

MINUTES OF THE ANIMAL CONTROL BOARD MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2011
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBER, 210 SAMS AVENUE
NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FLORIDA

Having been duly advertised as required by law, the meeting of the City of New Smyrna Beach Animal Control Board, was held on Thursday, June 2, 2011, in the City Hall Commission Chamber, 210 Sams Avenue, New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

Chairman Leonard called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and the following members answered present to the roll call:

Janice J. Kelly
Robert Leonard, Jr.
Bernard S. Stillwell
William Clarence Thieman
Robert C. Voshell

Also present were: Assistant City Attorney Greg McDole; Police Neighborhood Resource Officer Chris Norman; and, City Clerk Johnny Bledsoe.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Chairman Leonard outlined a scrivener's error on the second page of the minutes of the meeting on September 15, 2010. City Clerk Bledsoe acknowledged a correction to the spelling of Member Stillwell's name would be made.

Motion:

Member Kelly moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 15, 2010, as corrected. Member Stillwell seconded the motion and it carried un-animously by voice vote.

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FERAL CATS – Officer Norman commented on the ongoing problems experienced within the community regarding a high number of feral cats and urged a proactive approach be taken toward the situation. He outlined limited resources available at the Southeast Volusia Humane Society and highlighted only 7 or 8 cages were available to hold feral cats.

Officer Norman further outlined other local measures being taken to provide traps to citizens, but how the program had resulted in the need for a waiting list for traps that had grown to 50 to 60 residents. He further commented on his efforts to urge citizens to purchase their own traps. Officer Norman commented on locations within the community where colonies of such cats were located.

Officer Norman described such locations as public gathering places, such as schools and restaurants, most noteworthy being a specific restaurant on South Dixie Freeway. He felt a major obstacle was how the stray cats was able to find food in such locations.

Member Thieman questioned the number of calls received by Officer Norman regarding animals, and questioned whether the City had considered purchasing additional traps in order to sell to citizens at a discounted cost. Officer Norman felt he received more calls regarding nuisance dogs than feral cats, and commented on what he felt was a consistently high number of requests for traps and cages.

Member Thieman questioned the number of traps on hand to assist citizens and whether the humane society had any programs to offer feral cats to regional farmers or similar businesses. Officer Norman clarified the City owned approximately 40 to 50 traps for use by citizens and restated his encouragement of citizens to purchase their own traps.

The discussion continued and Officer Norman commented on trapping activities of other municipalities in the area and highlighted Volusia County programs such as the spay/neuter bus, and the Trap, Neuter and Release Program designed to manage area colonies of cats. He felt vaccination and spay/neuter programs were not successful.

Chairman Leonard questioned the areas of concentration within the community where the feral cat problem seemed to be worse. Officer Norman felt the two major areas of concentration were the Westside community and 4 or 5 locations on the beachside. Chairman Leonard questioned how successful the use of traps was and commented on individuals feeding feral cats. Officer Norman commented on efforts to communicate with citizens found to be feeding stray cats. Chairman Leonard commented on feral cat advocates as vocal and passionate groups who utilize resources to care for animals and felt the board and City should be sensitive to such groups in order to avoid adversarial situations in development of plans.

Member Kelly questioned how stray cats were handled after they were spay/neutered. Officer Norman clarified that no citizen had requested the return of a cat after it was spay/neutered. Member Thieman felt the Spay/Neuter Program could be productive. Officer Norman felt spay/neutering represented a solution to a problem and an operational plan was needed to develop an ordinance in order to control the problem in the future.

Member Thieman questioned whether a stray feral cat policy existed. Officer Norman clarified there were no other animal control guidelines and restated the need for an ordinance in order to have an enforceable local law.

Member Kelly questioned the disposition of stray cats, made part of the trap, neuter and release program.

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Chairman Leonard introduced Dr. Judith Milcarsky, who had done much work in Volusia County regarding wild cats and animals. Chairman Leonard commented on the potential of putting food out and attracting wild animals like raccoons, and questioned current actions being taken to battle rabies.

Dr. Milcarsky outlined data collection techniques utilized locally and the statistical data compiled, regarding rabies research conducted within Volusia County and felt New Smyrna Beach data represented a mini replica of Volusia County data. She complimented Officer Norman on his knowledge of feral cats within the community. Dr. Milcarsky commented on the association between the feral cat population and rabies. Chairman Leonard commented on the concern with rabies.

Dr. Milcarsky commented on the number of stray cats that had to be spay/neutered in order to achieve management levels within the community and outlined that an estimated 80,000 stray cats were currently in Volusia County and only 22,000 had been spay/neutered to date. She commented on the trap, neuter, release program and required vaccinations but felt the trap and euthanize program would have better results. Chairman Leonard advised such as program had not been utilized locally.

Bob Bell, a volunteer at the Southeast Volusia Humane Society, outlined his advocacy for cats and strongly opposed the trap and euthanize program as a means of population management of stray cats. Officer Norman commented on the financial impacts, in comparison, between trap and euthanize, and trap, neuter, vaccinate and relocate programs. Mr. Bell commented on alternative programs to responsibly identify cats and hold owners responsible, and felt options, other than trap and euthanize programs should be addressed and considered.

Chairman Leonard clarified the purpose of the meeting was to receive information, and the Animal Control Board was pet people with a goal to take its time and have future meetings regarding such issues.

Chuck Willy commented on the organization, "No Pet Left Behind" that practiced trap, neuter and return actions. Mr. Willy commented on efforts and results he felt supported Mr. Bell's feelings expressed.

Dr. Milcarsky commented on the results of research of rabies cases in proximity to golf courses and reported that of 26 golf courses in Volusia County, 12 were found to have rabies cases reported nearby. She commented on how she agreed that most citizens loved pets, but supported humane euthanasia practices that she felt were better than the un-witnessed death of animals.

Chairman Leonard thanked Dr. Milcarsky and felt a solution would not be simple. He felt a solution would have to be humane, affordable, etc. and commented on how people were at risk in handling animals. He felt a problem had been identified and more meetings should be conducted to discuss the issue.

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BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – Member Voshell supported beginning work on a proposed ordinance for future consideration and recommendation to the City Commission. Chairman Leonard commented on the challenge development of such an ordinance would bring.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS – Bob Bell, restated his support for spay/neuter programs. Chairman Leonard felt the Board should be provided copies of the Volusia County ordinance regarding spay/neuter.

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OTHER BUSINESS – Chairman Leonard commented on concerns with the identification of an alligator in the retention pond at the intersection of Brookline Avenue and North Street. Officer Norman commented on Florida Wildlife Commission regulations regarding alligators and other wildlife, as it had jurisdiction over wildlife in the area. Chairman Leonard commented on safety concerns for children and other animals by residents of the area.

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Chairman Leonard commented on recent dangerous dog determinations made and felt the City of Edgewater should be notified of the last determination made. Officer Norman advised he would follow up with City of Edgewater officials regarding annual requirements of the dog owner.

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Member Stillwell commented on aggressive activities of area raccoons. Chairman Leonard commented on raccoon feeding habits.

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With no further business to conduct. Chairman Leonard declared the meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.