

**Animal Control Board
Thursday, December 12, 2024
Penn Room / Hybrid**

Members Attending: A. Miller, J. Auchter, A. Cordero, S. Baller, C. DiLella - virtually

Others Attending: S. Smith – in person; C. Reed, R. Harnish, I. Litvinov, S. Herbert – virtually

Prior to calling the meeting to order, Ms. Miller read the following statement:

“I know there are a lot of feelings surrounding the huskies. Know that all steps that can be taken have been by Reading Police and the PA Dog Warden. The next step is for the case to go before a judge. In the coming year, we will be looking at making amendments to the Animal Ordinance to better align with current dog law. Please keep our mission statement in mind and the purpose of these meetings. As a reminder, these are public meetings that are recorded and minutes are kept.”

Call to Order

Ms. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm. She noted that a quorum was present.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Miller noted the need to correct the date of the minutes to August 13, 2024.

Motion was made by Ms. Baller, seconded by Mr. Auchter, to approve the August 13, 2024 minutes as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

Reorganization

Ms. Baller moved, seconded by Mr. Auchter, to nominate Ms. Miller to continue in the role as chair. Ms. Miller accepted the nomination. Motion carried unanimously.

Animal Control Agency Report

Ms. Baller reported that new software was initiated in September and some data may need to be further analyzed. She reported the following through September 16, 2024:

- Admissions
 - 3,043 total
 - 1,481 were City of Reading
- DAP Dispatches
 - 677 total (County-wide)
- Reading Dispatches
 - 326 including but not limited to:

- Injured animals (County-wide) - 24
- Six or more dogs / cats - 18
- Code Red / Code Blue – 14
- Keeping of exotic animals – 13
- Return to Field (County-wide) - 76

Old Business

- **Animal Care Education**

Ms. Miller noted the need to draft specific language.

Ms. Smith stated that she and Mr. Reed have met and that she will create a brochure, in both English and Spanish, noting the responsibilities of pet ownership in Reading. She stated that she will also work with the City's Communication Coordinator to use this information to create social media posts. She stated that she will share the brochure with the Board prior to publication.

- **620 Mulberry St** – operating cat rescue

Ms. Baller stated that the property owner has evicted the operator of the cat rescue. She stated that there has been no further contact regarding this rescue operation.

Ms. Herbert confirmed the eviction.

Mr. Auchter stated that he received information from residents that the property is now up for Sheriff Sale.

This property will be removed from the agenda.

- **952 N 10th St** – more than 6 dogs / cats

Ms. Baller stated that the last contact about this property was July 11, 2024. She stated that the owner has been non-responsive.

Ms. Miller questioned if Mr. Reed had researched this property. Mr. Reed stated that Property Maintenance did not gain access to the property and that they have also had no response from the owner.

Ms. Baller stated that no witnesses have come forward.

This property will be removed from the agenda.

- **1505 N 12th St** – more than 6 dogs / cats

Ms. Baller stated that there are not more than six dogs at this property. She stated that the Dog Warden is involved in this situation.

Ms. Miller stated that the incidents of these huskies attacking and killing other dogs is now in the court system.

Mr. Auchter stated that these animals continue to cause problems. He stated that he has spoken with the Dog Warden. He noted the need to continue monitoring the situation and to cite the owner with any violations that are available.

Ms. Baller stated that a State Dangerous Dog finding will supersede any City actions. She stated that only the State can require the destruction of the animals. She stated that this owner was found guilty of violations in the past and that those animals were relocated. She stated that if he is found guilty a second time the offense rises from summary to misdemeanor. She suggested that this agenda item be removed until the court case moves forward.

Mr. Auchter questioned the authority the City has in this situation. He expressed the belief that this owner should never be allowed to own animals again.

Ms. Miller noted the need to amend the City Ordinance to reflect the changes made by the State. She stated that this project will move forward in 2025. She expressed the belief that the City has done everything that it can to this point and that the situation is now in the hands of the Dog Warden and the court system.

Ms. Baller stated that she has spoken with the Dog Warden about recommendations to amend the City's Ordinance. She noted the need for this to be a future agenda topic.

Ms. Miller suggested that members review the Animal Ordinance on the City's website. She read the Board's mission statement - *The mission of the Animal Control Board is to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of the City of Reading and to ensure the humane treatment of animals by regulating the care and control of animals within the City.* – She stated that the Board can recommend Ordinance amendments but that the Board has no enforcement powers.

Mr. Auchter agreed that an amendment is needed. He expressed the belief that the animals should not be destroyed as the problems are the result of the owner's actions.

Ms. Baller stated that the ARL cannot remove the dogs at this point and that the judge must make a decision.

Ms. Miller stated that no one disagrees that these animals are causing problems.

Dr. DiLella questioned enforcement of dangerous dogs. Ms. Baller stated that the Dog Warden assigned to Berks County would enforce dangerous dogs. She explained the process to have a dog labeled as dangerous.

Dr. DiLella questioned the evidence required. Ms. Harnish stated that charges have been filed and a judge will make this determination.

Mr. Auchter questioned if all the dogs could be labeled as dangerous or if it would be a specific dog. Ms. Baller stated that it could be both. She noted the need to determine which dog has killed or injured other dogs. She stated that the dogs that were charged last year were identifiable and noted her hope that these dogs would be as well.

Mr. Auchter stated that there are currently five huskies at this location.

New Business

- **2311 River Rd** (legal address 2321 River Rd) – chickens

Ms. Herbert stated that she visited this property four times and could see no evidence of chickens.

Ms. Harnish stated that she visited the property in September and there were two chickens and a coop in the rear. She stated that the owner was given instructions to apply to keep the chickens. She stated that there may have been a language barrier.

Mr. Reed stated that no application has been received.

Using the chat feature, Ms. Smith reminded all that chickens must receive Zoning permits prior to an Exotic Animal permit.

- **2316 Berkley Rd** – rooster, chickens

Ms. Harnish stated that she visited this location yesterday and that chickens are present. She stated that there is a large coop and that she provided a second permit application to this owner.

Mr. Reed stated that Zoning will deny permits as farm animals are not allowed in the City. He explained that the applicant must appeal the denial to the Zoning Hearing Board. He explained that if the owner appeals the decision, enforcement stops until the Zoning Hearing Board makes a decision.

- **404 Rehr St** – more than 6 dogs / cats

Ms. Herbert stated that this tenant has been evicted and has moved to another property within the City but she does not have a specific address. She stated that this occurred 3-4 weeks ago.

This property will be removed from the agenda.

- **Dogs Being Hit by Cars**

Dr. DiLella stated that Safety Net Sanctuary is concerned about the number of dogs being hit by cars and she questioned if this could be addressed.

Ms. Harnish stated that this is unfortunate and that it is generally dogs running loose who's owner is not known.

Ms. Miller noted her experiences with many owners walking their dogs without leashes. She stated that her dogs have been attacked in the past by dogs that were not leashed.

Mr. Auchter agreed with Ms. Miller that many people don't use leashes.

Ms. Baller reminded all that anyone violating a dog regulation should be reported, specific information should be provided, and the caller should be willing to testify. She stated that situations can be complicated if the owner is not known or the caller is not willing to testify. She stated that getting assistance is difficult as people complain but don't want to leave their personal information. She stated that Police Officers are filing complaints as they are able.

Ms. Miller suggested adding the requirement to keep your animals on leashes to the brochure. Mr. Reed agreed and stated that the Leash Law can be added.

Dr. DiLella also requested that the requirements for licenses and vaccinations also be included.

Expiring Permits

- **2416 High St** – chickens, ducks

Ms. Harnish stated that this property has a new owner and that there are no chickens or ducks present.

This property will be removed from the agenda.

- **2329 High St** – chickens

Ms. Harnish stated that there are no chickens present.

This property will be removed from the agenda.

- **732 Thorn St** – chickens

Ms. Harnish stated that the property owner did not allow the tenant to keep chickens. She stated that no chickens were present.

This property will be removed from the agenda.

Other Matters

- **Chicken Complaints**

Mr. Reed stated that there were far fewer complaints about chickens in 2024. Ms. Baller agreed.

- **Pending Permits**

Mr. Reed stated that there are no pending animal permits at this time.

- **218 S 13th St** – rooster, chickens, ducks

Ms. Harnish stated that there are five chickens and two ducks. She stated that the rooster was surrendered. She stated that this owner was given a permit application.

Ms. Herbert stated that she will follow up.

- **1515 Mulberry St** – animals in poor condition

Mr. Auchter stated that this property has no electric and is in foreclosure. He stated that he hears dogs barking at this location. Ms. Harnish stated that the dogs are being taken care of and there is nothing further needed.

Mr. Auchter stated that he is glad to hear that the dogs are healthy.

Next Meeting

Ms. Miller suggested meeting in March unless there is other business to address before then.

Ms. Smith was asked to poll members at that time to choose a meeting date.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk