

HAMPTON VA

Animal Control Briefing

**City Council
July 12, 2017**



Background

- Last month a combination of the staff made a presentation on:
Whether council should amend our leash law to make it more strict?

June's Presentation


- The June Council Presentation covered the following:
 - Council's options
 - Current legal status and legal consequences of options
 - Public Input
 - Animal Control Advisory Committee's and Staff's recommendations

Today's Presentation

- Summarize Options
- Legal Summary
- Public Input Summary
- Animal Control Advisory Committee's and Staff's Recommendations and Rationales
- Answers to questions presented by Council at June's Presentation

(June's presentation is available on the council website for those who are interested)


Leash Law Options

- Option 1 – Make no changes to current law (Maintain the Status Quo)
 - Option 2 – Enact a leash law with no exceptions
 - Option 3 – Enact a leash law with exceptions for trained dogs with permits
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Legal Summary

- **Strict Leash Law would require:**
 - Redefining (limiting) the means of control for dogs
 - Redefining certain terms in the law
 - Enforcement challenges
- **Leash Law with an exception:**
 - All of the above
 - Establish a permitting process
 - Increased administrative costs

Online polling

- Conducted Jan. 7-24, 2017
 - 680 respondents from Hampton
 - Non-residents excluded from these results
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Public Input Summary

- Is there a problem with dogs being unleashed?
 - 55% “YES” and 43% “NO” (2% N/A)
 - Should dogs be required to be on leash?
 - 76% “YES” and 23% “NO” (1% N/A)
 - Should there be an exception for trained dogs
 - 34% “YES” and 59% “NO” (7% N/A)
 - Should the exception require a permit
 - 28% “YES” and 35% “NO” (37% N/A)
- *There were comments for and against. The comments also addressed several other topics people viewed as issues

Animal Control Advisory Committee and Staff's Recommendations

- Animal Control Advisory Committee Recommendation:
 - Option 2 – Enact a leash law with no exceptions
- Staff's Recommendation:
 - Option 1 – Maintain the status quo

Animal Control Advisory Committee's Rationale

- All dogs should be on leash when not on the owner's property or in designated dog parks
- Dogs are unpredictable even if well trained
- Dog owners should be able to walk their dogs without fear of attack from dogs not on leash
- Citizens should be comfortable and not have to fear dogs walking off leash
- Provide consistent rules for dog owners
- Protects the dogs from harm

Staff's Rationale

- Current law provides remedies to punish owners of dogs that attack
- Have not had significant issues with dogs under voice command (issues have been with dogs at large and strays which are addressed under current ordinance)
- Proposed changes will increase costs and be difficult to enforce
- Will not solve the current problems
- Will provide additional strain on animal control resources with limited return on investment

Questions from Council

- What are other jurisdictions doing?
- What are the dog attack statistics from 2014 through 2016?
- What are the dog attack statistics from 2014 through 2016 for dog parks?

Jurisdictions & Leash Laws

Jurisdiction	Strict	Control Method
Newport News	No	leash, cord or chain, or voice control
Virginia Beach	Yes	leash or lead or other means of restraint
Chesapeake	Yes	fence, chain or leash
Norfolk	Yes	chain, cord or leash
Portsmouth	No	fence, chain, leash or the owner's or custodian's physical presence
Suffolk	Yes	leash or lead or other means of restraint

Dog Attacks 2014-2016

Year	Improper Containment / Stray	On Own Property Provoked	Leash	Intentionally Loose	Voice Control	Total
2016	54	27	6	2	1	90
2015	38	21	7	2	0	68
2014	28	2	6	5	1	42

Dog Park Attacks 2014 - 2016

Year	Number of Attacks
2014	3
2015	3
2016	2

Animal Control Advisory Committee and Staff's Recommendations

- Animal Control Advisory Committee Recommendation:
 - Option 2 – Enact a leash law with no exceptions
- Staff's Recommendation:
 - Option 1 – Maintain the status quo

Questions