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Vet weighs in on city dog pound quality



(from left) Patty Pastore, Dr. Ronald Spink and Deborah Livingston are among the people who want the city of Cheifland to upgrade its animal impound facilities. Livingston said Ohio has higher pet ownership requirement standards than Florida. She and others want to see mandatory licensing by local governments, where owners would have to not only license animals annually, but if a pet dies, the person would be required to show the government proof of that death so the former owner could opt out of the annual license fees.

Story and Photo By Jeff M. Hardison © May 12, 2017 at 4:37 p.m.

CHIEFLAND -- Dr. Ronald Spink, DVM, of The Family Pet Vet of Chiefland was among the people speaking with the City Commission on Monday night (May 8) about the impound area for loose, unwanted dogs and cats in Chiefland.

City Manager Mary Ellzey said that for the past 20-plus years the city has kept these strays in a holding facility. When no owner shows up to claim the dogs and cats, they are euthanized.

The city code calls for holding them five to seven days, she said. Usually, they are held longer. The dogs and cats are given food and water, and their pens are cleaned.

Patty Pastore who works at one of the car parts stores in the city has shown up to the past few meetings to express her opinion that the conditions at the dog pound are not good enough.

At one point, Pastore claimed that a city worker told her the animals are not tended to on Saturday and Sunday. City Commissioner Chris Jones said she has been misinformed.

Ellzey said there is a part-time worker who cares for the animals on Fridays and Saturdays, and there are full-time workers who tend to the strays' needs on Mondays through Thursdays.

Although HardisonInk.com now provides a free link for people to see stray animals in the Chiefland pound, Pastore said people don't go on the Internet "especially the old people."

The most recent set of complainers said they felt the City of Chiefland should require all pet owners in the city limits to buy separate dog and cat tags to show their pets are vaccinated against rabies.

Deborah Livingston said she moved to Chiefland from Ohio a year and a half ago. In Ohio, all

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dogs must have tags, she said.

City Commissioner Teresa Barron said the city does not have enough money to do what the complainers want as far as building a new dog pound and starting a city dog license program and an adoption program for loose, abandoned dogs and cats.

She suggested that this group create a non-profit organization, and then when the city catches loose dogs and cats, the city will take the animals to them and they can adopt the strays to new owners.

When Pastore told Barron that the city has the property, Dr. Spink said the group could lease the property from the city.

Dr. Spink said he has looked at and cared for several dogs at the pound, at the request of city workers, and he has never charged for the care. City Manager Ellzey thanked the doctor for his service.

Dr. Spink strayed from the topic of the dog pound when he said he spoke to one city employee who gives his hunting dogs a tablespoon of bleach once a month for heartworm protection. The doctor said this is not something he would recommend. He shared that and other stories to demonstrate there are different perspectives on levels of care for pets.

Dr. Spink said he is not condemning people who have different opinions than he has in regard to the care of dogs and cats.

Chiefland could choose to go “first class and be a model for the Tri-County Area,” he said. And as for funding, the city might find donors in unlikely places. When Dr. Spink was in Grand Rapids, Mich., he was on the ASPCA with Gerald Ford, and they built an animal shelter.

He said the University of Florida will help the city design, coordinate and operate a shelter.

The approach to overcoming obstacles in regard to stray animal care, he said, can determine the level of success.

Ellzey reminded the veterinarian that the city has a holding facility.

Dr. Spink said if that is all the city wants, then that is what it will have. If the city wants something more, then it can move forward toward that.

Livingston again spoke. She was critical of her new home, having moved to Florida a year and a half ago from Ohio.

“I have never seen people treat dogs and cats so poorly,” Livingston said, “and hunters calling them (hunting dogs) ‘tools.’ OK. You want to think of it like a tool. Well a tool should be taken care of. You don’t put your tools away dirty. You put your tools away clean.”

Livingston said the Chiefland holding facility is what people call Florida – “A waiting room for heaven.”

“The dogs you are holding there are just waiting to die,” Livingston said.

City Commissioner Jones told Livingston that he takes offense at her saying the facility is not good enough. Within a few minutes, he learned that she had never visited the city dog pound.

Barron suggested that rather than the city taking on the upgrades sought by this group, the group could create a place for the city to take the stray dogs and cats, and the group could adopt them to people who want dogs and cats from the Chiefland animal pound.

If the group comes up with a plan and funding, then it can build the structure in the industrial park on property the city will lease to it, Barron said, and the city will bring dogs and cats for the group to adopt out. There would be a revision clause, though, where if the group disbands, the building reverts to the city’s possession.

There was no action to revise the current dog pound procedures in the city at that meeting on Monday.