

February 26, 2009

Council OKs new vicious dog ordinance

Man's best friend will be on a little longer leash in Westland following approval of some new ordinance language.

Last week, members of the city council unanimously agreed to take the bite out of current rules and approved a new ordinance that eliminates a breed-specific ban which required certain dogs considered "vicious and or dangerous" be restrained, penned, leashed and or muzzled, depending on the circumstances.

Following protests by a vocal group of supporters of pit bulls, the ordinance was altered so that only dogs reported to have bitten or attacked a person or another animal be subject to more stringent restrictions.

The ordinance becomes effective today, according to Police Chief James Ridener.

"We formerly required that pit bulls, or dogs deemed vicious or dangerous, be in a six-sided pen, that is one with walls and fencing across the top to prevent these dogs from jumping. Now, that has been relaxed until there has been a report of an attack," he said.

Ridener noted that the ordinance had required the top fencing because some of these dogs were able to jump a 4 or 6-foot fence.

"While other communities are becoming more restrictive regarding pit bulls and some other dog breeds, we're going the opposite way," he said.

After a report of any attack to police, the dog owner has the option of either having the animal tattooed or micro-chipped for identification, should it be out running loose or be apprehended by the animal control officer.

Ridener noted that the department does not have a scanner, estimated to cost about \$2,000, necessary to read the micro chips which are usually inserted in the dog's upper neck.

"It may also be quite difficult to get the scanner that close to a vicious dog to read the micro chip," he said.

The relaxed ordinance does not require the muzzling of the dog based on breed until a report of an attack. The seriousness of the attack is not addressed in the ordinance, Ridener said.

"Once an attack has been reported, we can then treat the animal as a vicious dog and a danger. I don't think that the best interests of the human factor were considered with this relaxation," the chief added.

Ridener stressed that his concern was for the safety of the public and that most dog owners, and owners of pit bulls, were responsible.

“Our problems come from irresponsible owners,” he said. “When we have a number of attacks and bites reported, and cases in court, that indicates there is a problem with some owners and that these dogs can create problems.”

<http://www.journalgroup.com/Westland/9290>

No Comments Posted

Start the Discussion

New! Talk about more Westland issues in **Journal Talk**.

Copyright © 2009 **Journal Newspapers**. All rights reserved.