

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

May 22, 2013

6:00 P.M.

Manager's Conference Room

Present: Leo Brummel, Dr. Kevin McGuigan, Darlene Hanley, Maureen Adams, Dr. Anthony Brickman, Mary Baird, Dr. David Maffei, Council Liaison, Carol Chamberlain, Health Officer.

Absent: Liang Schweizer

Guests: Eve Connelly, Kevin Connelly, Tim Steinbeiser, James Strycharz, Christine Buck, Animal Control Officer

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Feral Cat Issue – Christine Buck provided a review of the current municipal ordinances related to cats and the licensing of cats.

Kevin Connelly, Colonial Lake Drive resident said he has experienced a problem with feral cats for several years. In the past 2 ½ years there have been 45-50 cats trapped on his property. He feels the problem exists due to residents in the neighborhood feeding the animals. People put food outside for feral cats and as a result skunks and other wildlife come into the yards to eat the food. There are always 4-5 cats roaming around the homes. The cats create a nuisance by defecating in flower beds and digging in gardens.

Eve Connelly stated the cats have been creating problems for years. She stated the neighbors have also experienced problems with the cats. Mrs. Connelly expressed concern about rabies with the feral cats and the financial cost to the township when picking up the cats and removing them from the neighborhood.

Jim Strycharz, Alcazar Avenue, stated he is unable to enjoy his gardens because the cats damage his gardens. He has called Chris Buck to pick up the cats previously. When he traps the cats, Chris Buck picks the cats up and takes them to SAVE. The owner redeems the cats and the cats are back in his gardens, digging at mulch in a few days. He feels he can't eat the vegetables in his garden because the cats have been using the gardens as a bathroom. Jim Strycharz said he is very frustrated with the situation and would like there to be some manner to address this through fines and summonses.

Tim Steinbeiser lives on Manitee Avenue. He said he is also frustrated with the feral cats in the neighborhood. Since 1994 he has been a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Wild birds have been his primary type of animals he has worked with in previous years. Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of feral cats in the area. These cats attack the birds in his yard. It has become such a concern he has stopped providing rehabilitation services.

A copy of a proposed amendment to the nuisance ordinance was distributed to the Board. This amendment as written states

(9) It shall be unlawful for any person to cause, allow, suffer or permit any dogs, cats, horses, cattle, swine, goats or any other animals or any poultry of any kind owned, fed, kept, harbored or maintained by them to trespass upon either private or public property or to damage or destroy the property of any person other than its owner or caretaker, including but not limited to getting into or turning over garbage containers, or damage gardens, flowers, plants or other real or personal property or leaving fecal material on the property of another person or harms lawful users or occupants thereof.

After this discussion, Dr. McGuigan said the Board recognizes the health issues and concerns of the residents. Therefore, the Board recommends the amendment to the Nuisance ordinance. Dr. McGuigan made a motion to submit a recommendation to Township Council to amend the ordinance.

Maureen Adams seconded the motion. There was a discussion about how this would be enforced. The procedure for enforcement was explained by Carol Chamberlain. She stated anyone who witnesses a violation can either go to municipal court to file a complaint or the Animal Control Officer can file a complaint if there is a witness who is willing to testify in court.

There was a question regarding the fines associated with a violation. The fines for violation of the Nuisance ordinance range from no less than \$50.00 to no more than \$1,000.00 for each violation.

There was then an inquiry if there could be a requirement for a cat to be spayed or neutered. Carol Chamberlain stated this is a sensitive subject to many pet owners, therefore she would not recommend this to be part of the ordinance. Chris Buck did state she provides education on spay/neuter programs to residents and she provides residents with information about low-cost spay neuter programs.

The board then voted unanimously to forward a letter to the Township Council recommending the amendment to the board.

Dr. McGuigan thanked the guests for their input and the guests left the meeting.

B. Minutes

The minutes from the February 26, 2013 meeting were reviewed and approved.

C. Greater Mercer Public Health Partnership

Darlene Hanley provided an update of the Greater Mercer Public Health Partnership.

The RWJ Foundation grant has been completed. The objectives of the grant were accomplished with the completion of the needs assessment and the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). At this time, the GMPHP is dedicated to sustaining itself. It is anticipated both the hospitals and the public health agencies will contribute to funding a program to continue the mission of implementing the CHIP and continuing to address needs identified through the community assessment.

At this time the group is considering the option of forming a 501.C(3) agency for public health initiatives, including mental health, chronic disease management and transportation.

The group continues to meet regularly to re-organize and structure the group. It is anticipated the programs implemented will be county-wide programs.

One county initiative that is expected to be led by Mercer County Health and Human Services is a mental health program. This initiative and others are hoped to be done by combining efforts and resources of all the agencies together. There is also a goal to attract more county agencies, businesses and residents to work cooperatively to address the four focus areas identified in the CHIP.

Darlene Hanley said the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has reviewed the project and they are extremely pleasantly surprised at what has been accomplished by the GMPHP. It is expected this project will be nationally recognized as a model of hospital systems working cooperatively to complete a community needs assessment.

OTHER BUSINESS:

There were a total of seven Lawrence residents who recently graduated from the Mercer County Medical Reserve Corp. training. Carol Chamberlain thanked Dr. Brickman, Mary Baird and Maureen Adams for participating in the Medical Reserve Corp and for volunteering their time to complete the training.

Darlene Hanley made a motion to adjourn. Maureen Adams seconded the motion. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Chamberlain
Health Officer