

CITY OF RUTLAND, VERMONT
Board of Animal Control Minutes
Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Members present: Police Commissioner Pat Brougham, Peg Flory, Tony Romeo, and Michael Talbott. Also present, ACO Noah Sweeney and City Clerk Kapusta. Alex Adams was absent.

Chair Brougham called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and noted that the Board was asked to hear a Concerning Canine Complaints from ACO Sweeney, who investigated the incident that occurred on November 4, 2025. Chair Brougham asked if there were any conflicts or ex-parte communications from the Board. Seeing none, Chair Brougham asked City Clerk Kapusta to swear in anyone giving testimony or evidence. Philip Stephan and John Covell were sworn in.

ACO Sweeney was assigned an animal problem on November 4, 2025, located at 61 School Street for a report of a dog bite. A volunteer worker, Philip Stephan, who delivers meals from Trio Community Meals, was bitten on the hand by a dog owned by John Covell. Trio Community Meals delivers meals to Mr. Covell Monday through Friday at about the same time every day. While meeting with Mr. Covell, ACO Sweeney observed a dog named Stella, a 9-month-old Pit-bull Terrier, who is up to date on vaccinations and is registered with the City, was on a 15-foot lead tied to the house. Mr. Covell advised that he was in the house when the attack occurred and that Mr. Stephan is the only one who delivers meals in his car. Mr. Covell provided a towel to Mr. Stephan to stop the bleeding. Mr. Stephan ended up going to the hospital for treatment. ACO Sweeney believed this attack to be unprovoked as Mr. Covell receives meals on a daily basis about the same time every day by different drivers with no issues.

Chair Brougham then asked the Board if they had any questions about ACO Sweeney's testimony. There were no questions from the Board.

Chair Brougham then asked Philip Stephan to explain what happened.

Philip Stephens advised that when he delivers meals to Mr. Covell he normally drives his vehicle into the driveway and honks the horn for Mr. Covell to come out and get his meal. When Mr. Stephan arrived on November 4th there was a car blocking access to the driveway. Mr. Stephan honked the horn to get Mr. Covell's attention, but he never came out. Mr. Stephan exited his vehicle and approached the apartment of Mr. Covell where he saw a dog tied up that had quite a long chain in length to move. The dog Stella attacked Mr. Stephan by biting his hand. Mr. Covell came out quickly after the attack, restrained the dog and gave a towel to Mr. Stephan to stop the bleeding. Mr. Covell did not believe that the dog bit Mr. Stephan and thought that the injury was from falling on the ground. Mr. Stephan went to the hospital for treatment.

Chair Brougham then asked the Board if they had any questions about Mr. Stephan's testimony. There were a couple of questions from the Board.

Chair Brougham then asked John Covell to explain what happened.

John Covell advised that he was inside the apartment when Mr. Covell came to deliver his meal and he came out after the attack occurred. Mr. Covell advised that Mr. Stephan is the only one who delivers meals from his car.

Chair Brougham then asked the Board if they had any questions about Mr. Covell's testimony. There were a couple of questions from the Board.

With no further questions from the Board the open hearing concluded at 5:50 PM.

At 5:50 PM the Board entered the deliberative session.

At 5:58 PM a motion was made and seconded to come out of deliberative session and to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy L. Kapusta
Clerk of the Board of Animal Control