

Animal Control Board
Wednesday, April 12, 2023
Virtually

Members Attending: S. Baller, A. Miller, D. Straub, H. Carroll, R. Rosato

Others Attending: S. Smith, I. Litvinov, C. Reed

Call to Order

Mr. Rosato called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm. He noted that a quorum was present.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

The December 13, 2022 and February 22, 2023 minutes were approved as written by acclamation.

Animal Control Agency Report

Mr. Carroll reviewed the spreadsheets distributed by Ms. Smith. In summary:

2022 – 627 impounds; 2,366 total actions

2023 – 174 current cases; 551 total actions to date

Permit Updates

- **318 Pine St** – more than six dogs / cats

Mr. Carroll questioned if an application for more than six dogs / cats had been received. Mr. Reed stated that it has not.

Mr. Carroll stated that citations have been issued at this address and the owner has appealed the citations to the Court of Common Pleas. He stated that this owner has a habitual pattern and he will follow up.

Old Business

- **936 N 5th St** – more than six dogs / cats

Ms. Baller stated that a citation has been issued. Mr. Reed stated that he will follow up on this case.

- **438 N 9th St** – keeping chickens

Mr. Carroll stated that the ARL has no records on this case. Mr. Reed stated that he will follow up.

- **1029 Spring St** – large number of outdoor rabbits

Mr. Carroll stated that he has been unable to contact this owner. He stated that the number of rabbits has decreased and expressed the belief that the owner may be selling them. He stated that

this case brought a grey area to light on the number of small animals allowed. He stated that his proposed amendment will be discussed later in the meeting.

- **Animal Ordinance amendment** – adding regulations regarding guard dogs to Code Red / Code Blue

Mr. Carroll stated that a situation has occurred regarding guard dogs during Code Blue. He stated that there is no good solution to this issue. He stated that guard dogs are considered special service dogs and that all outdoor dogs with a bad demeanor are automatically categorized as guard dogs. He stated that adding regulations to address this situation may create other large loopholes. He stated that this specific situation has been rectified and the conditions are now in compliance.

Mr. Litvinov warned not to discuss specific instances in public. Mr. Carroll concurred.

Mr. Carroll stated that if exceptions are created it will reduce the efficiency of that section of the ordinance.

- **Animal Ordinance amendment** – more than six dogs / cats versus animal point system

Mr. Carroll stated that he drafted a point system rather than only dogs / cats to address excessive amounts of small animals. He stated that the process to keep these animals would remain the same.

Mr. Litvinov suggested amending the definition section rather than instituting this point system. He expressed the belief that the point system would be difficult for the public to understand.

Ms. Lynch from the Reading Eagle connected to the meeting at this time.

Mr. Litvinov stated that the point system would be difficult to use and may create odd results for families as the points will add up quickly. He suggested keeping the limitation on dogs / cats and updating definitions to clarify the types of animals that may be kept.

Ms. Miller expressed the belief that the point system allows regulation of smaller animals. Mr. Litvinov stated that fish should not be included in these calculations. He noted the need to be simple and clear.

Mr. Carroll agreed that the point system would be difficult for residents to understand and follow. He agreed that the definitions should be updated and that clarity needs to be made through the ordinance.

New Business

- **1048 Mulberry St** – more than six dogs / cats

Mr. Carroll stated that he will be performing another inspection at this location. He stated that it is a breeding situation and that if the litters are kept the more than six dogs / cats would apply. He stated that there are many unvaccinated puppies that will soon be old enough to require them. He

stated that the owner has also cited a vaccination exception for the mother as she was pregnant and nursing the puppies.

Mr. Rosato questioned if the dog was pregnant at the time. Mr. Carroll stated that she was nursing but that there was no verification received from the vet to confirm the exception.

- **100 Neversink St** – more than six dogs / cats

Ms. Baller stated that there are seven dogs at this location.

Mr. Carroll stated that one dog comes and goes. He stated that there are health issues with the animals and these animals started a Parva breakout to other neighborhood dogs. He stated that there were originally 16 dogs at this location and that there are property maintenance issues at this location. He stated that a citation has been issued and that all the dogs except the one that comes and goes are now vaccinated.

Mr. Carroll noted that the application to keep more than six dogs / cats needs to be corrected. Ms. Smith stated that she will make the correction and share it with Property Maintenance and have it corrected on the City's website.

- **Rooster / chicken complaints**

Mr. Carroll stated that he has not yet received any rooster or chicken complaints but he expects that to begin with the nicer weather. He stated that there are cock fighting allegations in the City but that he has been unable to find animals at the location.

Ms. Smith stated that she added this item to the agenda after Mr. Reed indicated at the Board of Health meeting that he had seven complaints.

Mr. Reed stated that it is sometimes difficult to determine which property owns the chickens if they are not confined to a yard. He stated that there are chickens in the 600 block of Tulpehocken St but everyone says they aren't theirs. He stated that the chickens are in vacant lots in the block. He questioned if ARL could remove the chickens in these situations.

Mr. Carroll stated that these animals would be considered strays and could be removed by the ARL. He stated that there are now flocks of chickens in the City that flourish on their own. He stated that they are removed when they are located. He noted the need to also remove coops. He stated that when chickens are found and ownership is denied, they are removed. He stated that Mr. Reed can call any enforcement officer at ARL for assistance.

- **Pet Store Ban**

Ms. Smith stated that this issue was brought to City Council and she suggested that this Board discuss it. She noted the need to determine if a ban should move forward. She stated that the sample ordinances provided specify the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits. She stated that the bans are a way to reduce the sale of animals from puppy mills.

Mr. Litvinov questioned if there are currently any pet stores in Reading. Ms. Smith stated that there are none but that one could open at any time.

Mr. Carroll agreed that puppy mills are detriments but expressed the belief that business opportunities should not be limited. He stated that the biggest issue locally is stores at markets who will sell to anyone. He suggested that rather than banning pet stores that the type of animals that may be sold be specified.

Ms. Miller stated that the email that was sent to City Council indicates a specific establishment. She expressed the belief that animals with health issues should not be sold. She agreed that the ban is focused on reducing the number of puppy mill sales.

Mr. Rosato stated that many puppies treated at the veterinarian where he works are from puppy mills. He expressed the belief that if done right, there is no need for a ban.

Mr. Carroll explained that the Department of Agriculture inspects dogs for resale. He stated that this ban would need to be regulated and enforced locally. He stated that oversight would need to be clearly articulated.

Ms. Miller agreed and noted the need to determine who would have oversight. She also noted the need to prevent the sale of rescued animals.

Ms. Smith questioned if pet store limitations could be included as part of the City's Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Litvinov stated that he will research that question.

Mr. Rosato stated that discussion should continue after additional information is received.

Mr. Litvinov agreed that there will be enforcement issues and the need to use limited City resources.

Mr. Rosato questioned who from the City would perform these inspections. Mr. Reed expressed the belief that it would be Property Maintenance but that there is no one in the office at this time with this knowledge base. He stated that this would be a new specialty and that the City would need to depend on the ARL.

Ms. Miller suggested limiting the size of the animals for sale. She offered to contact Exeter Township to see how they handle pet store complaints.

Mr. Reed stated that Exeter and Reading are different. He stated that they cannot always do the same things.

Ms. Miller stated that her inquiry would provide some guidance.

Mr. Rosato stated that he will contact Exeter Township as he has a professional relationship with them.

Mr. Reed noted his appreciation for this assistance. He reminded all of the City's denial of the live poultry markets in part because the City would be unable to perform the required inspections.

Other Matters

None.

Next Meeting

The Board will meet in June 2023. Ms. Smith was asked to poll members closer to the meeting date for member's availability. The meeting will be virtual.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk