

Dog Ordinance Committee Minutes

March 27, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 PM by Chair Robert Gowans

Committee members present were: Robert Gowans, William Fraser, Danis Regal, Marilyn Mode, Rick Lee and Judy Gibson. Neil Martel arrived at 3:30

Also present were Erika Holm, Richard Sheir and Lisa Lee.

William Fraser agreed to take the minutes for this meeting and the group agreed that the minute taking responsibilities would rotate among members for each meeting.

Public Comment: Richard Sheir expressed the opinion that fines or consequences for violations should be increased but that requiring all dogs to be leashed at all times was excessive.

Judy Gibson distributed suggested technical corrections.

Rick Lee expressed his concerns about unleashed dogs and shared his personal experience.

Comments from Erika Holm – Ms. Holm is a professional in the animal care field. She made clear that her comments were her own and not from any professional association that she had. Ms. Holm recommended increasing penalties. She noted that leashes are not 100% successful at preventing incidents. She noted that people need to be held accountable, not necessarily the dog. She said that it is good for dogs to be run off leash. She said that in communities where she works she communicates expectations and concerns through Front Porch Forum.

Judy Gibson said that the city needed a dog park.

Neil Martel said that enforcement in all cases was difficult due to volume but that a leash requirement was clear, either the dog was leashed or it wasn't. He pointed to a need for education. He expressed concerns that our ordinances weren't set up for hearing officers and civil penalties.

Danis Regal proposed raising fines significantly.

Bill Fraser shared information about dog ordinances in larger municipalities in Vermont. He raised the question of whether data existed to show the effectiveness of leash requirements.

Marilyn Mode raised the question of park signage.

As the meeting concluded, the group agreed that they may be able to reach agreement on requirements for streets and sidewalks but that additional time and consideration was needed for the Park.

The agenda for the next meeting – set for April 10 at 3:30 PM - would include review of any leash law data, decision on regulations for streets and sidewalks and technical corrections.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 PM