

**Board of Health
Tuesday, March 4, 2014
Penn Room**

Members Attending: B. Hospidor, J. Seidel, J. Wong, K. Schorn, J. Dethoff
Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, J. Meinhart, A. Rudy, T. Coleman, K. Minor

Dr. Dethoff called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm.

A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Dr. Wong, seconded by Mr. Hospidor, to approve the January 7, 2014 minutes as written.

Reorganization

The consensus of the Board was to retain Dr. Dethoff as chair and Dr. Wong as vice chair for 2014.

Health Officer Report

No report.

Animal Control Legislation

Dr. Dethoff reviewed the Board's discussion of this issue to date. He stated that hoarding is becoming problematic and that animal hoarding has been an issue in Reading several times. He stated that a limitation on the number of cats and/or dogs has been discussed and that the Board continues to revisit the issue about how a limit would assist with enforcement. He stated that behavior cannot be legislated but that it is unreasonable not to limit the number of cats and/or dogs when the number of people living in a unit can be set by the Fire Marshall. He stated that Mr. Minor was invited to the conversation to help improve life in the City.

Mr. Coleman explained that he has spoken with the solicitors of other municipalities that have a limit on cats and/or dogs. He stated that they do not use the limit to begin action but as an additional tool after action has already begun.

Dr. Dethoff questioned how this would help Reading. Mr. Coleman stated that it would become an animal wellness issue. He suggested that Reading have a registration where if you wanted to keep more than six cats and dogs you would register them with the City. He stated that if the animals are not registered and there is action against the property that this issue can be addressed at that time and that additional penalties would be assessed.

Mr. Minor stated that the limitation cannot be pre-emptive. He noted that there are several court cases and that Courts do not rule favorably to municipalities on property rights. He stated that the limitation cannot be an arbitrary number but needs to show a correlation to health and welfare.

Dr. Dethoff questioned Mr. Minor's position on a limitation. Mr. Minor explained that PA already addresses several animal issues. He stated that residents who own more than six cats and/or dogs

may have a mental illness or hoarding issue. He stated that these issues are not the same as animal cruelty issues. He suggested that the limitation be used as another tool and not a means for enforcement on its own.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the role of the Humane Society and how their services intersect with the City and the Animal Rescue League. Mr. Minor explained that the Humane Society stopped being the City's animal enforcement agency in 2008. He stated that at that time the Humane Society moved its focus to adoption and veterinary services. He stated that the veterinary services target low income residents.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if there were drop-off facilities. Mr. Minor stated that the Humane Society does accept drop-offs.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if Mr. Minor was aware of regulations in other municipalities that have successful limitations on the number of cats and/or dogs. Mr. Minor apologized for sending information to Ms. Katzenmoyer late this afternoon. He suggested that the Board review the study. He stated that hoarding needs a multi-disciplinary approach. Ms. Katzenmoyer will distribute the link to the study.

Dr. Dethoff requested that Mr. Minor also share the legal challenges with Ms. Katzenmoyer for distribution to the Board.

Mr. Minor questioned if there were specific examples in Reading. Ms. Rudy disagreed with Mr. Minor's statement that MDJs will issue search warrants for animal issues. She stated that the City must get permission from the District Attorney's office for warrants before approaching the MDJ. She stated that getting the District Attorney's permission is not simple. She noted the struggles she has with enforcement. She stated that hoarding now has its own diagnosis in the DSM but that most people in the City who have more than six cats and/or dogs are not hoarders.

Mr. Minor suggested that the City look into a mandatory spay/neuter program. He stated that this is legal if the City does its own licensing. He stated that this could help address the issue. Dr. Dethoff wondered how the Courts would allow this to be mandatory but would not support a pet limitation.

Dr. Dethoff stated that home owners insurance policies can increase the premium or choose not to provide coverage based on the type of dog breed owned.

Mr. Coleman questioned if Mr. Minor would be amenable to a limitation of six cats and/or dogs. Mr. Minor stated that he would and noted the need to ensure that the limitation is helpful for enforcement and addresses the issue.

Mr. Coleman questioned if Mr. Minor would support a registration if someone wishes to have more than six cats and/or dogs. Mr. Minor stated that he would. He noted the need for the statistics to prove that the number six provides for the health and welfare issues. He stated that studies show that bites to humans increase when there is a larger number of dogs.

Dr. Dethoff noted the need for forward progress. He requested an ordinance draft at the next meeting.

Dr. Wong stated that past attempts to set this limitation met with a public backlash.

Dr. Dethoff was surprised to learn that non-City residents could speak at Reading City Council meetings. He noted his hope for public consensus. Mr. Minor stated that he can help with public relations.

Dead Animal Removal

Dr. Wong stated that he requested this topic be on the agenda for discussion after the Reading Eagle article explaining that dead animals on private property must be removed by the citizen. He stated that the City had a scavenger in the past. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that the City no longer has a scavenger. She explained that dead animals are removed from the streets and public areas only.

Dr. Dethoff stated that dead animals are prolific with disease and questioned the logic to have private citizens disposing of them.

The Board requested that Ms. Katzenmoyer inform City Council of the Board's desire to have the City remove all dead animals when requested.

Mr. Minor stated that the Humane Society will accept them from residents if they are domestic animals.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Health will be Tuesday, April 1 at 4 pm in the Penn Room.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.

*Respectfully submitted
Shelly Katzenmoyer
Deputy City Clerk*