

DANGEROUS AND VICIOUS DOG TASK FORCE
McHenry County Government Center
Administration Building
667 Ware Road
Woodstock, IL 60098

MINUTES OF MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2006

Chairman Koehler called the Dangerous and Vicious Dog Task Force meeting to order at 3:30p.m. The following members were present: Ken Koehler; Ann Gilman; Anna May Miller; John Jung, Jr.; Sandra Salgado; Julia Feldt, (as representative for States Attorney Lou Bianchi); Pat McNulty, Health Department; Dr. Edin Mehanovic; Jerry Rivard; Sheriff Nygren; and Dr. Brian Sager. Nick Provanzano; Dr. Richard Gorski; and Tracey Odishoo were absent. Also in attendance: interested public; and the press.

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| Kenneth D. Koehler, Chairman | |
| Lou Bianchi | Ann Gilman |
| Dr. Richard Gorski | John Jung, Jr. |
| Pat McNulty | Dr. Edin Mehanovic |
| Anna May Miller | Sheriff Keith Nygren |
| Tracey Odishoo | Nick Provenzano |
| Jerry Rivard | Dr. Brian Sager |
| Sandra Salgado | |

MINUTES

Ms. Gilman made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jung to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2005 meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted with a unanimous voice vote of all ayes.

Chairman Koehler reported that the County Board approved the Task Force's recommendations for proposed legislation address vicious / dangerous dog issues at their January 3, 2006 meeting. The Resolution and supporting documents have been sent to our legislators. He stated he has talked with State Representatives Mark Beaubien and Mike Tryon and State Senator Pam Althoff and all support these initiatives. He went on to note that at today's Metro Counties meeting all counties expressed their support of what we are trying to accomplish. Lake County has included this issue on their legislative agenda and Dupage County has also referenced several of the items we recommended. He stated that although this meeting was held to address transportation issues, the attendees spent a lot of time discussing vicious dog concerns.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chairman Koehler explained that anyone wishing to address the Committee would be allowed three minutes to make their statement. A gentleman addressed the Task Force and raised his concerns with how Animal Control officers were going to enforce proposed new legislation and also current ordinances.

NEW BUSINESS/OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Koehler stated with Dr. Gorski being unable to attend today's meeting, additional information on wounds from dog bites will be discussed at the next meeting.

Discussion of previously recommended changes to County Ordinances: Chairman Koehler asked if members had any corrections, revisions or additions to the list provided of previously recommended County Ordinance changes. Mr. Jung stated that in previous discussions the Task Force had recommended that all dogs that are deemed vicious would be euthanized, therefore only dogs deemed dangerous would be required to wear an orange collar. Mr. McNulty added that it was his understanding that the fines for an unregistered dog would begin at \$150 and raise to \$1,000. He also noted that the one-year registration fee for an unaltered dog would be set at the current registration fee plus \$100.00 and the three year registration fee for an unaltered dog would be set at the current registration fee plus \$150.00. Members agreed that this was the recommendation. Ms. Salgado asked what the "orange collar" would look like. Chairman Koehler stated that the description is general at this point, but samples provided at a future meeting. He went on to report that there are currently nine items regarding animal control issues that state legislators will be considering. Ms. Gilman asked what those nine issues were. Chairman Koehler responded he would find out the exact nature of these items and report his findings back to the Task Force.

Animal Control Enforcement: Chairman Koehler asked for ideas and suggestions from the members as to how to address and provide for better enforcement of animal control issues. He stated we will not discuss funding at this point. Mr. Rivard noted that Animal Control does have a vaccination / registration process in place that appears to be working well at this point. There is also a procedure for determining if a dog should be deemed dangerous, which

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includes investigation, discussions with the owner and a final decision. The determination of a vicious dog is handled through the courts. Mr. McNulty reported that Animal Control services are provided during normal business hours and 24 hour emergency services are provided through an answering service that prioritizes calls and contacts the officer on-call. With staff limitations, not all calls are responded to, but staff does respond to all calls regarding bites. If the officer on-call lives within the County, they are allowed to drive the Animal Control vehicle home. However, if the officer lives outside the County, they cannot take the vehicle home. If they are called, they must first come to Animal Control to pick-up a vehicle. When people dial 911 and require an immediate response, said response would be by the local authority. Chairman Koehler pointed out that the problem appears to be that no specific procedure is in place to address these concerns. He also questioned why calls 911 would be referred to "answer call" services. Mr. Rivard noted that 911 should provide an immediate response. Mr. McNulty stated that if the Health Department is called after hours, the caller would be directed into answer call if they listen to the complete message. Chairman Koehler asked if the operator on duty at "answer call" was trained in how to handle an animal control emergency. Mr. McNulty responded that they are provided information on how to respond to a caller. Chairman Koehler asked if the program has been assessed to determine how effective it is. Mr. McNulty reported that Animal Control has had "answer call" for several years and it appears to be working fairly well, however there has been no formal assessment. Sheriff Nygren reported that not all 911 calls go to the Sheriff, but when the department does receive a 911 call they respond immediately and dispatch an officer to the scene to make an assessment. After the assessment and it has been determined that an Animal Control officer is needed, the officer then contacts Animal Control. Chairman Koehler asked if there were steps in the procedures or process that could be improved. Sheriff Nygren stated it is a man-power issue, pointing out that the Sheriff has officers on duty 24/7, 365 days a year. He stated that his department looks at man-power statistics and analysis when and at what times the most officers are needed on the street. He noted that there are some municipalities that have an animal control officer as part of their police force. Chairman Koehler asked if it would make sense to discuss animal control with municipalities to see how they handle these issues. Sheriff Nygren stated to some degree such discussions would make sense and perhaps with the County's centralized animal control department municipalities would consider providing funding. He stated that a centralized service approach must be properly funded and properly staffed to meet the needs of the population. Currently Animal Control has five officers which are not enough to provide on the street coverage 24/7. Mr. McNulty stated even if the amount of officers doubled there would still be limitations. Response time can be a problem due to traffic congestion and problems beyond our control. Ms. Salgado suggested this issue be discussed by the Board of Health with their recommendations going to the Public Health & Human Services Committee. Chairman Koehler felt this would be a possibility but pointed out the need to have animal control officers on the street 24/7, 365 days a year. Ms. Miller pointed out that even with additional animal control officers the Cary incident would not have been handled differently, noting that animal control officers do not carry weapons. Ms. Gilman stated there must be something the officers could carry that would stop a vicious animal attack. Chairman Koehler stated tasers could be a possibility. Sheriff Nygren voiced his opposition to tasers. Ms. Gilman stated that tasers can be dangerous and can kill. She stated on the farm a cattle prod is used and suggested their use. Mr. McNulty stated that animal control does have batons and dart guns, but has nothing that would drop an animal immediately. Ms. Gilman then asked if the County has any authority to ask for funding from municipalities. Chairman Koehler stated these issues will be discussed at an up coming McCog meeting. Ms. Gilman stated it is her opinion that animal control officers should be required to live in McHenry County. Sheriff Nygren pointed out that not all of the Sheriff officers live in the County. Chairman Koehler stated we need to determine what is necessary to have coverage 24/7 365 days a year. Sheriff Nygren pointed out that only sworn / trained officers are allowed to respond with red lights and sirens and animal control officers are not fully sworn officers. Ms. Salgado stated that the Task Force all agree that we want the best of services and suggestions should be forwarded to the Board of Health emphasizing that we want excellent service. Sheriff Nygren suggested that a man-power study be conducted for Animal Control which would provide a basis to move forward. Mr. McNulty added that late night response by an Animal Control Officer is always a concern and most of these calls are handled by the Sheriff as their staff is trained in this area and are armed. Dr Sager stated that in the City of Woodstock an officer would first respond to a dangerous or vicious dog situation and then contact an animal control officer. He felt the system was good and also expressed willingness to partnership with the County on funding issues should that be appropriate. Mr. Austin was asked to research how other counties address these concerns. Mr. McNulty was asked to gather data for the next meeting. Mr. McNulty reported that the staff is current on paperwork and registrations and most veterinarians are cooperating with getting registrations to the department in a timely manner. Data will be helpful in determining how much additional staff is necessary. The Task Force will review these reports at the next meeting.

Educational component: Chairman Koehler asked what age group should be target for education. Members agreed to look at schools and perhaps the senior population. They noted several organizations that could be helpful including Senior Services, churches, PTAs, etc. Mr. McNulty stated they have just completed interviewing for the

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volunteer position and that individual could provide assistance in addressing the educational link and could coordinate the program.

Chairman Koehler announced that the next meeting will be on Monday, January 23, 2006 at 3:30 p.m.

Executive Session

None

Adjournment

Noting no further business, Ms. Miller made a motion, seconded by Ms. Salgado to adjourn the meeting at 4:50 p.m. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

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MOTIONS APPROVED: