



Jones County Health Department

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Health Director

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Jones County Animal Control Subcommittee Meeting Tuesday, October 30, 2019

Members: April Aycock; Wayne Hurley; Patricia Roddy-Jones; Tom Labuda;
Wesley P. Smith, Dr. Steve Stelma

Staff: Melissa Lamb, Accounting Technician III; Ann Pike, Nursing
Supervisor I

Others: Eric Brown; James Hill; Timothy Jones; Stephanie Mills; Michael
Sutton Jr; Jennifer Thomas

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 a.m. by Dr. Steve Stelma, Board of Health Chair. Dr. Stelma requested an introduction of each of the members of Public in attendance.

Old Business

Dr. Stelma then called attention to the agenda, and asked everyone to review the minutes from the September meeting. *A motion was made by April Aycock to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2019 Animal Control Subcommittee Meeting. Patricia Roddy-Jones seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.*

New Business

Dr. Stelma opened by stating the purpose of the Animal Control Subcommittee was to explore the possibility of bringing structure to one of the few counties in North Carolina that does not have animal control structure at all. Per Dr. Stelma, if this Subcommittee votes to approve it, then the proposal will be brought before the Jones County Board of Commissioners. Dr. Stelma stated the committee is made up of several individuals whom the Board of Health has chosen. The Board of Health appointed him to be the Chairman for the Board of Health. Dr. Stelma introduced the other member of the Animal Control Subcommittee: two (2) County Commissioners – April Aycock who is present and Rev. Charlie Dunn, Jr., who was unable to attend the meeting today; Wayne Hurley, who is also on the Board of Health; Patricia Roddy-Jones, owner of Top RJ's Animal Rescue Rehab and Kennels; and Tom Labuda, Animal Cruelty Investigator for the Jones County Sheriff's Department.

Wesley Smith, Health Director, reviewed the results of the Animal Control Survey that has been passed out. A total of 324 surveys have been collected so far. Roddy-Jones

stated the town of Pollocksville will be putting the survey in the next water bill. Dr. Stelma asked for the breakdown of the source on how the surveys were received. He also inquired on how people had access to the survey and how to become aware of the survey. Smith explained Facebook was one of the sources to access the survey, as well as the Health Department website. Smith stated a reporter from WCTI Channel 12 posted it on their website as well. Dr. Stelma voiced concern on missing a significant portion of Jones County residents in receiving results via the internet and social media. Roddy-Jones stated she would be attending the Heritage Festival in Trenton and will have surveys at her booth available. Labuda informed the Subcommittee he went back through his call log and reached out to those who had called the Sheriff's Department to voice a complaint on stray animals, etc. and made sure they received a copy of the survey. Per Labuda those surveys were to be dropped off at the Health Department. Diana Craft, Health Educator, was called into the meeting by Smith to further explain the dissemination of the survey. Per Craft there are hard copies still out in the community that have not gotten back to her to enter into Survey Monkey. Smith stated he would speak with Mike Houston, Water Department Supervisor, in reference to having the survey included in the County's water bill as well. Dr. Stelma voiced his concern on making sure all areas of the county were covered as far as everyone having the opportunity to fill out the survey and have their voice heard. Craft offered up suggestions of having the surveys dropped off at the local fire departments, as well as the Senior Center in Trenton and the Filling Station in Pollocksville. Dr. Stelma raised the question on the deadline for having all the surveys turned in. The Subcommittee agreed on December 31st as the deadline to ensure surveys were sent out in the utility bills to give all residents the opportunity to complete the survey.

Dr. Stelma asked for feedback each Subcommittee member has had from the public. Aycock stated one of the concerns brought to her attention is the license fee. Aycock further stated she has not heard a positive comment about the fee. Aycock voiced concerns from the public of rumors going around on a "high" license fee. There was much discussion by the Subcommittee over the licensure fee and registration of animals. Labuda reminded the Subcommittee the basis for looking into a county ordinance and a license fee as well as registration of the animals is concern for rabies. Smith stated another reason for the ordinance, license fee, and registrations is for nuisance animals and dogs running at large where there is no ordinance in place to do something about this problem.

Dr. Stelma opened the floor for public comments. Many concerns were voiced by members of the public in attendance. Eric Brown stated his main concern was in keeping the rabies tag on his dogs during hunting season, because the collars will fall off the dog's necks in no time when hunting. Labuda informed Brown wearing the rabies tags on the dog's collar was not a concern and was exempted during hunting season. Timothy Jones stated the issue of the rabies tags on the hunting dogs during hunting season was a main concern for him as well.

Michael Sutton, Jr. voiced many concerns to the Subcommittee. Sutton stated he had a concern over the method of disseminating the survey. When it is being hand delivered it is being delivered to a certain population of people in order to get the vote that is wanted by the Subcommittee. Per Sutton handing surveys out at the Heritage Festival is an example of his concern since there will be no hunters represented at the Heritage Festival on a Saturday during hunting season. Member of the Subcommittee agreed with Mr. Sutton on this concern. Sutton further stated his concern with mailing out the survey since a large portion of the Pollocksville area has moved out and the survey will be going to an empty mailbox or received in another county and still completed. Sutton voiced his concerns on the licensing fee. He has approximately 30 hunting dogs, and stated he and other hunters are constantly trading, buying and selling hunting dogs. He questioned how anyone could tell which hunting dog has been registered and which one has not. Collars on hunting dogs are constantly being changed out due to malfunction or getting lost, and if his hunting dog gets picked up by Animal Control then he has to pay to have his dog returned to him. Sutton cited an incident that happened in which two of his dogs were picked up and taken to Craven County Animal Control. Labuda reminded Sutton that the incident happened in Craven County, not Jones County.

Sutton stated the honest citizens will be the ones paying the licensing fee. He feels that approximately 75% of the people will not pay the fee and the tax payers will have to pick up the difference when Jones County already has one of the highest tax rates in the state. Sutton admitted there is a problem with stray dogs in certain areas of the county, and asked why the whole county would have to suffer for only certain areas. He also asked Labuda if there was a problem with stray dogs in rural areas of the county. Labuda responded that there is more so of a problem in the rural areas than in the towns as far as stray dogs are concerned. He also noted there is a problem with people from other counties coming to Jones County to dump stray dogs since there is no ordinance in Jones County. Dr. Stelma closed the public comments by voicing his appreciation for each and every concern brought before the Subcommittee. He added that the comments would be put into the minutes and each one will be taken into consideration. Dr Stelma further stated he has served on many committees over the years and not one of them has had the level of concern for the hunting community as this Subcommittee.

Labuda proposed to change the name of the Animal Control Ordinance to Animal Protection Ordinance. Hurley stated that would just be a play on words. Dr. Stelma asked if the Subcommittee members had reviewed the draft ordinance prepared by the County Attorney. Dr. Stelma asked Smith how the draft ordinance came to be. Per Smith, the County Attorney took samples of surrounding county ordinances (Lenoir, Greene and Craven) to develop the one before them. Per Smith, a significant portion of the ordinance is already addressed in NC General Statues. The Subcommittee briefly went through the ordinance to determine if they were in favor of the format. Labuda informed the Subcommittee the State statutes must be included in the ordinance so the Animal Control Officer, or designee, may enforce them. The Sherriff's Department can

enforce State statutes; however, if those same statutes are not in the ordinance, then the Animal Control Officer, or designee, cannot enforce them.

There was much discussion on the requirement of a licensure fee and registration of animals. Smith stated the Health Department could maintain the animal control program using an organization like Top RJ's to respond to complaints and pick up the dogs. Smith informed Subcommittee members he believed it would only take about \$15,000.00 to get the program up and running through the Health Department. The Subcommittee was in favor of removing the requirements of a licensure fee and registration of animals from the ordinance, as well as including an additional \$15,000.00 into the Health Departments budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020. The Subcommittee was also in favor of continuing with the meetings to review the draft Animal Control Ordinance for Jones County. ***Smith made a motion to have the County Attorney remove those sections from the draft ordinance that deal with licensing and registrations only. Patricia Roddy-Jones seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried.***

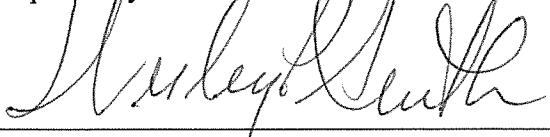
Labuda then addressed some of the civil penalties that would be assessed, and recommended the following changes: Section 1.21-A, reduce from \$200 to \$100 the penalty for any person who violates any provision of the ordinance; Section 1.21-B, reduce from \$500 to \$250 the penalty for any dangerous dog or potentially dangerous dog that attacked, assaulted, wounded, bit or otherwise injured or killed a human, and in this same section, reduce from \$1,500 to \$500 the penalty for owning or keeping a dangerous dog that attacks, assaults, wounds bites or otherwise injures or kills a human. He finally asked that the word "shall" be changed to "may" in section 1.21-B.

Dr. Stelma then proposed that the Subcommittee hold off on any further review of the ordinance for the sake of time, and schedule a second meeting to thoroughly go through the ordinance and tweak the draft as needed. Dr. Stelma followed up on the dissemination of the surveys throughout the County as previously discussed. ***Roddy-Jones then made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Aycocock seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

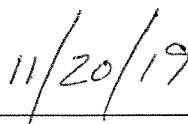
Next Meeting

November 20, 2019 at 9:30 in the multi-purpose conference room between DSS and the Health Department.

Respectfully Submitted: Melissa Lamb, Accounting Technician III



Wesley P. Smith, Health Director



Date