



CITY COUNCIL

Standards of Living Committee

Monday, August 15, 2016
Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: D. Reed, C. Daubert, S. Marmarou

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, B. Rivera, A. Palacios, L. McCauley, A. Adams, D. Driesbach

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm by Mr. Daubert.

I. Trap, Neuter, Release or Discounted Neutering Programs

Mr. Daubert stated that he wanted to focus the discussion on three main areas which are that the City recognizes and acknowledges there is a problem with the over population of feral cats, that Trap Neuter Release (TNR) is an effective method to address this problem and how the City, with its limited funding, can arrive at a solution for this ever-growing problem.

Ms. McCauley agreed with Mr. Daubert stating that this is the reason she brought along members of the No Nonsense Neutering organization to talk about how they may be able to assist. She introduced Ms. Adam and Ms. Driesbach. She stated that TNR is very effective as last year the Animal Rescue League (ARL) was taking in 900 to 1000 cats and this year that number has decreased to 400 to 500.

Mr. Marmarou questioned what area of the City is most problematic in having the highest numbers of feral cats. Ms. McCauley stated that it's difficult to answer that as the problem is widespread. She stated that ARL takes in approximately 3,000 to 4,000 cats per year and of that number, roughly 3,000 of them are from the City. She stated that there was a big issue in the Milmont area this year but that the problem is definitely widespread.

Ms. Driesbach distributed handouts outlining numbers of cats trapped by zip code. She stated that the calls she receives for help with TNR are mostly around the City and not in the City. She stated that she has a few trappers that go through the City that feed and trap. She stated that generally the community in the City is not actively involved in the TNR process. She directed the group to the handouts and explained that the illustrations indicate that though TNR is taking place, the rate at which cats are reproducing, there is still much work to be done. She stated that these numbers are City and County numbers. She stated that she suggests targeting a specific area at a time, possibly by district (two to three per year), rather than all over the City. She stated that she has also educated the community by speaking with them; sometimes by going door-to-door.

Ms. Reed questioned what grants may be available for this specific need and would No Nonsense Neutering file the application. Ms. Driesbach stated that it would depend on the grant as some are federally funded for municipalities and others exclusively for non-profit organizations. She questioned if there was currently any type of funding available through the City.

Mr. Daubert stated that unfortunately there is not at this time. Ms. Reed reiterated stating that the City is very limited in discretionary funding and stated that perhaps CDBG funding may be available. Mr. Palacios stated that CDBG funding cannot be used for this type of project.

Ms. Adams stated that in the past she has utilized fundraising as a means to raise funds to implement the TNR process in a specific area which proved quite successful. She suggested that this may be useful in the City as well.

Fire Marshal Searfoss joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Marmarou stated that in looking at the numbers for the 19604 area, he believes that number will be exceeded in the coming weeks and months and stated that many Albright students leave their pets behind when they move home.

Ms. McCauley stated that ARL has stopped allowing adoptions for college students as they tend to leave the animal behind when they return home.

Ms. Adams stated that a major benefit to this program is to go door-to-door to educate the public. She stated that many of them do not understand that the animal will be returned after neutering so they are apprehensive about the process in general.

Mr. Johnson arrived at this time.

Ms. Reed suggested that another outreach group may be the elderly community. She stated that educating them would be beneficial as many of them do not have the means to neuter or spay their pet but can still partake in the TNR process.

Ms. Driesbach stated that once funding is in place, their organization's plan would be to target a specific area, perform effective outreach measures, set up TNR Workshops and informational sessions and then implement the TNR process.

Mr. Daubert suggested reaching out to neighborhood groups as an outreach source.

Ms. Adams, Ms. McCauley and Ms. Driesbach left the meeting at this time.

II. Reinstatement of Requirement for Local Property Manager for Rental Properties

Mr. Palacios stated that at the last meeting it was suggested to make this a requirement.

Ms. Reed stated that as she recalls, it used to be a requirement but later rescinded. Ms. Katzenmoyer confirmed stating that it was a recommendation from Property Maintenance to have this removed.

Ms. Reed stated that Council will propose this so that the Administration can implement the reinstatement.

Mr. Palacios stated that once it has been reinstated, putting the language together will be the next step.

Mr. Marmarou handed Mr. Palacios paperwork and suggested that he study it as it was something that was implemented in Boston that could be very effective if it was implemented in Reading. He stated that there are six houses in the 1500 block of North 12th Street, meaning there are 24 college students living on that block and the College will not cooperate in giving the names of these students. He stated that these students do not pay the Per Capita tax yet they reap all the benefits.

Mr. Daubert questioned what the next step would be to move this forward.

Mr. Palacios replied that he would research the former requirement and make adjustments where needed.

Ms. Reed suggested that the Standards of Living Committee introduce this legislation and Mr. Daubert concurred.

III. Fire Department “Do Not Enter” List

Fire Marshal Searfoss introduced himself. He distributed handouts to the group outlining demographic information on the program he has developed. He stated that the main purpose for this program is to protect the City’s firefighters. He explained the difference between vacant and abandoned properties. He stated that this is unfortunately a systemic problem across our nation not just in our City. He stated that statistics show that of the number of fires in vacant buildings, 25 percent of these fires are intentionally set. These fires pose a great danger to our firefighters because of deteriorated conditions at these unoccupied properties. Firefighter injuries at unsecured, unoccupied houses are extremely high. This program is designed to assist in “flagging” these properties so that our firefighters know what they’re going in to and can be better prepared. He stated that the County does not allow the City to mark buildings. He stated that the communication portion of all of this is its own separate issue.

Ms. Reed questioned if there was anything that prohibited the City from marking the exterior of a building. Mr. Searfoss stated that according to the City of Reading’s Fire Prevention Code, there is a section on placarding and the ability to legally post signage indicating dangerous conditions. He developed a sign that would alert firefighters of the type of danger any one building may pose. He showed the group this sign and explained in detail how it would alert firefighters to structural or other conditions in the property. He stated that he has spoken with the Fire Chief who believes the signage is too costly at this time.

Ms. Reed questioned what Council can do to assist. Fire Marshal Searfoss stated that the Department has funds set aside for the signage which he obtained three estimates for. He stated that the signage would cost \$3911.00 and the signs would be reusable.

Fire Marshal Searfoss stated that within the program a database was developed outlining these dangerous properties and one of the benefits is that this database will be shared with the Police Department so that they, too, will be made aware of potentially dangerous conditions.

Ms. Reed stated that an email would be sent to the Fire Chief and the Mayor to move this forward and purchase the signage needed to implement this program for the safety of firefighters and police.

Fire Marshal Searfoss left the meeting at this time.

IV. Idling Trucks/Buses

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that this agenda issue came by way of an EAC meeting where this concern was presented. One of the EAC members found a DEP explanation regarding the idling of diesel vehicles. She stated that the concern is when a vehicle is idling for hours due to an event near one of the City's entertainment venues.

Ms. Reed suggested that the City work together with Santander to utilize lots instead of City streets.

There was some discussion on specific streets where this is occurring.

Mr. Daubert stated that if these individuals are in violation of the DEP regulations, they should be cited.

Mr. Johnson stated that he believes the Police Department enforces this only when a complaint is made. He stated that many of the newer vehicles address these environmental issues already.

Ms. Katzenmoyer read the definition section to the group adding that she will again meet with the EAC and will ask for clarification on those specific sections related to private and commercial vehicles. *(Note: The EAC is researching the issue and will report back to Council.)*

V. Lease Agreement Updates

- Fire Tower

No report.

- Reading Redevelopment Authority

No report.

- Blacktop Basketball

No report.

- County Emergency Services

No report.

Ms. Reed requested that Mr. Coleman attend the September meeting.

VI. Other Matters

- Bodegas and Trash Receptacles

Mr. Daubert requested a discussion on this particular issue because he was made aware that there is legislation requiring bodegas to have trash receptacles outside of their

establishment. He stated that he knows for a fact that this is not happening in certain parts of the City. He stated that in personally doing some clean ups on South 4th Street, he could not locate trash receptacles to dispose of the litter he collected.

Ms. Reed agreed and stated that she has had issues with the uncleanliness of certain areas surrounding bodegas in her district. She questioned if these bodegas have registered haulers.

Mr. Johnson stated that this is an issue on Public Works' extensive list of things to be addressed and that he's looking to make adjustments to how often these trash receptacles/dumpsters are being emptied.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Katzenmoyer, CMC
Deputy City Clerk
and *Bea Rivera*, Legislative Aide