

**City of Willowick
Lake County, Ohio
Minutes of the February 18, 2020 Safety Committee Meeting**

Date: February 18, 2020

Place: City Hall

Time: 6:30

Present Safety Committee Members: Chairman Phares, Ms. Bisbee, Mr. Malta

Also Present: Mayor Regovich, Councilwoman Antosh, Councilwoman Koudela, Council President Patton, Police Chief Brian Turner, Fire Chief Ron Zak, Service Director Rob Pauley.

Topic of Discussion: Responsible Dog Ownership

Chairman Phares began the discussion by reviewing the events in the Fall of 2019 involving Bob Pinkerman's dog being attacked. Chairman Phares mistakenly put down Sylvan Drive on the agenda instead of Bruce Drive. Bob Pinkerman collected 55 signatures from residents around his neighborhood. The same dog has been involved in four different incidences in the neighborhood. Two of the incidents were not reported soon enough and it is important to report these events as they are happening or right after. The other incident happened while the bite victim was on the dog owner's property which means it is not prosecutable.

An important point to remember is that when these events happen, you can't just go and take the dog. The owner is entitled to due process and that process comes from the ordinances.

Mayor Regovich asked who is responsible for designating a dog as dangerous. One of his biggest concerns is having residents afraid to walk down their own street. There has been a lot of legislation at the State level protecting dogs but maybe this is bad ownership. He would hate to punish the dog because of bad ownership or refusing to put up a good fence. If we don't know who is going to declare it, then we aren't quite sure what to do.

Chairman Phares asked if that is the Dog Warden's call and Mayor Regovich felt that it is the County's call. The Mayor feels that after two visits, on the third then something should be done. This is a public safety issue and it's part of being a good neighbor. They obviously do not want to take care of the dog. Is that something that can be added to the ordinance. You can't let your dog run around and bite other dogs and people and put fear in the people on the streets.

He doesn't want to leave it up to someone in the Police Department at 10:00 at night to have to determine whether this is a dangerous dog or not. They need to know that if this happens then they can go and cite them for this - so there is no gray area. And this is the hard part of any legislation.

Chairman Phares mentioned possibly simplifying the ordinances. Councilwoman Bisbee stated that there has to be a set number of incidents and then action is taken. Councilman Malta agreed that after two calls then a hefty fine should be put in place for the owner.

Mayor Regovich stated that on the other hand, substantial evidence is needed, whether it is video or what - it can't just be someone's word. Chief Turner stated that we need to be careful and not take away the officer's ability to use discretion. Introducing legislation that spells out a specific number of visits by the police could be problematic. If they go to a house multiple times but have not seen anything then those are unfounded complaints - that doesn't mean that the resident making the calls is a liar but that the officer has not had enough evidence to take any enforceable action. Just be careful how you introduce legislation like that. He also states that we have to make sure that there is something in the building codes that requires dog owners to secure their dogs on the premise so they can't get out.

Mayor Regovich stated that, as a committee, we can take the existing ordinances and look at other cities and see what adjustments to make and then take it to the Law Director.

Councilman Malta suggested contacting surrounding communities to see what has worked for them. Chairman Phares mentioned that many of the ordinances for dogs are identical as they have been copied from the ORC. Councilwoman Antosh brought up having the city cite or fine loose dogs on top of the County citations and fines also.

Mayor Regovich mentioned advocacy groups for dogs might have suggestions.

Topic of Discussion: Wild and Exotic Animals

Chairman Phares stated that there is a house on Beechwood that has a number of large snakes, possibly pythons. He looked at Mentor's ordinances and they have one prohibiting exotic animals. But once again these animals are personal property and you can't just march in and say 'get them out', the owner is entitled to due process. The City of Lakewood has a whole list of animals in their ordinances that are prohibited, spelled out by species

Councilwoman Antosh said she has gotten calls from residents wanting to know if they can have pigs. She stated that people want chickens and have even started raising foxes. She feels we need to get this under control. Chairman Phares stated that basically since it is not prohibited in the ordinances then it is allowed.

Mayor Regovich stated that the house on Beechwood was selling the snakes and was on Facebook but has since pulled that down. Councilman Malta said that the Law Director has contacted the Department of Agriculture in Columbus and it is still pending.

Mayor Regovich stated that venomous snakes are prohibited but these are not venomous.

Councilman Malta's fear was that there might have been young children in the home with the snakes.

Topic of Discussion: Rats

Davene Sarrocco-Smith from the Lake County General Health District gave a presentation on the rat situation in Willowick. Last year from April 9th to November 14th, the LCGHD received 77 complaints about rats.

Three neighboring properties per complaint for over 231 properties, the LCGHD inspected for potential harborage, feeding and water sources

On August 1st, she met with Mayor Regovich, Chief Housing and Zoning Inspector Sean Brennan and Service Director Rob Pauley to talk about what can be done moving forward - these included the Mayor reaching out to City Council, putting information on Facebook, information about what residents should and should not do to help the situation.

In October they discussed locations for baiting some of the sewers.

Her department started mapping the locations around the city when the problem got worse. She has a sewer map and she had an intern map the locations of the complaints and the houses they visited.. They also looked at the direction the storm drains were going and the locations of the catch basins.

At the August 2019 meeting, it was decided that the LCGHD would enact the initial orders and the Zoning Department would follow up. She sent the list to Sean Brennan.

On October 1, 2019, Rob Pauley reached out to her and told her that the nine catch basins that were discussed were going to be baited for two months. These were chosen based on the location and quantity of complaints - the mapping was used to decide specific locations.

On October 25, 2019, Rob Pauley reached out to her again to see if there were more catch basins that need to be baited. She sent him a list of 12 more catch basins that needed to be baited. Once again the mapping dictated these locations based on complaints.

In the meantime, if they found homes that met the criteria for having bait stations put on their property, then she would go and assess the situation and then reach out to him if the property met the criteria for baiting ie. no small children, no pets and the property and surrounding properties were doing what they were supposed to be doing - not feeding the birds, no solid waste etc. It was not just haphazardly done.

December 27th and January 3rd more complaints came in. She reached out to Sean Brennan and inquired as to whether the city was going to continue baiting individual properties. She has

gotten 13 complaints in 2020, she has inspected nine of them with four left to go to. On February 4th, Sean forwarded her request to Rob Pauley.

Anything the LCGHD can do to help, such as citizen meetings, they are willing to do.

She has been with the LCGHD for 25 years and this is the worst she has seen it in the city. This is due to hard, large quantity rains last summer and multiple flushes of the sanitary sewers. Her department just re-made the rat brochures and incorporated the checklist into the brochure.

They have added additional areas and re-baited certain areas that were baited in October. The four remaining clusters were also re-baited - that was another 15 catch basins.

Chairman Phares stated that there is information on the City website for the residents but perhaps more needs to be done in educating the residents - maybe having educational seminars.

Davene stated that any location - Library, Senior Center - can be used and she will help in any way she can. She stated that Mr. Brennan and Mr. Pauley have been wonderful to work with regarding this issue.

Chairman Phares stated that he feels that residents would likely attend these meetings, especially the ones that don't look at the website or come to Council meetings.

Mayor Regovich asked Davene if the houses that were feeding animals, had bird feeders overflowing, were they vigilant in cleaning them up? Davene stated that most are vigilant about cleaning up. There was a small minority - probably 10% - that had to be issued formal orders to clean up.

Councilman Malta stated that any calls he gets, Davene and her department are on the scene very quickly and he appreciates that. He inquired about other cities having this problem in other years and how long does it take to get rid of the rats - months, years?

Davene state that because we are tied into the Euclid system and we have outflows to the lake and we are at the end of the system, she couldn't really give an answer to that. She knows of other cities like New York and Las Vegas have never been able to get their rat problem under control. They just try to minimize it. Councilwoman Antosh asked if other cities in Lake County have this problem. Davene stated that yes they do but not to our severity. She credited Willowick with having excellent communication with their residents about the problem and getting information out to them.

Mayor Regovich asked what the next step is in the process - what can we do beyond baiting? Davene stated that education is the key and she lamented the fact that it did not get cold enough this winter and with the warm spells, residents go out and start feeding the birds and

wildlife and that draws them back out. All nine of the complaints for 2020 were next to a catch basin. The locations from last year had flow coming from three different directions. She understands that residents want to get out and feed the birds but she says that has to stop when the weather breaks. She doesn't want the city to throw around money on baiting. This is why they started mapping the complaints so the baiting could be concentrated in specific areas. She stated that besides baiting and more education for the residents, she doesn't have any other answers.

Councilwoman Antosh asked if she would be available on weekends to have meetings. Davene stated that her supervisor will allow her to attend meetings on weekends. Councilwoman Antosh stated that this would be a benefit to people who have kids in school and work during the week.

Chairman Phares stated that the city can definitely do more to educate the residents about what to do and not do.

Councilwoman Bisbee asked if there are certain areas that have been hit more than others. Mayor Regovich advised her to look at the map. He also stated that he has received calls from residents that they are finding dead rats which tells him that the bait is working. Councilwoman Antosh stated that she got a call from a resident on Clarmont Drive that her dog brought a dead rat into their house. Davene stated that some residents are calling her directly and some are calling Sean Brennan and he then forwards the calls to her.

Mayor Regovich stated that other cities have this problem but they are not talking about it. But we can't control it - we already have a 'do not feed' ordinance - but we need to know from residents where they are. There is a responsible way to do things. If you put up a bird feeder, you don't just fill it up and leave it. Maybe we should not do bird feeders for a while since they provide the food for rats. Councilwoman Antosh stated that a lot of people don't have a bird feeder with a tray under it so the food just goes to the ground. Davene stated that nonetheless, when the gardens came out last Spring, food was plentiful for rats. Someone sent her a picture of a rat eating a pumpkin in October. The earlier we can keep them in the sewers the better chance they will stay there.

Mayor Regovich stated that it did not get really cold until last week.

Councilman Malta asked how dangerous is the bait that is being used? Davene stated that the bait stations are contained units and the poison is meant to be consumed while in the bait station. The bait you buy at hardware stores is the type that the rat puts in their mouths and then runs around and drops all over. This concerns her for people's pets when they buy it over the counter.

Mayor Regovich suggested coming up with dates for the meetings before Spring arrives because that is when people start feeding the birds and cleaning up their yards.

Davene asked whether the city wanted to continue baiting. Chairman Phares asked who Davene's contact would be to get the dates setup. Mayor Regovich will be the contact. Discussion revolved around when to set up dates, evening, weekends etc. Mayor Regovich stated that Saturday morning might be the best.

Topic of Discussion: ATV's

There has been an issue with a resident riding an ATV on their property on Crescent Drive and causing problems. Councilwoman Antosh state there are ATV's being ridden on the street in the Oakdale and Vineyard areas also. She stated that this is not the gentleman who is plowing with his ATV. These are kids.

Chairman Phares stated that if these are the only incidents being reported maybe we shouldn't start changing ordinances yet.

Mayor Regovich stated that the problems are also the noise, the mess they make, kicking dirt through the fence and the same kid goes up and down the street. He addressed the Police Chief about whether these kids stop doing this when they grow up. Chief Turner stated that something that was introduced in the past was legislation that would require a certain amount of land space to operate an ATV. Right now it is legal to operate an ATV on your property.

Chairman Phares stated that that legislation has not gone anywhere and it would have to be discussed with the Law Director to move forward.

Topic of Discussion: Manry Parking issue

Chairman Phares stated that this issue came up last year and it deals with large amounts of cars parking on 300th street and other streets around Manry Park when a swim meet or baseball tournament takes place. He stated that former Councilman and Safety Committee Chairman Pintar discussed the issue with Recreation Director Julie Kless but no solution was decided on. Chairman Phares inquired as to how often this happens. Mayor Regovich stated that there are a couple baseball tournaments each year and every four or five years a big swim tournament. He also stated that if you get a city with a big following of fans and parents coming to Manry the issue becomes magnified. He mentioned a big swim meet last year on July 4th weekend and Kimble had to pick up trash that day and it's not something that can be foreseen. You don't know the size of teams until they get there or how many people are going to arrive.

Councilwoman Bisbee stated that the car show at Manry causes this problem also.

Mayor Regovich suggested that the Rec Department set up 'no parking' zones - perhaps on every other block - just to give through traffic space to get over when another car comes by. Since it is just a one day event he is not sure how practical this would be. This problem has been around since he played there.

Chairman Phares mentioned that a shuttle service was suggested coming from Willowick Middle School. This is actually done for the swim meets but people still want to park close by the park in the streets. Chairman Phares stated that this is something that happens when you have a park in the middle of a residential area. Mayor Regovich stated that in Willowick there is more than one way to get where you are going.

Councilwoman Antosh stated that these homeowners have to deal with the traffic and getting in and out of their driveways four or five times a year.

Councilwoman Koudela stated that she had a resident call her about the same traffic problems on 323rd Street near Roosevelt Park. One resident suggested that during signups have parking instructions spelled out of where to park. Mayor Regovich stated that that doesn't always work because where people are parking are legal parking spots. Chairman Phares asked whether something could be put in the Spring or Summer event flyers and Mayor Regovich stated that this is the tough part. Who is going to enforce the parking rules - league presidents perhaps. The Rec Board might have to look into providing signs etc.

Councilwoman Antosh asked who pays for the shuttle. Councilwoman Bisbee said the leagues pay for it. Mayor Regovich mentioned that adequate handicap parking becomes a problem also. Councilwoman Bisbee stated that people coming to Willowick for visiting teams don't know the area but know that they want to be close to the fields.

Councilwoman Antosh asked about the Fire Department viewpoint on this. Fire Chief Zak stated that as long as they are not parked on the fire hydrant side of the street it's not a problem for them.

Councilman Malta felt that the 'no parking' in every other block idea might work and Mayor Regovich suggested the Rec Board bringing this up at their next meeting. Councilwoman Bisbee stated that she can bring it up at the Rec Board meeting since she is the Council Liaison for them. The tournaments happen at the same time each year.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Phares". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.