Minutes for the Meeting of the
Mayor's Task Force for the Stamford Animal Control Center
February 25, 2014, 12:00pm
Democratic Caucus Room, Government Center

Task Force information including agendas, minutes, and video of meetings can be found at:
http://www.stamfordct.gov/animal-control-task-force

Attendance: Chair Eileen Heaphy, members, Annie Selkowitz Taylor, Mary Ann Kleinschmitt, Brenden Leydon, ACM Tilford Cobb, SPD Lt. Nicholas Montagnese, Legal Advisor Kathy Emmett, Assistant Legal Advisor Mike Toma

Tilford Cobb, Animal Control Manager gave his report – Despite complaints he has been receiving, there IS heat in the building, the temperature is always between 60 – 73 degrees, it is an older heating system but does work. He also reviewed number of employees: - Lindsey is the part-time kennel worker, M-F, 4 hours per day, Animal Control Manager Cobb and assistant control officers, volunteer coordinator Katina (also a control officer). All employees are up-to-date on training, but we are down one Animal Control Officer position. Katina's job had to be posted as an Assistant Control Officer due to paperwork; Tilford's old position is still vacant. Kennel cleaner is not in on weekends, therefore an ACO has to do that work on weekends, making short one ACO for 4 hours each weekend day. It is difficult when a staff member is sick. The Administration should review staffing recommendations. It was agreed that Rabies and distemper/parvo vaccinations should be mandatory before any animal leaves the shelter.

Review of Proposed Ordinance

Annie Taylor said she would like the draft ordinance broken down into multiple ordinances, feels unwieldy and too large. Eileen noted that the ordinance is 11 pages long, doesn't think it's too big. Many rules cross species. She explained that the sample ordinances we've reviewed are all one document.

Eileen began to review the draft ordinance. She clarified that the Whereas clauses explain the justification for revising the ordinance. They do not become part of the ordinance once enacted.

Livestock – This section needed updating on its language, which reflected a more rural Stamford. There were few comments on this section

Poultry –. Annie noted that rooster crowing would be difficult to enforce, as exemplified by weakness of other noise enforcement actions in North Stamford. Tilford clarified that the state has $46 fee added for rooster crowing. Tilford said that action based on complaints received, not the decibel level. Written statement can be submitted and with that can be acted on with the written statement. Cock fighting is not addressed because it is forbidden by state statute.

Pens – Language was enhanced with pens needing to be safe and healthy for the animal, as proposed by former Task Force chair Art Layton.

Feces – Eileen pointed out that this section was changed to reflect all pet feces, not just dogs.

Mary Ann Kleinschmitt recommended and all agreed that it is clearer and easier to make all fines the same for all violations of the ordinance, $100.

Time limit for buried dead animals. It was agreed to stick with 12 hours, flexible enforcement, particularly for larger animals, as long as someone is working towards removal.

Control of dogs – Eileen reviewed and clarified that Stamford Dog Park is currently run by non-profit (501(c)3), so changes do not need Board of Representatives' approval. It was also agreed to change some terms "dog warden" is now "Animal Control Officer" and "pound" is changed to "shelter" to reflect changing times. The new CT Task Force on shelters is also recommending such changes for the entire state..

Vicious dogs – The task force reviewed definitions. Legal Advisor Kathy Emmett agreed that legally these definitions are valid.

Dangerous dogs – Question was raised if the SACC should seek outside evaluation to determine if a dog is dangerous. Tilford discussed the SAFER test which determines level of aggression in dogs. Eileen will add to this section that the Animal Control Officer may seek the input of a 3rd party evaluator to determine aggression levels in dogs.

Dangerous dogs – Can the city require liability coverage for dangerous dogs as suggested by Mary Ann. New Canaan's ordinance requires $50,000 liability policy for dangerous dogs. If so, would a 3rd party evaluation be required? Kathy Emmett will review and report for next time. Review of muzzles and signs ("Beware of Dog") for dangerous dogs.

Stray cats and dogs. Eileen will send out proposed wording that requires those who take in stray cats and dogs to report this to the SACCC in case these animals have been reported as lost.

Feral Cats - Animal Control Officer can visit a feral cat colony without being required to impound the cats. Annie believed that feral colonies should not be registered nor time of feeding limited because it would discourage people who are trying to help animal welfare groups –Kathy Emmett said the city cannot deputize these cat non-profits groups to act for the city. There was discussion of the pros and cons of a feeding restriction to look at the impact of feeding when raccoons and other wild animals are present. Eileen will look at alternative wording, but safety is primary.

Colony registration. There was a full discussion of whether or not to register feral cat colonies. If that happens the SACCC will be overloaded to enforce such a requirement. Tilford pointed out that there is a new plan in the making with a group called TEAM which could help with feral cats, if the city is willing to pay $45 for each TNVR".

The proposed feral cat section calls for fines collected for not meeting the requirements of being a keeper of feral colonies. The proposal calls for money from the fines to go to a special fund to help finance the TNVR activities of the non-profit cat organizations. Kathy Emmett thought it might be too complex, and that maybe the money should go to Dog Fund. Kathy said there is no clear answer right now and she would look into what is possible.

Eileen proposed that the ACO or Police should provide colony keepers with a list of private cat non profits that can help the keepers with the TNVR activities. The SACCC could help out with trapping if there is a situation requiring their intervention. The SACCC could have an informal partnership with the cat non profits, but cannot work with them in a legal sense. Tilford also pointed out that there are public complaints about cat non-profits feeding and trapping activities.

Rabbits/ferrets/small pets – There was a review and discussion of the issue. Eileen will update once there is specific wording suggested for this part of the ordinance.

Section C – Mission statement for SACCC. It was decided to take it out of ordinance and leave it as a mission statement for the SACCC.

There was also a discussion of creating a policy of quarterly meetings between the animal control authorities and the animal welfare communities, including veterinarians, to stay on top of the animal welfare situation in Stamford. The Director of Public Safety, Health and Welfare would establish this procedure. This seemed agreeable to all.

CT Humane Treatment of Animals Task Force. Eileen provided an overview. It seems that this state task force is dealing with some of the same issues the Stamford Task Force is dealing with. She advised the group to check out their activity. Mary Ann attended one meeting and said that the group is moving ahead with changes.

Meeting adjourned at 2:03pm.