



SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 15, 2024

Members: Don McDowell, Laura Streets, Richard Craig, George Cormier

Absent: Chris Palermo

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Carrie Johnson, Interim Town Manager; Judi Alberi, Executive Assistant; Todd Thomas, Health Officer; Jason Luneau, Chief of Police; Bruce Emerson, Animal Control Officer

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: Elizabeth Kourkoulis, Sophia Kourkoulis, Roy Ward, Cassie Baronette

10:00AM - CALL SELECTBOARD MEETING TO ORDER

Don McDowell called the Selectboard Meeting to order at 10:00AM at the Tegu Building.

10:01AM - NEW BUSINESS

1. DOG BITE HEARING

Re: Dog – German Shepherd - *Cyrus*

Owner/keeper of dog/domestic pet: Sophia Kourkoulis/Owner

Elizabeth Kourkoulis/Keeper of dog

Complainant/victim: Cassie Baronette

A. INTRODUCTION AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. **Warning/Rules of Procedure:** Don McDowell read the warning and offered Rules of Procedure to all in attendance.
2. **Complaint Initiation:** Cassie Baronette initiated the complaint regarding the dog/domestic pet bite pursuant to 20 V.S.A. §3546 received on April 10, 2024.
3. **Public Notice:** Public notice of the hearing was posted in or near the town clerk's office, Morristown Post Office, Morristown website, and given to each member of the Selectboard and Interim Town Manager.
4. **Notice to Owner/Keeper:** Sophia Kourkoulis, the owner/keeper of Cyrus (presumably the dog/domestic pet in question), was notified of the hearing via certified mail with return receipt requested sent on 4-11-24.
5. **Notice to Complainant/Victim:** Cassie Baronette, the complainant/victim, was also notified of the hearing via certified mail with return receipt requested sent on 4-11-24.
6. **Parties Present:** Cassie Baronette, Sophia Kourkoulis, Elizabeth Kourkoulis, Todd Thomas (a witness and Health Officer), and Officer Bruce Emerson (Animal Control Officer) were all present and sworn in affirmatively for the proceeding.

Don McDowell read the following statement from the victim:

B. WRITTEN COMPLAINT FROM VICTIM

On April 8, 2024, I was walking from my residence at 43 Maple St. towards Washington Highway and at the intersection of E. Olive St. a large German Shepherd busted through the screen door of the residence of 207 Maple St. I had to scoop up my puppy quickly off the ground and the German Shepherd attacked I have scratches down my stomach where the dog jumped on me in addition to multiple bite marks, top and bottom jaw on my left buttocks. There are no less than eight puncture, wounds and significant deep muscle bruising. It has made it consistently difficult to walk and sit and sleep. This has been reported to the Morristown Police Department as well as required a visit to the emergency department at Cogley Hospital. I am requesting for a vicious dog hearing for some serious actions to be taken place to stop this from happening to someone else. It is my understanding from the police if this is not the only incident that has happened with the dog. And I am quite certain had my puppy remained on the ground. She probably would've been killed and I can't even bear to think what would have happened if it had been a small child.

Thank you, Cassie Baronette

C. TESTIMONY

1. Cassie Baronette, Dog Bite Victim

1. Cassie Baronette, residing at 43 Maple Street, Morrisville, testified that she did not provoke Cyrus to leave his home or attack her.
2. On Monday, April 8th, while walking her 6-month-old puppy on the sidewalk near the Olive Street/Maple Street intersection, Cassie encountered Cyrus, a German Shepherd residing at 207 Maple Street.
3. Cassie mentioned that Cyrus frequently barks when she walks past his house on Maple Street.
4. On the day of the incident, Cassie heard a loud noise and realized Cyrus had busted through the door of his home and was approaching her.
5. Cassie scooped up her puppy, but Cyrus jumped up on her and scratched her torso. He then bit her left buttock 3 times.
6. Three individuals from 207 Maple Street ran out and called Cyrus back home, after which he retreated.
7. Cassie declined immediate assistance from Elizabeth Kourkoulis but requested contact information.
8. Cassie reported the attack to the Police Department and sought medical treatment for her injuries.
9. Cassie expressed physical soreness, fear of being outdoors, and extreme apprehension about walking her puppy on her own street.
10. Despite the incident, Cassie stated her love for dogs and her desire for peaceful enjoyment of her property.

2. Sophia Kourkoulis and Elizabeth Kourkoulis, owner/dog keeper of Cyrus

1. Elizabeth Kourkoulis, residing at 207 Maple Street, Morrisville, testimony corroborated Cassie Baronette's testimony, confirming that Cyrus was not provoked and did break through the

screen door to attack Cassie.

2. Elizabeth affirmed that Cyrus is up to date with his shots and recounted previous incidents where Cyrus had escaped the house and exhibited aggressive behavior.
3. Cyrus received training from a professional trainer at their home in 2021 to address behavioral issues.
4. Cyrus has access to a double-fenced backyard with a 4ft high fence and a stockade fence, where he has never broken out.
5. Described as a loving and protective dog, Cyrus is part of a family that includes neighbors and 11 children. He is known to be vocal when there is activity on the street or sidewalk.
6. Despite their love for Cyrus, the Kourkoulis family is taking the attack seriously and exploring rehoming options. Sophia Kourkoulis has initiated contact with individuals and posted on social media for assistance in rehoming Cyrus.
7. In response to questions, Sophia confirmed that Cyrus receives regular exercise, is neutered, and they are willing to comply with any recommendations from the town regarding his care and management.

Additional Inquiries:

1. George Cormier raised concerns about Cyrus's regular exercise and neutering status, as well as the plan for rehoming. Sophia assured that Cyrus receives regular walks, is neutered, and they are open to following the town's recommendations.
2. Laura Streets questioned whether Cyrus barks regularly from the backyard and if he chases cats or chickens. The Kourkoulis family clarified that the backyard does not have a view of the street, and Cyrus does not chase cats or chickens.

3. Officer Bruce Emerson, Animal Control Officer

1. Officer Emerson, having heard the testimonies presented during the hearing, concurred with the assessment that Cyrus was not provoked to attack Cassie Baronette.
2. Officer Emerson did not provide additional information beyond what had already been stated regarding the circumstances of the incident.
3. Officer Emerson acknowledged that based on the testimonies heard during the hearing, Cyrus has been involved in three incidents to his knowledge.

4. Todd Thomas, Health Officer/Witness

1. Todd Thomas, who was walking his dogs approximately 100 yards behind Cassie Baronette and her puppy at the time of the incident, provided his account of the events.
2. Todd did not witness Cyrus breaking out of his home but heard the screaming during the attack.
3. He confirmed seeing Cassie walking on the sidewalk and curb but not on the property of the Kourkoulis home.
4. Todd's observation led him to agree that Cyrus was not provoked in the incident.

D. DELIBERATIVE SESSION

Concluding testimony, Don McDowell stated that the Selectboard will go into private deliberative

session and will include Carrie Johnson, Interim Town Manager. All parties will be notified of the decision within 30 days by mail.

Motion made by Richard Craig to go into deliberative session. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried. (4/0)

Motion made by Richard Craig to come out of deliberative session at 11:46AM. Motion seconded by Laura Streets. Motion carried. (4/0)

10:55AM - OTHER BUSINESS

None

11:00AM - ADJOURN

Motion made by George Cormier to continue hearing until 4-22-24 at 5:30PM. Motion seconded by Laura Streets. Motion carried. (4/0)

Meeting adjourned at X11:47AM

Submitted and filed this 4-16-24

Judi Alberi, Scribe

Please note all minutes are in Draft form and are subject to approval at the next Selectboard meeting.