eleven animals.

After a lengthy public hearing on April 12th, the County denied the special use application to relocate several lions, tigers and bears to a substantially more populated and developed area. This decision was based on concerns that the proposed plan for relocation of these animals was not adequately resourced, nor were exigency plans clearly defined which would ensure the safety of the animals and the surrounding residents.

The decision by the operators of Lion's Gate to euthanize all their animals comes as a total surprise to the County for two reasons. Only two weeks earlier, the operators of the facility assured the County in a public forum that if the application was denied, they would continue to operate at their current location as they had for the previous 10 years. Additionally, the Keenesburg Wildlife Sanctuary publicly offered to care for the animals at their facility if Lion's Gate was unable to do so. Given these facts, the news that Lion's Gate euthanized all 11 animals at the same time and so shortly after the decision to deny the move comes as a shock.

“The most important consideration in this land use issue was ensuring the safety of the many citizens residing in the vicinity of the proposed relocation site. We would have loved to have seen these animals be allowed to live out their lives at the Elbert County location that had been their home for more than a decade.” – Commissioner Chris Richardson.

Elbert County is located approximately 30 miles southeast of Denver and is home to over 26,000 residents. We are a unique mix of suburban bedroom communities and rural agricultural areas. The county provides essential statutory services and supportive infrastructure to our citizens in a professional, respectful, and cost-effective manner while creating a working environment that supports their endeavors, western lifestyle and rights as individuals. We strive to be viewed by our citizens and employees as the best place to live, work, and conduct business in Colorado; led in a responsive, effective, transparent, and professional manner.

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