

The West Branch Animal Control Commission met on November 12, 2019 at 6:30 P.M.

Roll Call: Members present were Alan Beyer, Leesa Johnson, Amy Kessler, Ashley Olson, and Red Provine. Also present were Tawni Toth and Ashley Carroll.

Minutes from the October meeting were read and approved.

Old Business:

TNR Program (Trap/Neuter/Release): Tawni and Ashley are present to discuss their interest in starting and participating in a TNR Program for feral cats in the area. The Commission as we left it last time wanted more information. (Numbers of animals, cost estimates, vaccinations, etc..)

Tawni: Preston brought language that possibly could be incorporated into our ordinances that would allow us to take some action for the feral cats that they know about. Hoping that then they could be told when they could begin. They would begin with what they have identified as Colony 2. This is a group of 6-8 cats on the corner of 5th and Main Streets. Dr. Samuelson was present the last time Tawni was here (August) and he projected cost was believed to be \$55 per cat. This cost was comparable to IHA. Their cost was \$55. This was for rabies, FVRCP, ear tipping, and altering.

Ashley: As far as budgeting besides traps it is just getting an idea of how many cats there are and what we could afford to do in a year. Want to know what the city/commission will handle. They reached out on Voices of West Branch Facebook page to see if there were other cats that they didn't know about. With what they know and what the people reached out with they have a potential count.

Tawni: Not counting the Maher situation, which they have decided that they weren't interested in trying to address right now. Their count now is 6-8 on Main Street, Ashley's query on Voices of West Branch generated 1 or 2 cats here and 1 or 2 cats there. They didn't get the sense that there was a dedicated caretaker or feeder and they weren't actually colonies. They were cats that had territories of 1 to 2 blocks and neighbors knew of them. There is question that they could be someone's cat.

Leesa: There used to be a lot of cats by West Branch Roofing.

Tawni: They are all gone now. Before Mr. Rushton died he had a colony that he took care of there for years. She noticed a cat and kittens there in 2018. There were only 2 cats that remained from his colony and someone that arrived late that had not been spayed and had kittens. All of those cats are gone now.

Amy: What about the Kum & Go cats?

Tawni: She knows nothing about those cats.

Ashley: She has seen a few in the storage shed area. One that it looked like it wasn't being cared for.

Amy: It is deceased now. It was found in one of the cars next door.

Tawni: They would project that if we gave them a cap that they probably wouldn't hit it. She would imagine between now and January 2020 that they might manage to get the 6-8 cats of the colony. (Colony 2) So, the costs would be much lower than the budget allowable.

Leesa: That's the fewest cats that we have had in the area for a long, long time.

Tawni: There are more. That's just a colony that they know of that someone is feeding regularly but not vetting or spaying and neutering. Someone can be relied upon to continue feeding them if they are TNR and the colony will not expand. Good place for a start/trial.

Al: In a typical TNR Program there is not testing and vaccinating.

Tawni: There is vaccinating and not testing.

Al: You cannot identify the cats for rabies because you can't put a collar on them.

Tawni: If they are ear tipped it means that they are vaccinated.

Amy: But it is only good for a year.

Tawni: There are scientific studies that show that the antibodies remain in the blood for 7-10 years. Most TNR's do not re-trap.

Al: The antibodies work after the second dose. It is state law.

Tawni: Well, they wouldn't be able to be re-trapped probably. They would have to ask Preston but she doesn't know that it's done.

Ashley: She doesn't know about re-trapping. Have there been cases of rabies in West Branch?

Al: Yes

Ashley: In cats?

Al: In a bat 2 years ago. Before that too but the most recent was in a bat. So if there were a bite it would mean that if the cat is identified that the brain would have to be tested.

Tawni: You mean that if there was a bite of a human by one of the feral cats. So that will fall to the caretaker that interacts with them. They (the cats) aren't going to be sighted or touched by other people I don't think.

Al: Just wondered if we wanted to include that vaccination or not. I don't think that cost is going to be a problem because there aren't that many cats. He is not opposed to vaccinating. But, do we want to include that?

Tawni: They are hoping to include rabies and FVRCP because that is the basic package at IHA and Johnson County is doing.

Red: Is that included in the \$55?

Tawni: The vaccines that Samuelson spoke about? The \$55 at IHA, yes.

Red: We need to check with Shawn to make sure what all is included in this fee.

Tawni: She can't remember what Shawn said. She knows that it was comparable to what IHA was charging.

Al: A single dose of FVRCP provides limited protection.

Red: But, we are still better than them not having anything.

Tawni: They are the same threat of becoming rabid and biting now as they would be after being vaccinated once. It's not an increased risk. It's logically lowered.

Al: I have no problem including it just understand that we don't get a lot of protection.

Tawni: Do you guys need anything else from us? They would really like to get started because winter is on the wing. She put straw in the Styrofoam houses where they are putting food out. The renter allowed her to put straw in the houses. She asked them how many cats that there were. It would be a good time to do it now that its winter. What do we need to for you to get started? What needs to happen to get started?

Al: We have to make a decision on who administers this. Does the city administer it? If so it has to be approved by the council. It has to go through 3 readings.

Tawni: What kind of timeline?

Red: What comes up with me is that Redmond (City Manager) had mentioned something about the attorney and 17.B. Has there been any follow up on that?

Al: If it is administered independently of the city, then we don't have to do that.

Amy: But, if you did fund raising?

Tawni: We don't have time to do that.

Al: I think that it's going to have to go through the council. Have to get on the agenda then there are 3 readings.

Tawni: Is it folded into the ordinance language or do the have to go to the council?

Al: It comes out of budget.

Tawni: It comes out of your budget? The animal control commission? So, do we need to go to the city council meeting? Or do you guys speak to them?

Al: Either/Or. What we will probably do is contact Mr. Olsen the attorney to see if we need to enter the language into the ordinance or if we need to enter it into the contract that we have. So we may not have to go through the ordinance readings.

Tawni: Do you have a projected timeline? Or, when that could happen?

Al: I can talk to Kevin Olsen and get back to you.

Ashley: Otherwise it would be February, probably after the 3 readings.

Al: 2 months.

Tawni: Because February is the next town council meeting?

Amy: They meet every 2 weeks. We wouldn't probably get on the agenda until December.

Leesa: So we would be looking at next year's budget actually.

Amy: If we have to do an ordinance. Now, if we just have to do a rewrite.

Al: If it's an ordinance through the city we are talking a couple of months.

Tawni: She thought that the ordinance would have to be in place already before they do anything. Even if we gave them permission.

Amy: 6-8 cats is doable. Better than 30-40.

Al: He will contact Kevin Olsen to see if we can do it under existing ordinance. Hw will contact Tawni. He comes once a week. Al will get back to her.

Tawni: They don't know anything about liability issues. Obviously, if someone who is trapping a cat gets bitten its their responsibility. They took the risk. To go get care etcetera. We would need to be sure that it is OK to trap.

Amy: If you would be covered under the city's blanket with insurance. We would have to check and make sure.

Tawni: She doesn't think that they would be. But, wants to make sure whatever permissions would be in place. And, who they cover. She might be involved with the 6-8. But, as things fo on other people would need to be involved. Especially, at Maher's because she has made them angry

Red: Is that lady going to allow you to catch those cats? Are they her cats?

Tawni: It's a strange situation. That isn't the same person that was there a year or so ago when she put the houses out. They always say that they are cats that just live here. They aren't really our cats but we feed them. They just throw their food out. There's no water. It's not a close caretaking situation. But, they have been doing it for years. Thank you for letting us talk about it.

Al: I will try to talk to them this week and get back to you. If we don't have to do the ordinance we can get it in place pretty fast. If we have to pass it it's is a pretty long process.

Tawni: That would be great. If we could get it done before Spring when kittens start being born.

Al: That's not very many cats and our budget can handle that.

Amy: That's doable. They need to find out the liability part of it too. Because the chance of them getting bit with feral cats it pretty high.

Red: You may get into an issue of permission. Especially, with the Maher situation.

Ashley: We should have it written

Red: Whether there are so many reports in a certain region of town. The Maher's is where the issue is. The 5-8 cats over here aren't bothering anything.

Al: If we could do it under the stray provision that we have we may not have to worry about the liability.

Red: That would be ideal.

Ashley: If we were to get the Maher's cats we would probably have to involve the Sheriff.

Al: Are those cats out there being taken care of?

Amy: They aren't vaccinated, not spayed. They are sick, they have runny, goopy eyes. They feed them.

Al: Feed and shelter? So they qualify as not abused?

Red: The worst part is that we know that they are having litters every year.

Amy: Where do you draw the line between abuse and neglect? Because they have food and shelter, then they are clear.

Leesa: It's not abuse or neglect. If there wasn't shelter and there wasn't water then it was very clear cut. They aren't their cats. Then they are at large. It's fine if they stay on their property it's when they step off of their property that's when there is a problem. There's probably not enough reports coming into the police.

Amy: There's been 3.

Leesa: That should be enough.

Red: With 3 you could say "How do you know that they are my cats?"

Ashley: It would almost be nice that the people that are calling would trap them on their property. Because they wouldn't even have to touch it they could just call the police.

Amy: My son has one tom cat sleeping on his screened in porch.

Red: Intentionally?

Amy: No, he gets up in the morning and there he is. Must be a tom cat as he is pretty beat up.

Red: Have him throw a few reports.

Amy: He has.

Leesa: Definitely a difficult situation up there.

Security at the Dog Park:

Al: Contacted 2 locksmiths. Waiting on them to get back to him.

Amy: Waiting on a quote from American Fence – the guys that put the fence in. Also, she talked to a company from California that has a touch pad and a card reader pad. Those sell for like \$3,000.

Al: I saw one on eBay. They are all hesitant about weather. Whether they are covered or not. That one was about \$500.

Al: I guess that we are going to table this.

Amy: The one had a cover that said that it is weather resistant. Whatever that means. There is another one that she saw for \$1,300.

Red: North Liberty is actively building a dog park. Maybe, we could reach out to them to see what the alternates are.

Amy: Iowa City just went to having their park staffed.

Al: It will be interesting with North Liberty to see how they would do that. Because they have voluntary licensing. They had like 40 people. Compared to West Branch which is miniscule we had 200.

Amy: Dog park registries are down. Because people don't feel like they have to pay. I hate to lock it up.

Leesa: We have to make it fair for everybody. I would still pursue quotes. Especially something more weather worthy and then email out the codes.

Al: We will table this until next month's meeting.

#### Ordinance:

Al: Remember when we changed the licensing to up to 3 years for rabies, last May or something? It finally got on the readings. It passed the first reading with no comments or questions. So, we presume that the next two will go the same. Looks like it is going to pass.

#### New Business:

Police Report: None

Question: Al was contacted on – In our city ordinance we do not have a limitation on the number of animals per household.

Leesa: Yes we do.

Amy: Yes we do.

Leesa: Yeah, there is a limit of 3 or 4 dogs.

Al: I remember that but, I couldn't find it

Leesa: The chief was the one who insisted on it because it was so much easier to regulate.

Al: I remember it too but I couldn't find it anywhere and he couldn't find it.

Amy: We did. I don't know if we did a cat number but, I know that we did a dog number.

Leesa: I'm not sure that if we were the ones that put in on here. I think that it was something that the police department pushed through.

Al: Do you know where it would be?

Leesa: Not at all. I don't think that we had a vote or any input on it. They just went ahead and put it in.

Al: Any ordinance

Leesa: It was something that the chief was pushing for because he was the head animal control officer.

Amy: I know that we had a discussion on that.

Al: A couple of things on it. Al was contacted – he couldn't find it. Was there any state law? He made a few phone calls and spoke with the Assistant State Veterinarian. There are no state laws. It is usually up to the county or city to regulate that. Unless they are breeding animals. Then you cannot have more than 4 without being declared a breeding facility and you get inspected and stuff. Let's table this also. Think it over. I remember the numbers but, I couldn't find it anywhere.

Red: It wouldn't be in the pamphlet?

Al: No

Amy: No

Leesa: It wasn't in the pamphlet?

Amy: I could have sworn that I saw it in an ordinance somewhere.

Leesa: I thought that I did too because it kind of stuck in my craw. But, I know how important it was to them and what a great job that they do.

Al: There is the second concern about rescues.

Amy: Yeah, because if you are a rescue you could have 6 dogs one month and then the next month you have 1.

Leesa: And what if you happen to have a litter? You are over the limit. There was a provision in there about litters and the time that you had.

Al: We will discuss next meeting.

Membership Vacancy: Red's term is up.

Al and Amy know of people that may be interested. These people are to go online or to the office to fill out a survey.

By tradition we do not have a December meeting.

Next meeting will be January 14, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.