

CITY OF RUTLAND, VERMONT
Board of Animal Control Minutes
Thursday, August 24, 2023

Members present; Sean Sargeant, Peg Flory, Carrie Savage, Luther Brown and Joe Barbagallo. Also present, Animal Control Officer Jones, Clerk Kapusta, and Attorney LaChance.

Also in attendance: Ren Vanwagner, Donna Young, Leslie Mack, Sarah Gordon, Penny Burch, and Linda Sokolowski.

Chair Sargeant called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and noted that the Board was asked to hear a vicious dog complaint from Animal Control Officer (ACO) Jones, who investigated an incident that occurred on June 1, 2023, with a dog named Brodie and owned by Ren Vanwagner (respondent), and Donna Young (complainant). Chair Sargeant introduced all members and participants present. Chair Sargeant asked if there were any conflicts or ex-parte communications from the Board. Seeing none, Chair Sargeant asked Clerk Kapusta to swear in anyone giving testimony or evidence. ACO Jones, Ms. VanWagner, Ms. Young, Leslie Mack, Sarah Gordon, Penny Burch and Linda Sokolowski.

ACO Jones read the Vicious Dog Complaint form and explained that there was a bite and injury, but it is not clear if it was due to provocation or another reason for this bite. There are conflicting stories about what happened on June 1, 2023. ACO Jones presented evidence including sworn statements, medical records, pictures, and police reports. ACO Jones stated that Brodie is a service animal for Ms. Vanwagner. ACO Jones presented his evidence and reviewed the documents prior to submitting them to the Chair. Chair /sergeant noted the documents and placed them into evidence. There was a video of the incident however IT at the Police Department were unable to view it.

Ms. Young was asked to comment on the incident and gave verbal testimony of the incident. Ms. Young was working at Price Chopper at the self-checkout when Ms. Vanwagner, who is in an electric wheelchair asked Ms. Young to get the leash of her dog, Brodie, that had got caught under one of the wheels of the wheelchair. When Ms. Young bent down to grab the leash, Brodie lunged at Ms. Young and bit her in the hand. Ms. Vanwagner was able to get control of Brodie. Ms. Young was bleeding pretty bad and ended up going to Urgent Care for her injury. While at Urgent Care the wound on her hand was soaked and she was told that dog bites heal from the inside out. It took about three (3) weeks for the wound to heal. Ms. Young stated that she did not provoke Brodie and she has never approached the dog because he is on duty as a service animal. Ms. Young states that she does not want anything done to the dog.

There was a brief Q & A with Ms. Young and the Board.

Ms. Vanwagner was asked to comment on the incident and gave verbal testimony of the incident. Ms. Vanwagner explained that she was in the self-check-out and told Ms. Young that the leash is under my wheel, "Please do not get it." She further explained that she wasn't sure if Ms. Young heard her correctly as Ms. Young bent behind her wheelchair and Brodie bit Ms. Young's hand. Ms. Vanwagner states that she cannot muzzle the dog as she has been mugged before and Brodie protects her. Brodie is on a nine (9) foot leash.

There was a brief Q & A with Ms. Vanwagner and the Board.

Chair Sargeant asked ACO Jones to provide, at the continuation of this meeting, any police reports about a man jumping out of the bushes at Ms. Vanwagner and security video from Price Chopper showing the attack.

With no further questions from the Board, the Board concluded the open meeting session at 6:20 PM and the Board adjourned until Thursday, August 31, 2023 at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Tracy L. Kapusta
Clerk of the Board of Animal Control