

## PUBLIC SAFETY

Tuesday, December 21, 2021 – 7:25 p.m.

via Zoom

Present: Members: Chairman Robinson, Vice Chairman Barnard, Alderman Witte, Alderman Panus, Alderman Gonzalez, Alderman Crawford, and Alderman Anastasia. Others: Mayor William Aiello; Jack Hart, City Attorney; Lens Martial, City Auditor; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Ron Richardson, Police Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

### 1. Roll Call

Alderman Robinson called the meeting to order at 7:25 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

### 2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, November 16, 2021)

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2021 committee meeting was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Crawford. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

### 3. Unfinished Business

None

### 4. New Referrals for Consideration

#### a. Full-Time Animal Control Officer

Alderman Crawford explained that he and Mayor Aiello have had numerous conversations, and that the City needs an Animal Control Officer. He explained that he has heard that under our Charter we are required to have one, and in the past we have contracted this service with the SPCA. He explained that he would like the Council to consider a full-time Animal Control Officer.

Alderman Crawford explained that an Animal Control Officer would investigate animal cruelty cases and provide testimony in court, manage the feral cat program, catch stray dogs, enforce existing laws regarding licensing and vaccinations, manage the growing deer population in the City, relocate nuisance animals like skunks, raccoons, and possums, capture dangerous or rabid animals, and patrol dog parks to ensure proper usage of the facilities and to enforce facility rules. He explained that the median annual salary for a position such as this is \$36,300. The position requires a knowledge about a wide variety of animal species, animal first aid, animal

care and nutrition, humane capture tools and techniques, animal behavior, public relations, cruelty investigation procedures, and law enforcement. Prior experience and possible certification would aid in capturing and impounding dangerous or stray animals, investigating cases of animal cruelty, enforcing licensing laws and other state, county, and city laws and regulations that are applicable to the animal control program, providing expert testimony in court cases, rescuing trapped animals, writing incident reports, and providing humane care to animals under their supervision.

Alderman Crawford explained that the City provides a certain quality of life. He explained that he understands that we pay high taxes, but we provide many services for our community and our residents. He explained that when we increase services, we don't just do it without being proactive and ensuring that we have the necessary service in place to make sure that it's not a zoo, and that we have rules and procedures in place as well as someone to enforce the rules and procedures. He explained that there are 431 dog licenses in the City, which generates an average annual revenue of \$7,000. He explained that it is not the easiest process to register your dog, and it is a hassle that has gone largely unenforced. He explained that based on the census, there are 6,000 households in the City and given that 60% of households in the U.S. have at least one dog, there are probably close to 3,000 to 4,000 dogs in the City. Only 10% of dogs are registered.

Alderman Crawford explained that if we had a body to enforce this law, they would pay for themselves. He explained that if all dogs in the City were licensed it would generate \$55,000 to \$74,000 per year in revenue. He explained that the Animal Control Officer could also provide testimony in court, and the feral cat population would benefit from someone managing the TNVR program. He explained that he reached out to the Police Chief, and the SPCA wanted to end the contract and wanted out of the cat business.

Alderman Crawford explained that there were approximately 493 animal or dog complaints to the Olean Police Department in the past year. He explained that this is a lot of hours for a City that already has a short-staffed Police Department. He explained that the job of the animal control officer would be to enforce the laws that are already on the books. He proposes that we ask for something be included in this year's budget for this position.

Alderman Anastasia asked if there is a portion of the dog license revenue that goes to New York State. Alderman Crawford explained that it is around \$3 per license, so \$8,000 to \$10,000 would go to New York State. Alderman Anastasia asked what the Dog Control Officer would do if they catch stray cats. Mayor Aiello explained that the plan would be to get the position established and work with organizations that help with the adoption of cats. He explained that we would take animals to different people who would help with the adoption of them.

Mayor Aiello explained that we keep going with the feral cat population in terms of spaying and neutering, and then returning them to their colonies. He explained that we were on a good track until COVID hit in reducing the population. He explained that we would probably build a relationship with different organizations that could help with the cat problem. Alderman Crawford explained that the cat problem is crazy right now because there is no consistency at the helm. He explained that an Animal Control Officer would help with this. The TNVR program works if we are consistent at it.

Alderman Witte explained that the City had a nightmare situation with the last Animal Control Officer position. She asked who would oversee the position, and what other ways we will get out there to make sure dogs are licensed. Alderman Crawford explained that the Mayor, Council, and City Attorney need to work together on different strategies. He explained that something as simple as walking up and down the street to see if dogs are registered and writing tickets when they aren't could help. He explained that a dog census could be done as well and residents could be notified that they need to get their dogs registered. He explained that when an Officer is in place, we can work on these programs. He explained that his first thought is that they will be supervised by the Police Department. He explained that if we are not using the SPCA to the fullest extent, we will see a savings there too.

Alderman Panus explained that he knows that the County is interested in us doing this. Alderman Robinson explained that he thinks that a lot of the logistics and answers that we are looking for are down the road. He explained that for now, this is something that we need and something that is overdue. People don't register their dogs because the law is not enforced. He explained that we need to start enforcing these things. Hopefully this can be added to the budget next year, and he invites the County to please help out so we can get this going.

Alderman Crawford explained that if this is passed, a note could even be sent out with water bills regarding registration requirements. He explained that we have to set the fine where we incentivize people to register their dogs for \$20 instead of paying a \$200 fine. He explained that he would be very interested in seeing how many people would start to register their dogs. He explained that he would also like to make the registration process easier than it is now. He explained that he is interested in seeing what other communities do. He wants to get a general feel of the Council, Police Chief, and Mayor.

## 5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

## 6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.