

Morgan County Commission
Meeting Minutes
Animal Cruelty Workshop Meeting, October 29, 2009

Members Present: Thomas Swaim, Brenda Hutchinson and Stacy Dugan

Others Present: Sheriff of Morgan County, Vince Shambaugh, Prosecuting Attorney, Debra McLaughlin, Morgan County Animal Control Officer, Laura Klein, West Virginia State Police Officer, Dave Heil and Morgan County Humane Officer, Seth Place

The workshop meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Commissioner Hutchinson explained that the purpose of the workshop meeting is to find ways to enforce the laws against animal cruelty in Morgan County. Animal Control Officer, Laura Klein, explained that since 2007, there have been six charges of animal abuse in Morgan County, four charges have been prosecuted and two charges are still pending. Ms. Klein explained that animal abuse cases go to Magistrate Court. Ms. Klein explained that she writes tickets for not having a dog on a leash, no tags and no rabies shots.

Prosecuting Attorney, Debra McLaughlin explained that if she prosecutes someone for animal abuse, the individual cannot have an animal for five years. Ms. Klein stated that seized animals go to Dr. Townsend, and he is willing to be a witness at the trial.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked the Sheriff and Animal Control Officer if they were still in favor of the anti-tethering ordinance, Ms. Klein stated that the people of Morgan County do not understand the basic needs of having a dog; Sheriff Shambaugh stated that he is a supporter of the ordinance if it is for dogs and does not include farm animals or livestock. Sheriff Shambaugh and Ms. Klein stated that it is very important to get the residents of Morgan County to understand the basic needs of a dog. Ms. Klein stated that she will provide informative articles to the public explaining the responsibilities of owning a dog.

Commissioner Swaim requested that Animal Control Officer, Laura Klein provide a monthly report or log to the County Commission with the number of citations and calls she has responded to each month. Ms. Klein agreed to start providing the report the first week of each month.

Commissioner Swaim also stated that the WV Code states that the County Commission pay .50 for each dog picked up by Animal Control, and the County Commission agreed to start paying the fee.

Prosecuting Attorney, Debra McLaughlin, explained that if the Commission would like to create an anti-tethering ordinance, the ordinance should state specific pen sizes and lengths of chains.

Commissioner Dugan read aloud some pen sizes that she had obtained from the AKC website.

Commissioner Hutchinson stated that she is in favor of an educational program to educate the citizens and to also create an ordinance. Commissioner Hutchinson stated that an ordinance with specific tethering lengths and pen sizes will make it easier for the Animal Control Officer to write citations.

Commissioner Swaim stated that he thought there were a lot of abuse cases in Morgan County, but he has learned in this meeting there is not, and he feels much better about the abuse issue.

Commissioner Hutchinson suggested the Commission move forward with a draft of the educational information with research to create an ordinance. The Commission would like to have a workshop meeting to create an ordinance specifying lengths of chains and sizes of outdoor pens.

The Commission set a workshop meeting for December 10, 2010 @ 1:30 p.m. to discuss the tethering lengths, time limits on a chain and the appropriate size of pens.

Commissioner Swaim stated that although he is not in favor of an ordinance, he is not opposed to having a workshop meeting to discuss the lengths of chains and the appropriate size of pens.

The Commission ended the workshop meeting at 2:15 p.m. and then discussed Administrative issues.

Administrative

Tri County Legislative Summit Meeting

All three Commissioners will attend the Tri County Legislative Summit meeting that will take place at the Woods Resort in Hedgesville, WV on November 3, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.

The Commissioners will take a list of concerns to be presented at the meeting.

West Virginia Counties Risk Pool Workers' Compensation Coverage

The Commission received a letter from the West Virginia Counties Risk Pool explaining that the West Virginia Legislature made some changes in state law that open up the opportunity for all public entities, including County Commissions and county-related entities to obtain workers' compensation coverage outside of Brickstreet as of July 1, 2010. The West Virginia Counties Risk Pool is moving forward with a feasibility study to determine the opportunity of providing workers' compensation coverage within the pool. On a Stacy Dugan/Thomas Swaim motion, the County Commission approved the request on October 29, 2009 for specific use by the West Virginia Counties Risk Pool in their Worker's Compensation feasibility study. This motion carried.

Adjournment

On a Stacy Dugan/Brenda Hutchinson motion, the County Commission adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m. This motion carried.