

PET-FRIENDLY TASK GROUP

12: 30 PM | September 29, 2021
1. OPENING OF MEETING
MEMBERS PRESENT: Abby Block, Michelle Gentine, Laura Berchem, Michelle Warner, Andy Heyn, Kristine Potter
ABSENT: Betty Ackley, Pam Hertel,

Molly Talaska, Ofc. Kevin Post
STAFF/OFFICIALS PRESENT: Mayor Ryan Sorenson

1.1 CALL TO ORDER
Chair Laura Berchem called the meeting to order.

1.2 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. MINUTES

2.1 Approval of minutes
Motion by Andy Heyn to approve minutes of the August 25, 2021 meeting.

Second by Michelle Gentine. Motion carried.

3. PUBLIC FORUM

3.1 Limit of five people having five minutes each with comments limited to items on this agenda.

Toni Becker attended the meeting but declined to speak further citing the letter she submitted to members of the committee prior to the meeting (the text of Ms. Becker's

communication

immediately follows these minutes.)

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

4.1 Discuss grant opportunity from Mars Pet Care - DUE OCTOBER 1 st

Members of the task group discussed the merits of completing the application in support of improving pet friendliness in the City of Sheboygan through park improvements. Abby and Laura will work to complete application and will share with the group when completed. Application to include promotional support for pet-friendly parks survey, signage for all City parks, pet waste stations, two pet fountains and operational support for the Humane Society s new dog park.

4.2 Brief discussion following August 25 th Licensing, Hearings and Public Safety Committee meeting.

The group is aware of the issues of concern but cannot endorse requiring all dogs be leashed whenever they are out of their homes as the group felt this action would not be legal, that it failed to address root causes of aggressive incidents and that there was insufficient information to make any suggestion to

Council at this point in time. The group does not want to educate the public when recommendations for improvements are to be made soon. Abby reached out to Ofc. Kevin Post about the number of various incidences in the City. He will provide this information at the October meeting. The group will be putting out the survey soon and will use this information, and that from the police department, to better inform any suggestions. The Task Group will continue to monitor community concerns.

Delegate community survey tasks. Members will look at the survey individually before the next meeting and will come to the October task group meeting prepared to make suggestions for shortening the survey significantly, ideally to about

10 - 15 questions, with a general focus on parks and other recreations spaces.

4.4 Delegate tasks surrounding Sheboygan's Pet Friendly City Assessment. In the interest of time and because there is not any considerable change, the group did not discuss this topic but will do so at a future time.

5. CLOSING OF MEETING

5.1 Next meeting date: Wednesday, October 27 th

5.2 Adjournment Motion by Michelle Warner, second by Abby Block to adjourn. Motion carried.

Due to no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1: 48 pm.

COMMUNICATION FROM TONI BECKER:

Two problems with Restraint Code Section 18 - 46:

Before education and enforcement strategy planning can begin, we need a dog restraint ordinance that adequately protects the public---Restraint Code Section 18 - 46 does not.

The voice-command-only that this section allows for on-premises dogs, is not sufficient restraint when a dog decides to run.

Even the best trained dogs can be unpredictable. The Restraint Code Section 18 - 46 needs to require that all dogs be physically and securely restrained whenever they are anywhere outdoors---on or off premises.

Many city-wide Nextdoor posts refer specifically to frightening issues caused by dogs that are loose in their yards---anxiety that walkers feel when they spot a loose-in-the-yard dog; loose-in-the-yard dogs confronting leashed dogs and/or walkers, creating scary and potentially dangerous situations; the lasting trauma of confrontations, injuries and worse caused by loose-in-the-yard dogs.

Some Section 18 - 46 syntax is ambiguous; it can be misinterpreted.

Before education and enforcement can begin, we need a dog restraint ordinance that is clear and understandable to the general public.

Clarity is especially important because the Restraint Section 18 - 46 addresses most of the current unrestrained dog issues, and it will be the most effective section to disseminate in efforts to educate the public.

The current Section 18 - 46 syntax can be and sometimes has been misinterpreted, as evidenced by previous Nextdoor posts claiming there is no leash law , some claiming they were told no leash law by a city employee who apparently misunderstood the code, as was I.

Before a future revised code would be presented for a vote, the draft should be proofread by numerous non-lawyer people, in order to catch any syntax ambiguities that might not be noticeable to the author.

(As a freelance writer, and a victim of two dog attacks, I volunteer and request to be one of those draft proofreaders.)

Ambiguity in Section 18 - 46 of the Municipal Code The dog or cat may be off the premises if it is restrained by a substantial leash or chain not exceeding six feet in length, in the hands of such person and directly controlling the movement of the animal, or if it is being trained or shown in an area or at an event approved for such purposes by the superintendent of parks.

The phrase, in the hands of such person and directly controlling the movement of the animal is intended as an added condition to being restrained by a leash .

Does or if it is being trained or shown simply mean that such dogs may be off premises without a leash, or do trained or shown dogs also need to be on leash?

The comas and the word or before the last item, sets this long sentence up as a series which gives three options for dogs that are off premises:

Being on a leash, or being in the hands of (with) a person controlling the animal s movements, or being trained or shown in an approved area.

Commas can change the meaning of a sentence, as they do here.

Section 18 - 46 wording, punctuation and length of the sentence creates ambiguity. EDUCATION

When there is an ordinance that adequately protects the public, an ordinance that is clear and understandable, then education can begin.

A revamped Restraint Ordinance Section 18 - 46, which addresses many of the current unrestrained dog issues, can be disseminated to the target audience through various means.

The Pet-Friendly Task Group can solicit ideas and help from the public.

My ideas:

1.

Print the Dog Restraint Section 18 - 46 in the ample space on the bottom half of the yearly dog-license permit, using bold fonts and an attention-getting logo.

2.

Interested citizens could coordinate to work with local veterinarian offices and the Humane Society to encourage that Section 18 - 46 be printed on their billing pages, and provide a short, attention-getting Section 18 - 46 poster to be displayed in their waiting rooms; work with local pet stores to display such a poster, perhaps visible at check outs; work with local dog trainers/kennels/club to place such posters and newsletter articles.

3.

Officers could remind people of the Dog Restraint Section 18 - 46 when visiting neighborhood association meetings, schools, etc.

The Police Department could occasionally post the Section 18 - 46 on Nextdoor with a friendly reminder that this code is to protect all dogs and people---and that it is a law which will be enforced.

5.

The Police Department could advertise on Nextdoor, a Recognizing Responsible Dog Owners campaign, by occasionally stopping when they see a properly-restrained dog, giving the owner a compliment and a donated-certificate from an ice-cream shop or pet shop, etc.

(Awareness and goodwill raised from both the advertising, and the winners-passing-the-word should be an effective and fun attention getter for the Restraint law.)

ENFORCEMENT

When there is an ordinance that adequately protects the public, an ordinance that is clear and understandable to the general public, then revamped enforcement can begin.

Find ways to make offenders accountable with a first-time info warning, and consequences/fines for reoffenders.

My ideas:

1.

Clarify what constitutes a report that someone with authority will follow up on.

(It is likely that such a visit will be enough to stop future offending by some people.)

2.

Determine what amount of time police are available to follow up with first-time info warnings, and repeat-offender citations.

(To catch offenders in the act, may people call to report an unrestrained dog, at the moment they see it, and expect the area officer to immediately respond, if not busy?)

If police officers spot a person with an off-leash dog, or a dog loose in its yard, during a time the officer is not busy, could officers then stop to issue a warning or citation?)

If necessary, because of police time limitations, hire a qualified, full or part-time, Pet Control officer to follow up on loose dog complaints by making info/warning offender visits that includes checking for a current pet license.

This officer might also have authority to issue citations for reoffenders.

The city has a large number of dogs---average annual dog licenses given between 2014 and 2021, was 2,350.

City-wide dog incidents have become rampant and out-of-control.

Therefore, hiring a qualified pet-control officer should be a justifiable, perhaps a necessary, component of getting these issues under control.

Conclusion:

The first step in combating this problem needs to be creation of a Section 18 - 46 Restraint Code that both adequately protects the public, and is clearly understandable to the general public.

Creating such a revised Restraint Code needs to be the first focus as this committee starts its work.

Once the revised Restraint Code is in place, the work of education and enforcement can begin.

The extensive dog issues cannot be eliminated overnight.

But the issues can be continuously decreased as offenders are educated, one-by-one. The issues can be continuously decreased as offenders face accountability, one-by-one.