

## **VILLAGE OF WRIGHTSTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

A meeting of the Village of Wrightstown Public Safety Committee was held at Village Hall, 352 High St, on **Tuesday, February 12, 2019** and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Public Safety Committee Chair Andy Lundt.

Present: Village President (Public Safety Committee Member) Dean Erickson, Village Trustee Sue Byers, Village Trustee (Public Safety Committee Member) Andy Lundt, Village Trustee Dan Segerstrom, Village Trustee (Public Safety Committee Member) Terry Schaeuble, Village Trustee Keith Wendlandt, Administrator Travis Coenen and residents Carol Rossal, Erika Seidler, Andrew Welnetz and Mara Welnetz

Motion made by A Lundt with a second my D Erickson to open the Public Safety Committee Meeting. **Motion carried.**

- **Chapter 75, Article II of The Village of Wrightstown Municipal Code Review** – Village Board meetings were held on Tuesday, December 18, 2018 and Wednesday, January 2, 2019, in which several public views were received regarding the Village’s current vicious dog ordinance. While the ordinance regulations are appropriate, the question is whether breed specific language should be removed. The Board’s focus is on community safety and insuring dog owners are responsible and what the best way is to make these things happen?

### **Public Input**

Resident Erika Seidler: Breed specific language should be removed from the Village municipal code. Her dog and her mother’s dog, may, as would most, react negatively when muzzled since they are unable to defend themselves. Because information presented by the Village Board indicates that pit bull attacks predominantly happen within the home, breed specific “rules” will not protect families with these pets. She feels that the policy is a personal attack that is unfair because her dog, her mother’s dog and her daughter’s dog are not mean.

Andrew Welnetz, 806 Broadway St.: In favor of behavioral specific legislation. Indicated that people are not judged by specific demographics as more likely to commit a crime so dogs should not be blanketed as vicious simply because of their breed.

Mara Welnetz, 806 Broadway St.: dogsbite.org website was created by a runner that was attacked by a pit bull. Statistics were debunked by multiple organizations. Study by the American Veterinarian Medical Association from 2000-2009 examined potentially preventable factors in a human dog bite fatalities based on complete verifiable accurate data sources. Results found that breed was not a factor. What was found: 87% of the time an able body person was unavailable to intervene, 85% of the time the victim had no familiarity to the dog, 84% of the time the dog owner failed to neuter their pet, 77% of the time the victim did not have the ability to appropriately interact with the dog, 76% of the time the dogs were kept isolated from positive human interaction, 37% of the time the dog owners were accused of prior ownership mismanagement and 21% of the time there was a history of abuse toward the dog. Out of 80% of the deaths, 45% of the time breeds were verifiable and they included 20 different kinds. Organizations that do not agree with dog specific legislation: American Dog Owners Association, Human Society, American Kennel Club, American Veterinary and Medical Association.

Keith Wendlandt, 562 Royal St. Pat’s Dr., recent statistics indicate that 77% of dog bite fatalities were caused by pit bulls or pit bull breeds. Out of 270+ dog breeds, over 50% of deaths were caused by this one. The testimonials regarding victims are scary. The Village of

Wrightstown is responsible for the safety of the residents and cannot ignore the data. Municipalities' across the county as well as in the State of Wisconsin have chosen to totally ban pit bull breeds within their boundaries. Rather than do this, enforceable regulations should be added to the ordinance that would be more acceptable than banning. Breed specific language should remain in the Village's ordinance language.

Goal of Village Administration is to outline parameters that will protect our residents especially in situations where the dog owner is not acting responsibly. Could a home visit be done so a vicious determination can be made as an alternative to breed specific language in the municipal code?

Carl Rossal, 1107 Main St.: Although pit bull breeds have explosive personalities and are bred for security, maybe the community would be better served by removing the breed specific language, the muzzle and the screen door restrictions in the Village ordinance and enforcing the rule that no dog, no matter the breed, be left running loose in the yard of a home. If the dog is a rescue and its history is unknown, then maybe a home visit could be warranted.

Sue Byers, 433 Fawnwood Ct.: 2013-2018 Village of Wrightstown incident reports show the following:

2013 – 1 dog bite

2014 – 1 dog bite

2015 – no bites reported

2016 - 5 dog bites including a pit bull attack in October 2016

The details of the incident: Village Trustee completing his nightly run was bitten by an unrestrained dog. A report was filed with the police department and the pet owners fined. The owners later removed the dog from their home as they were unable to pay the tickets. It took 2 years for the Trustee to receive reimbursement for medical expenses related to the incident.

Spoke of an article from June 29, 2014 printed in a Cincinnati, OH newspaper, about Dr. Billmeyer, a professor and Director of the Division of Cranial Facial and Pediatric Plastic Surgery at Children's Hospital for 30 years. The most common dog bites, at the start of his career, were from German shepherds and occasionally retrievers where one "warning shot" was given due to the removal of food or infliction of pain. As the years progressed, rather than single bites, injuries seen were becoming more severe where flesh was torn from the victim from several locations on the body. Generally, these attacks were unprovoked and were from pit bulls or from pit bull mixes. Different dog breeds are bred for specific purposes so dogs bred to fight and kill should be banned as they are the equivalent of placing a loaded gun, with the safety off, on a coffee table. Ms. Byers thinks that if a resident chooses to have a pit bull, they need to put up with the inconvenience of a few extra steps to insure that the public is safe and is not in favor of removing the breed specific language from the Village ordinance.

Andrew Welnetz: Believes that dogs are a product of their environment and if they are treated well, they will respond well. Believes that it is the owner's job to keep tabs on their dog and who is around it. He is in favor of adding home visits and temperament testing to the Village ordinance.

Dan Segerstrom, 245 Patricia Ln.: Village board members need to make sure that pet owners are taking responsibility for their dogs. He walks daily and has never had a problem with dogs running at him even when his dog is along. He has put in a lot of time learning how to and training his pet. Still, he would be scared to have a pit bull, and chooses not to have one, based on research he has done. Agrees that writing in home visits and temperament testing requirements, in the ordinance, may be the way to go.

Are home inspections and temperament testing the best, most proactive way to guarantee safety in the Village? If rabies records come in and indicate a breed we question, are we being proactive checking up on the situation like we would about a received complaint?

Andy Lundt: Doesn't put much stock in home visits because from the information he has received, it sounds like many times dogs that attack are great family pets that one day turn vicious for unknown reasons. A visit may not catch a dog that ends up attacking someone later, and in turn, a pet could be having an unusually bad day during the visit, and is deemed vicious, but normally it is mellow and laid back. Andy feels residents have the right to own breeds of their choice as long as they are responsible and regulations are in place to insure that responsibility. His question to the dog owners present, do you feel it is unfair to be asked to carry the additional insurance requested for having a pit bull breed?

Sue Byers: Spoke with American Family Insurance agent Bill Draeger. When he receives a request to cover a dog, he is required to do a site visit that includes a specific list of steps that have to be done before binding coverage.

One resident indicated that she was told by her agent that most policies include pet provision coverage whether an incident happens on or off your property. She takes no issue with having a policy that requires coverage for dog bites but would just like to see that all Village dog owners have this requirement rather than just pit bull owners.

Carl Rossal: Compared higher premium costs for home owners with pit bulls to the cost of automobile insurance rates for boys compared to girls based on loss statistics. It's not fair but it is probably based on more claims submitted.

Andrew Welnetz: If all municipalities outlaw pit bulls, we may be contributing to the extinction of this specific dog breed.

American Kennel Club rallies against breed specific legislation because majority of dogs turned into shelters are pit bulls. If people become aware that this is a breed that requires closer monitoring, more will be euthanized.

Further discussion debated the pros and cons of home visits and the level of control the owner has over their dog.

Village President/Committee Member Dean Erickson stated that the residents opposing this ordinance did so only after they were informed that they were not in compliance. This is evidence that Village regulations were not checked prior to bringing the dog into the community and does not reflect responsible pet ownership. The ordinance is not totally bad and safeguards people that have a true fear of pit bulls.

Administrator Coenen noted that unfortunately, the ordinance was overlooked for many years since its inception in 1995 and residents should have been told, at the time the pit bull breeds were originally licensed, of the special requirements.

Trustee Keith Wendlandt stated that enforcement regulations have to be viable.

Administrator Coenen suggested that a home visit should be added to the current municipal ordinance and a determination can be made as to if the dog is vicious. If not deemed vicious, the muzzle, additional leash regulations etc... would not then apply.

A public survey will be created to get feedback from Village residents, as to how they would like the ordinance to read, prior to the next board meeting.

- **Police Department** – Future goals for 2019 into 2020 will be tabled since Chief Deike was not present at the meeting. Next COFFEE WITH A COP is March 7<sup>th</sup>. Great feedback is being received from this event. A variety of times may be scheduled so more residents are able to attend. Neighborhood Watch had a low turnout. Due to this, a table may be set out at the Winter Movie on March 24<sup>th</sup> to try and draw more interest. Hoping that the new police squad will arrive by the end of this month.

**ADJOURN** – Motion made by Dean Erickson with a second made by A Lundt to adjourn. (7:34 p.m.)

Michelle Seidl

Clerk/Treasurer