

# Tighter Animal Control Ordinance Considered

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County moved closer toward tightening the reins on stray and nuisance-causing animals Monday night.

County commissioners discussed proposed amendments intended to put more bite into the county's animal control ordinance, but delayed action until a July 22 meeting.

The delay is to allow additional review by commissioners and members of the Sea Trail community who first lodged a request for a county-wide leash ordinance.

"It's a substantial improvement over the existing ordinance as we now understand it," commented Dick Goode, while Zane Winters said the changes should discourage violations and cut down on complaints received by the shelter.

The proposed amendments would in no way, said County Attorney David Clegg, "turn the animal control officers into dogcatchers."

Rather they would concentrate on individual problems by:

- Increasing the fees necessary to reclaim an impounded dog or cat to \$5 for a dog and \$2 for a cat on first offense; up to \$25 and \$8 respectively the second time the animal is reclaimed, to \$50 and \$25 respectively on subsequent violations. An added boarding fee of \$3 per day for dogs and \$1 per day for cats would be charged, as well as the cost of a

rabies vaccination and any overdue county taxes, where applicable.

Declaring it unlawful for an owner or caretaker to allow a dog or cat to interfere in any way with pedestrian or vehicular traffic in a public roadway, with violation punishable as a misdemeanor under existing state law.

•Declaring it unlawful for an owner or caretaker to allow a dog or cat to block or in any way impede or interfere with any person's use or enjoyment of their private property, with violation a misdemeanor under existing state law.

•Reiterating that animals whose owners are not found by third day and which are not claimed by the fifth day become the property of the shelter.

Clegg added that the changes would 1) insure the county has a witness if it takes a complaint to court, or else gives the county the substance it needs to ask the court to otherwise charge costs to the witness who fails to show; 2) give property rights of individuals greater respect than before.

It does not, however, provide additional remedies against barking dogs. Under the current ordinance an individual can file complaint based on trespass of their rights. Also unchanged is the fact that any untagged dog is subject to immediate pickup.

Health Director Thomas Blum said that with expansion of the animal

shelter and the addition of a staff person he does not anticipate the proposed ordinance adding to the staff's workload.

"We go out on every complaint now," he explained. "The difference is what happens then."

**Sideline Application**  
At County Attorney David Clegg's request, the board went on record against a permit issued by the state to the City of Wilmington and Biograde Systems to dispose of sludge (industrial waste) by spreading it on leased land in the northwestern portion of the county. Clegg said the county had no legal grounds on which to object.

"We can't do anything about it. I'm mad and about it and I want you to be mad about it too."

"It's not that I think it will be tremendously harmful to the environment of Brunswick County, by no means," he added. "It upsets me that they would do this on June 4 and simply tell us. I would like to have known this beforehand."

Trace elements of mercury, zinc, lead, copper and cadmium were to be within acceptable levels, Clegg advised.

**•Other Business**

In other business, commissioners:

•Adopted the 1985-86 budget ordinance, setting a 5 1/2-cents tax rate, and adopted an interim water budget with a provision allowing the county to pay about \$135,000 to the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority for operation and maintenance, and to accept the return from the authority of \$430,000, the unspent bond proceeds the county can now apply to other capital projects.

•Following a two-hour closed door session to discuss the positions, accepted her year-end report and reappointed Tax Collector Nancy Moore for a one-year term, with Chairman Chris Chappell voting in opposition, and reappointed Boyd Williamson to a two-year term by unanimous vote. Both terms are the minimum for the respective offices.

•Appointed Margie Dozier of Boiling Spring Lakes (District 4) to the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees and Clarke Munn of Leland (District 5) to the Brunswick Technical College Board of Trustees.

•Approved paving specifications from Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Director Bobby Jones for two tennis courts and one basketball court each for Smithville and Lockwood Folly Township Parks, with the addition of a 30-day deadline for completion of the work.

•Accepted the dedication of a water distribution system in Ocean Lakes Subdivision to the county water system.

•Voted to forward two road petitions, an S.R. 1 for Friendship Place, Four Winds subdivision, and a petition for S.R. 1182, to the N.C. Department of Transportation.

•Received a letter from the N.C. Department of Transportation indicating the state overturned the county's request to withdraw its concurrence in the abandonment of a road near the Pfizer plant at Southport.

•Heard complaints from Eileen Kellagher of Oak Island about a decision to include funding for the area chambers of commerce, four local festivals and the Resources Development Commission in the county budget.

•Heard a request from Grover Holden to resolve a 1975 tax bill that he says was taken care of that year. If he owes anything, said Holden, it's the difference between two tax bills issued that year on the same land. The tax office is to investigate again and report back.

•Delayed action on a request from Ocean Isle Beach to provide certain services to the town's extrajurisdictional area, on the recommendation of Planning Director John Harvey in consultation with County

Attorney David Clegg. The two decided Ocean Isle has not established such a district yet. When it does, the town and county will have a 60-day period in which to discuss what responsibilities each will assume, Harvey said. In the meantime the county will enforce its building code ordinance in the unincorporated area proposed for the town's extrajurisdictional zone.

•Set a meeting of the Solid Waste Committee for 10 a.m. Wednesday, July 3, at the complex.

•Set an "important" meeting of the Water Policy Committee at 6:30 p.m., Monday, July 8, at the request of County Engineer Dan Shields. The engineer said the county had been considering a delay in start-up of the water treatment plant at Malmo.

"But we're running into problems," he said. "We don't know if we're going to be able to do that." Heard a recommendation from County Manager Billy Carter to consider employing a planning architect to begin looking at the courtroom facility and other construction proposed at the county complex.

•Approved a memo explaining the county's plans regarding salary increases and merit pay for employees in this fiscal year.

•Amended the county's water line design contract with Jerry Lewis & Associates engineers by a \$15,000 increase to reflect the fee for the county's request that the firm prepare dual bid specifications for a 24-inch and a 20-inch trunk line in Segment 5. "I think we'll need larger than a 20-inch with the demand in that area," Shields said. "If the price is agreeable we'll probably go with the 24-inch." If the county does choose the larger line, the engineering firm will not receive the additional \$15,000.

•Directed Shields to consult with landfill, building and grounds and construction department heads to see if the county has the manpower and equipment to build its own Lockwood Folly Township convenience station at Oxpen Road. Of two bids received after a second advertisement for construction of a concrete wall and pad, one bidder had failed to have his license renewed and had committed a misdemeanor in bidding, the other bid, from Crowder Construction, was by Shield's estimation, "way out of line" at \$86,000 when it should be closer to about \$35,000.

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