



Jones County Health Department
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Wesley P. Smith
Health Director

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Jones County Animal Control Subcommittee
Tuesday, August 14, 2019

In Attendance: April Aycock; Rev. Charlie Dunn Jr; Wayne Hurley; Tom Labuda;
Dr. Steve Stelma

Staff: Wesley P. Smith, Health Director; Melissa Lamb, Accounting
Technician III

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Wesley P. Smith, Health Director.

New Business

Wes opened up the meeting by stating the first order of business was to ask Commissioners Aycock and Rev. Dunn whether or not they believed the Board of Commissioners would be open to considering an animal control ordinance in Jones County. Dr. Stelma agreed, stating there was no need to proceed further if the Board of Commissioners were simply going to vote an ordinance down after the subcommittee put a lot of time and effort into animal control concerns. Both Aycock and Rev. Dunn felt that the Board of Commissioners would be willing to discuss an ordinance, depending on how it was presented and how much it would cost the county.

Tom Labuda stated the Jones County Sheriff's Department responded to between (20) and (30) animal complaints per month; however, he can only investigate individuals and their crimes against animals. Aycock stated she had no problem with an animal ordinance as long as the hunters were protected. Labuda responded stating the problem with hunters and their dogs is as soon as hunting is over, the hunters will take the collars off and let the dogs go free or kill them.

Labuda informed the subcommittee he has to respond to all the animal complaints due to there not being animal control in Jones County. The only investigation that can be done is on animal cruelty. Labuda stated he has trained all deputies at the Sheriff's Department to do a preliminary investigation to see if any animal cruelty is taking place. Labuda went on to explain that North Carolina state law only requires five (5) things: 1) rabies vaccination; (2) food based on breed and species enough to maintain normal body weight; (3) water has to be clean and accessible 24-7; (4) shelter that has three sides and a roof where the animal can walk in and out of it; and (5) necessary veterinary care.

Labuda passed around a picture of a dog with a chain around his neck to show that the chain weighed about half of the dog's weight. Aycock inquired on the reason for the picture. Labuda explained the dog in the picture was used as bait for training fighting dogs. Hurley inquired if the crimes which Tom Labuda is speaking of and showing pictures of is a misdemeanor or a felony. Per Labuda the crimes are only a misdemeanor. Labuda explained that surrounding counties will not take a stray dog that was found in Jones County. Labuda stated there is an Assistant District Attorney (ADA) out of Duplin County that will be handling all animal crimes cases in Sampson, Duplin, Onslow and Jones Counties.

Labuda informed the subcommittee that the Mayor of New York's daughter heard about the case in Jones County some years back involving the Puppy Mill on Highway 41 and became involved due to her involvement with the Humane Society US (HSUS). The Mayor's daughter asked Labuda if he had sufficient resources. Per Labuda, only those provided by the HSUS. The Mayor's daughter sent Labuda a check three (3) months later for \$20,000.00 along with a letter stating she had reached out to other another organization for a three to one match. Per Labuda, he received another check in the mail for \$60,000.00. Labuda has since used part of the money received to purchase a vehicle and equipment needed for investigating animal cruelty in Jones County. Labuda stated he also uses part of the money received to pay Top RJ Rescue & Rehab to take the dogs rescued from animal crimes. Smith inquired if any more money has been received in the animal crimes fund; per Labuda no. He stated there was approximately \$25,000.00 left.

Hurley inquired if the animal cruelty was covered under state law. Per Labuda yes; however, there is no one in Jones County to enforce it. Aycock explained a scenario where stray dogs kept coming to her Aunt's house and there is nothing anyone can do about it since there is no ordinance stating a dog owner has to keep their dogs on their property nor is there anyone in Jones County to enforce that ordinance. The topic of conversation switched to what department would be responsible for animal control. Smith passed around a survey from UNC School of Government indicating the percentages of which department is responsible for animal control. Smith further explained this survey is approximately ten (10) years old, and things have changed since this survey was done. However, the survey showed the Sheriff's Department at 29% and a tie between Stand Alone and the Local Health Department at 23%.

Labuda proposed three (3) ideas to the subcommittee on how to fund animal control in Jones County. The first proposal would be a licensing fee per dog. He suggested charging \$10.00 per dog; additional dogs in the family would cost \$5.00 for licensing over a period of two (2) years (every two years the license would need to be renewed). Depending on the number of dogs in the county, this would raise between \$50,000.00 and \$75,000.00, which would more than pay for part time animal control services. The second proposal Labuda presented would be a "Go Fund Me" page. The third option would be to raise taxes by one eighth of a penny, which would cost tax payers approximately \$5.00 a year which would then bring in a revenue of about \$40,000.00 to

\$50,000.00 a year. Per Labuda, this would also more than pay for part time animal control services. Included in the animal control program would be a contract with a shelter (within the county or out of the county) for the animals to be transferred to.

Smith presented to the subcommittee an instance where a stray dog bit a Jones County Sherriff's Deputy. Smith explained there was no tags on the dog and no way to find out if the dog has ever been vaccinated; therefore, the dog had to go into quarantine at Riverbank Animal Hospital for ten (10) days. Smith further explained the county would have to pay for the quarantine and vaccinations of the dog since no owner could be identified. Smith elaborated on the licensing of the animals to inform it would cause animal owners to take responsibility for their animals. Labuda presented the proposal of a deal that included a free rabies vaccination included with the licensing fee. Hurley was interested in the latter proposal. Smith explained that the Health Department offers two (2) rabies clinics a year - in May and November. Dr. Stelma expressed his opinion that licensing of the animals would be the most likely option, as he is not fond of raising taxes or the "Go Fund Me" page. Labuda added to the licensing proposal, that if it is put into effect and the animal owner chooses not to get their animal licensed, then they are subject to a fine. Hurley stated the licensing would be the best way to go in his view point. Aycock stated she agrees with the licensing as well, but asked Labuda if licensing would put more dogs out in the street. Per Labuda there would be some; however, he did not think it would not be an issue.

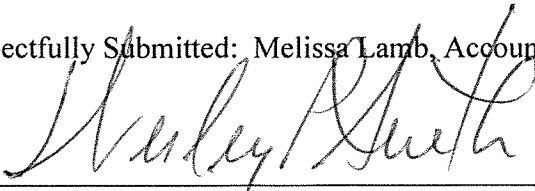
Aycock, Hurley and Dr. Stelma all agreed it would be best to take an animal control ordinance from several other counties and design on specifically for Jones County. There was much discussion on the matter of a leash law. Most agreed that a leash law would not be popular, and the ordinance could require owners to keep dogs on their property or face a fine. Smith also stated that whomever Jones County contracts with for picking up dogs and cats, cats must be kept in an environmentally-controlled shelter. Dogs do not have to be kept the same way; therefore, cats will be significantly more expensive.

Smith summed up the meeting stating the purpose of the subcommittee would be to develop an ordinance that fits Jones County, as well as obtain funding for animal control. Aycock stated the subcommittee needed to come up with different ways for funding, grants, spay and neutering options prior to submitting anything to the Board of Commissioners. There was much discussion on location of housing for animal control.

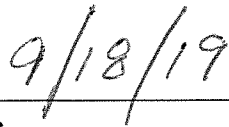
Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2019 at 10:00 am.

Respectfully Submitted: Melissa Lamb, Accounting Technician III



Wesley P. Smith, Health Director
Secretary, Ex Officio



Date