

Animal Control Commission

April 14, 2025, at 5:30pm

**Bloomington Animal Shelter – Hybrid Zoom and In Person Meeting
3410 South Walnut Street, Bloomington, IN 47401**

MEMBERS

Sue Allmon – present in person
Sita Cohen – present in person
Chris Hazel – present in person
Brandt Ludlow – present in person
Valerie Pena – partial presence in person
Laura Soto – present via zoom

GUESTS

Kathleen Mills
Benjamin LoPilato
Holly Snider
Brandon Hood
Jaclyn Brooks

STAFF

Audrey Brittingham - present in person
Kat Ennis – present in person
Lisa Ritchel – present in person
Virgil Sauder – present in person

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brandt moved to approve the **February 10, 2025**, minutes as written.

Sita seconded.

Roll call vote: Sue – “yes,” Sita – “yes,” Chris - “yes,” Brandt – “yes,” Laura – “yes.”

Motion passes, 5-0-0.

II. NEW BUSINESS

i. Request to declare Potentially Dangerous/Dangerous/Vicious – “Bandit”

Officer Ennis described a bite incident involving a dog named Bandit owned by Holly Snider. Animal Control received call that a man was taken to the hospital for bites to his face from a shepherd type dog. The victim’s injuries consisted of a slice from the base of his nostril to his upper lip that was deep enough that his teeth could be seen when he talked. The other wound was inside his nostril and there were several other minor scrapes. The victim stated that he was at Wheeler Mission and when he walked outside he saw Ms. Snider’s dogs, Bandit and Luna sitting there. He claimed that he walked past a group of people and heard them yell something. He turned around, thinking he dropped something and bent over. He advised that the dog then lunged and bit him in the face from four feet away. Officer Ennis then detailed the dog owner’s and a witnesses’ statement. They advised that the man walked outside, walked up to the group of people, was asked to leave and to leave Bandit alone. The man did not comply. Ms. Snider had her back turned and heard something, turned around, and saw that the man had blood on his

face. The owner advised that the man got into Bandit's face after being asked not to and received wounds to his face. Both parties concurred that Bandit was on leash restraint at the time of the incident. Officer Ennis added that the victim did not follow up with officers in regards to medical records after leaving the hospital. Officer Ennis advised that Bandit has had two prior bites which occurred in the home during domestic disputes between Ms. Snider and a previous individual in which Bandit bit the instigator of the dispute. Bandit is neutered and current on Rabies Vaccination. He has been held at the shelter since the incident.

Holly Snider explained that there is a big group of men at Wheeler Mission and Bandit is very protective of her. She and her friend Brandon tell the men to not get in Bandit's face because he will snap at them. They did tell the victim this. When she turned around, she saw that the victim was bloody. Ms. Snider stated that Bandit is a good dog and he was protecting his pack. He does not like a lot of men. Ms. Snider added that her other dog is deaf. Ms. Snider explained that she had Luna on leash and Brandon had Bandit on leash. She added that she does have a muzzle for him and will be fine to use it if required, but will need some training. Sita advised that someone at the shelter will be able to assist.

Brandon concurred with Ms. Snider's statement.

The Commission discussed. Chris felt that no action should be taken because the victim was warned and the dog was on leash. Sita agreed that the dog was provoked, but feels that Potentially Dangerous is appropriate due to the injury and agrees that the muzzle is a good idea. Valerie agreed that the Potentially Dangerous requirements will be appropriate for Bandit. She recommended also getting a "Don't Pet Me" leash or harness. Brandt asked Ms. Snider to consider the liability. Laura agreed with Potentially Dangerous.

Sita moved to declare Bandit Potentially Dangerous with the addition of wearing the muzzle when in public and making an appointment with the shelter to learn how to use the muzzle.

Brandt seconded.

Roll call vote: Sue – "yes," Sita – "yes," Chris – "yes," Brandt – "yes," Valerie – "abstain," Laura – "yes."

Motion passes, 5-0-1.

ii. Request to declare Potentially Dangerous/Dangerous/Vicious – "Louie"

Officer Ennis explained that she was called out to Grimes and Fess where an individual was bitten by the dog, Louie. Officer Ennis spoke with victim and found that she was walking her dog Moon, who had previously been bitten by Louie. As they got closer to each other, Louie began pulling at the leash and was let go. The victim then let her dog loose so it could get away. Louie chased Moon to the end of the road, turned around and went back, then jumped up and bit Ms. Brooks on the elbow. He grabbed ahold, shook, and Ms. Brooks fell. She received a significant wound on her elbow needing fourteen stitches and there were additional punctures on the underside of the arm. Louis came to the shelter for bite quarantine and before he could go home, officers spoke with his owner about guidelines for public safety. The owner emailed a plan of action which included the following: walking Louis in the backyard on leash only by Ms. Mills, muzzle training, seeing Madelyn from Mad4MyDog for training and fence improvement. Animal Control approved. During a previous incident last year, Louie bit Moon resulting in a single puncture on the back leg. Officer Ennis did receive a call from Ms. Brooks while Louie was

on quarantine stating that she saw the dog off leash in the backyard. Animal Control went by several times and spoke with owner, but did not witness this.

Kathleen Mills provided a written document for the Commission. She first clarified that Louie has been on a tether attached to a cement block in the backyard. From a distance it may have appeared that he was not restrained, but he was on a tether. She expressed that she was very sorry for the incident and thanked Officer Steury and Ennis for their kindness, help and suggestions. She was not aware of the victim's identity for over two weeks, but once she found out, she delivered an apology letter to the victim's house. She was also not aware that it was the victim's dog that was chased last spring. Ms. Mills shared that when the ACOs came to inform her, her husband had just died and she had a difficult time processing the information. She explained that Louie was originally a stray found on a rural road. He happily jumped into the finder's car and was taken to the animal shelter and named Dusty Roads. The shelter staff told them that he was a model pup who interacted well with humans and dogs. He has been in their home since August 2023, living with another shelter dog. The dogs walk and play together and share their toys and food. They have only experienced love from Louie. He has stayed at her friends' homes, Airbnb's, hotels and visited her workplace at Bloomington South and interacted multiple times with students and teachers. Last summer Louie completed a foundational training class at Mad4MyDog and interacted with the other dogs and humans with no issues. He is a very large dog and sometimes pulls forcibly on leash. The incident occurred when Ben was walking both dogs with harnesses and leashes. She acknowledged that it was probably not a good idea to walk both at the same time. Louie is sometimes fearful, hides when someone is at the front door and is easily spooked by loud noises, and she believes that he acted out of fear during the incident. Madalyn evaluated Louie on March 18 who agreed that he could have been fearful in the situation. Ms. Mills is committed to improving his leash walking and has been practicing in the yard using a martingale collar on the advice of the ACOs. Ms. Mills also has a new leash that wraps around her body on the advice of Officer Ennis which had made a huge improvement in her ability to control him. Louie is also learning to use a basket muzzle. They have a three and a half foot, chain link fence that he has never escaped from, but have contracted with Blake Ward for a five foot fence. Ms. Mills stated that she and Ben are truly sorrow and they are willing to comply with any requirements to ensure people in the neighborhood can feel safe.

Ben LoPilato shared that he moved back home after his father died to help out which includes walking the dogs. They get daily, morning and evening walks. He and his family have been caretakers of five different dogs over the years, all adopted from the Bloomington Animal Shelter. Mr. LoPilato shared that he was the first to meet Louie at the shelter and he was very friendly. He has been a much loved member of the family. Since the bite incident, Louie has not shown any other aggressive behavior. He enjoys playing tug of war with his brother, Sherman, watching TV, and sleeping. Mr. LoPilato next described the incident which occurred at Bryan Park and explained that he usually listens to podcasts when walking the dogs. He took out an earbud and shifted both leashes to one hand. This is when Louie pulled free. He knows now that walking the two dogs together is bad idea. Mr. LoPilato is unsure what initiated Louie's behavior that day. He shared that there was a lot of stress in the home at the time. He expressed his sincere apology to Ms. Brooks. He added that he would be more than happy to walk the dogs in a different neighborhood.

Jaclyn Brooks shared that she is feeling good although is still recovering and doing physical therapy. She indicated that she understood that Louie was actually tethered and not loose in the yard as she had reported previously. Her main concern along with neighborhood safety is that there is something

between Louie and her dog and there has been an escalation over the past three incidents. The first incident, Ben was walking Louie and let go of the leash and Louie chased her dog. The second incident, Nora was walking Louie and he dragged her before she let go of the leash and then her dog was bitten. The third time she was bitten. The escalation has been extreme and she is concerned about what could happen the fourth time. This has caused her anxiety as they live so close together. She has tried to understand what could be triggering him. Ms. Brooks advised that her dog is very submissive. During the last incident, she reacted to Louie when she saw him and cowered down because she has been bitten by him. This alerted him to her. She also reacts to him when she is at home and hears him in the back yard. Ms. Brooks wonders if Louie is trying to play with her dog in some way. The first time he chased her, he cornered her on a porch, but did not growl at her or show signs of aggression. He bit at her in almost a playful way, then would back off like he wanted her to engage, but then got too rough. During the last instance, he did not seem like he was trying to chase her dog to attack her, but like he wanted to play with her dog. She cannot explain why he bit her arm seemingly out of nowhere. He was not growling and did not strike her as aggressive. She stated that she does not feel afraid of him when he is in the fenced in yard. He looks at her dogs in her backyard and wags his tail and barks. Valerie then stated that it might be interesting for Madelyn to work with both dogs so that they could eventually interact. Ms. Brooks concurred and wondered if the dogs could meet in the presence of someone who knows how to control animals and their behavior so that they could feel safe. She added that Louie sees her dog every day from the yard but they do not know each other. When they do interact, it is extreme. Valerie gave some more suggestions but Virgil noted that he would be nervous about the dogs meeting since Ms. Brooks' dog has said no in multiple situations. This is not likely to change.

The Commission moved to discussion. Sita stated that neither Vicious nor Potentially Dangerous are correct but that Dangerous seems appropriate due to the severity of the injury. She also felt that the owner has gone above and beyond to make sure this does not happen again. Chris felt that Vicious is appropriate due to the severity of the injury which required fourteen stitches. Brandt noted that the number of stitches can be subjective. Virgil then read over the definitions to compare. Sue suggested declaring Louis Dangerous with wearing a muzzle and continuing the training. Officer Ennis advised that the fence is secure, the only concern was the height. Valerie added that Louie has not jumped the fence. Officer Ennis concurred and stated that everyone involved feels that Louie would not jump the fence. Brandt appreciated the willingness of everyone to communicate and cooperate. Sita recommended that they not walk Louie in the Bryan Park neighborhood until he is trained on the muzzle.

Valerie moved to declare Louis Dangerous, amending the three year designation to a check-up in one year, and at that point in time, the Commission will determine whether or not to extend the declaration two years or remove it. Considering the enclosure adequate, walking will occur outside of the immediate Bryan Park area while Louie is in training on the muzzle.

Sita seconded.

Roll call vote: Sue – “yes,” Sita – “yes,” Chris - “yes,” Brandt – “yes,” Valerie – “yes,” Laura – “yes.” Motion passes. 6-0-0.

iii. Request to modify motion to uphold ticket – Groomer 12/2024

Virgil explained that Casey Groomer sought to appeal her citation for animal abandonment at the December 9th, 2024, meeting of the Animal Control Commission. At that meeting the Commission determined that the appeal would be denied and the ticket upheld. The minutes from that meeting are attached. In the process of preparing the findings, it was noticed that there are two different fine amounts

listed in the Municipal Code. Section 7.36.070 lists the fine as \$500 and section 7.56.020 lists \$2,500. The recommendation is to apply \$500 fine to the violation until the code is changed. We are requesting that the Animal Control Commission clarify this change as part of the motion to uphold the citation for the abandonment case heard at the December 9th meeting.

Valerie moved to uphold Virgil's recommendation to define the penalty as \$500.

Sita seconded.

Roll call vote: Sue – “yes,” Sita – “yes,” Chris - “yes,” Brandt – “yes,” Valerie – “yes,” Laura – “yes.”

Motion passes. 6-0-0.

III. REPORTS

i. Animal Care and Control Report

Virgil reported that the shelter statistics look good. In mid-March there was an adoption special with \$20 fees to spur adoptions after Spring Break. There was an IU service group that designed a beautiful mural for the adoption lobby. They are now gearing up for summer with new volunteers and kitten season starts soon! April is the month of appreciation and the volunteers and fosters just had an appreciation party to recognize their service. Monday starts ACO appreciation week and Virgil publicly thank Officers Clark, Steury and Ennis for their dedication to the community and to public safety. Virgil noted that it is also Administrative Assistant Appreciation Week and he would like to publicly thank Lisa, Jennifer, Danyale and Camille for all they do for the shelter.

ii. MCHA Update

Sue reported they are hard at work on Tails on the Town. Sue recommend that everyone sign up for the MCHA newsletter. She stated that their emergency housing is completely full with seven residents. She is concerned that things will get worse with the economy and job situation. They could use donations of food, litter, etc. The good news is that the staff is doing well and there are volunteers walking the dogs.

iii. AMC Update

No meeting.

IV. ANIMAL CONTROL COMMISSION DISCUSSION

No discussion.

V. Public Comment

No public comment.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Sita moved to adjourn.

Chris seconded.

Roll call vote: Sue – “yes,” Sita – “yes,” Chris - “yes,” Brandt – “yes,” Valerie – “yes,” Laura – “yes.”

Motion passes, 6-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55pm