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FRIDAY JUNE 20, 2008

Last modified: Thursday, June 19, 2008 12:00 PM CDT

Burley council drops plan to ban pit bulls

By Damon Hunzeker/Staff writer

Pit Bulls within Burley city limits can relax. They will not be sent into exile, at least not as a collective group. Individual dogs that misbehave will be judged accordingly, as they always have been.

During Tuesday night's Burley City Council meeting, members decided to forget about the idea of banning the ill-reputed dogs.

"I can't find that this bill, when you talk about breed-specific animals, can be enforced," Councilman Dennis Curtis said.

Even Councilman Vaughn Egan, who originally proposed the ordinance, voted in favor of the motion to table the proposal.

Burley already has an aggressive-dog law, which holds the owner of a vicious animal, regardless of breed, responsible for the dog's behavior. Egan conceded that the law is probably sufficient — provided it is enforced and that dog owners obtain licenses for their pets.

"The bottom line is irresponsible dog owners," Egan said.

Several dog owners from Burley offered their opinions.

Kathy Morris, who, along with her husband, owns two pit bulls, asked, "Why put another law on the books when we already have one that should take care of the problem?"

John Stokes said the proposal has put Burley in the news recently and that every dog lover in America knows about it. He then demonstrated, by showing a series of pictures, that pit pulls aren't easy to recognize and that many of their detractors mistake them for boxers or other breeds.

"In reality, they're just like any other dog," he said.

Javier Martinez, who has owned pit bulls for 25 years, adopted a more personal approach. "To put a ban on the breed itself is a pretty outlandish stereotype. It's like saying Latinos are more aggressive than whites."

Martinez owns two of the dogs.

"Do you have them licensed?" Egan asked.

"No. I'm actually going to get them licensed," Martinez said.

Only one resident, Gerald Egan, spoke in favor of the ban.

"Mr. Martinez is going to get them licensed because of all this," he said and argued that, because it makes owners more responsible, the law is necessary.

Stokes later pointed out that, if there were a ban on pit bulls, there wouldn't be a need to get them licensed.

"If dogs are trained to be aggressive, they're going to be aggressive," Curtis said and then suggested that the current law simply needs to be used — by more citizens complaining about unruly dogs — in order to "put more teeth in it."

While council members voted unanimously to table the idea of banning pit bulls, Vaughn Egan told people to get their dogs licensed and said, "I want to be on record as protecting the people of Burley."

In other matters

n The Council agreed to commit \$6,500 from next year's budget to partially fund a project by the Burley Area Action Team that would adorn Overland Avenue, from the Snake River to downtown, with permanent flowers.

"It seems we have a lot of things that die on the vine around here," Councilman Steve McGill said, but he voted to commit the funds, along with everyone else.

n Also adopted was an

ordinance that prevents large vehicles, such as semis, from parking on city streets. The exceptions are vehicles operated by the city, as

well as moving vans and trailers — provided they stay less than 72 hours and aren't obstructing traffic.

In the July 1 meeting, among other items, the City Council will consider paying Anna Wemets to fix her windshield, which was recently broken by a golf ball.

Wemets pulled it out of her purse Tuesday night, said that she's been trying to locate the owner, and insisted, "If the ball had been going any faster, it would be lodged in my brain right now."

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