

TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN, MA
ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES



Date: February 10, 2011
Revised: February 15, 2011

Time: Meeting Convened 6:00pm
Meeting Adjourned 7:02pm

Place: Town Hall, Selectman's Room

Present:

Anna Fenton, Animal Control Officer, Town of Belchertown
John Wellman, Chair
Joan D'Ambrosia, Vice-Chair
Nicole Miner, Secretary
Sonya Hawkins
Irene Spring
A reporter from the Sentinel

Absent: there is an additional member named John (last name not provided) who was unable to attend the meeting.

Meeting came to order at 6:00pm.

Fenton left to make photocopies of the Committee Handbook and Open Meeting Law Guide for each member. During that time, miscellaneous questions were asked of the members by the reporter of the Sentinel in reference to the duties of the Board.

Fenton notified Miner that her appointment occurred at the Selectman's meeting on February 8, 2011 and that she would need to be sworn in by the clerk before having the ability to vote on any issues.

Fenton gave a general description of the Board's duties. Specifically oversight of dog barking complaints, viscous animal situations, and animals chasing after other pets, people and livestock. Complaints were more prevalent in the summer. Fenton stated that this Board would convene on an "as needed" basis. The Board must hold hearings within forty-eight (48) hours of a request from a complainant. The Chair is responsible for contacting the Town Clerk who will post a notice of meeting within this time frame on the door of the Town Hall. There was further general discussion by some of the members in reference to personal experiences they have had with their dogs, other dogs, and coyotes in the area.

Fenton requested that the Board introduce themselves.

Joan (Joanie) D'Ambrosia introduced herself. She has lived in Belchertown for seven years. She lost her dog to bone cancer in November 2010. This was a rescue dog. She is looking forward to rescuing another dog soon for adoption. Joan is employed by Mercy Hospital as an EMS Coordinator. This position works as the liaison between ambulance services and fire departments in the community and the hospital.

Deleted: works as a paramedic for Mercy Hospital.¶

Sonia Hawkins introduced herself. She has lived in Belchertown since 1970 and is the owner of a dog and a cat.

Irene Spring introduced herself. She has lived in Belchertown since August 2010 and is the owner of two horses, two dogs, two cats, and four birds. She is an R.N. in the area of home care. Several of her animals are rescued.

John Wellman introduced himself. He is retired from the Post Office. He has been breeding and showing pedigree cats for the past thirty years.

Nicole Miner introduced herself. She was born and raised in Belchertown. She purchased a home in October 2009. She is the owner of a one year old Brittany named Lucas and a seven year old tiger cat named Lizzie. Nicole was interested in joining the Board after the incident in town with the abused Brittany spaniel in 2010. She had her own dog DNA tested to see if there was a match in helping to find the owner of the abused animal. Nicole is a financial broker for a firm in Holyoke.

Anna Fenton introduced herself. She is the Animal Control Office for the Town and has been in this position for two years. She has lived in Belchertown for five years and owns a boarding kennel. Anna boards and breeds thoroughbred racehorses and rescues dogs.

Fenton moved for the Board to appoint a Chair. Spring motioned to appoint Wellman as Chair. D'Ambrosia seconded. All in favor. Unanimous. John Wellman appointed as Chair.

Fenton moved for the Board to appoint a Vice Chair. Spring motioned to appoint D'Ambrosia. Hawkins seconded. All in favor. Unanimous. Joan D'Ambrosia appointed as Vice Chair.

Fenton moved for the Board to appoint a Secretary. Spring motioned to appoint Miner. D'Ambrosia seconded. All in favor. Unanimous. Nicole Miner appointed as Secretary.

Fenton stated that there is currently one open spot for an additional member to the Board. She would prefer to appoint an individual who is a dog breeder, dog trainer, veterinarian, or non-pet owner, with emphasis on the individual being a non-pet owner.

Wellman asked Fenton if there were any animal bylaws that could be distributed to the group. Fenton said she would obtain copies from the Clerk's office and distribute them. Fenton mentioned that she believed the by laws could also be found on the Town website at www.Belchertown.org.

Fenton advised the Board that an individual can receive three warnings as the result of a complaint per calendar year. After the third warning Fenton can issue a restraint order. The individual has the right to contest any fines or fees and appeal before the Board. Fines and fees are also administered on a calendar year basis.

Spring inquired about residents who do not license their dogs. Fenton stated that the Town Clerk will know which residents who were registered in the past have failed to renew their licenses. If it is apparent that an individual owns an unlicensed dog, three warning notices will be given. If the license is still not obtained court proceedings will begin. This is not the responsibility of the Board.

There was general discussion regarding the need to fill the remaining open spot on the Board. D'Ambrosia acknowledged that they already had a quorum, however, it consisted of an even number of members. Wellman indicated that for now, one member would have to abstain until a seventh member was appointed. The reporter from the Sentinel indicated that he was writing an article for the upcoming edition and would discuss the need for a seventh member.

Miner stated that she would complete the minutes for the meeting and email them to Wellman. Miner confirmed with Wellman that he would forward the minutes to the Town Clerk and Selectman's office. Miner distributed a paper asking each member to write down their contact information. Wellman stated that the minutes would be reviewed at the start of the next meeting. Miner suggested a follow-up meeting to review and approve the minutes, review the bylaws and meet the absent member. Wellman indicated he would be in contact with the Board.

No subsequent meeting was scheduled. Spring motioned for meeting to adjourn. D'Ambrosia seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:02pm.

Prepared by Nicole Miner

Note: Miner was sworn in with the Town Clerk on February 11, 2011.