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Office of the City Administrator

**PUBLIC WELFARE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 24, 2015**

PRESENT: Aldermen Mayr, Gierl, Pukaite

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant City Administrator Thyges, Alderman Adams, City Administrator Jones, Executive Assistant Prosser, Interested Parties

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Mayr at 6:30 PM

Approve minutes of the January 13 and, January 27, 2015 meetings

Action: Motion to approve meeting minutes from January 13 and January 27, 2015 meetings (Gierl/Pukaite)

Result: Motion passed by voice acclamation.

Item for Discussion: Coyote Incident Data

Alderman Mayr opened the discussion stating, although the Public Welfare Committee is meeting to discuss the coyote incident data, anyone wishing to address the committee will be recognized. Alderman Mayr turned the meeting over to Assistant City Administrator, Jesse Thyges. Mr. Thyges stated the actions the city has taken to date regarding coyotes includes; a presentation by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources was made to the Public Welfare Committee in 2007 about coyotes, in February 2014 a seminar was held with the Humane Society of the United States at the Mequon Nature Preserve, in January 2015 guest speakers were invited to speak about coyotes at the Public Welfare Committee meeting held at the Mequon Nature Preserve and an informational web page has been created on the city's website on coyotes. Mr. Thyges provided a summary of the data collected on coyote incidents, noting eight phone calls have been received to date through the city clerk's office, and 113 responses have been cataloged as of February 17, 2015 as a result of the online survey. Mr. Thyges did point out some of the questions in the survey were not answered; therefore a number of responses may vary. Mr. Thyges went on to say, the online survey provided data on the location of coyotes, the number of coyotes, and the types of interactions residents encountered with coyotes. Mr. Thyges pointed out the interaction may have taken place two years ago, so while the survey does not provide a timeline of interactions, it does help pinpoint locations and numbers, and general types of interactions that have happened with regards to coyotes.

Mr. Thyges reviewed the chart of reported coyote interactions; 69% have been limited to sightings, long distance sightings or hearing coyote calls, or interaction without harm, 21% have witnessed coyotes running through their yard chasing pets, circling pets or found it necessary to haze a coyote to rid them from their yard, 10% responded their pet was harmed or killed. Mr. Thyges informed the committee that the survey provides the type and number of interactions, but there is no tool in place to track time, unless the person answering the questions includes the time in their comments. Mr. Thyges pointed out the survey identified two clear clusters of coyote activity in Mequon located in the southeastern corner and south central portion of the city. Mr. Thyges pointed out the vast majority of the responses have been long range sightings or hearing coyote calls, indirect contact with hazing involved or a near by sighting of a coyote.

Mr. Thyges stated he spoke to other communities as to how they have been handling coyotes in their community and reported the common theme is the educational approach. Mr. Thyges pointed out the city currently does not have a specific 2015 budget allocation with regards to addressing the coyote issue. Mr. Thyges concluded his overview by stating the city is protected under their liability insurance should an individual file a suit against the city in regards to a coyote incident, primarily because the individual would have to prove the city is negligent.

The meeting was turned over to the Committee to discuss the coyote incident data presented by staff.

Alderman Pukaite noted the only draw back in terms of the data collected is the date of the incident and asked that the survey be modified to include a question on the date and time of the year of the incident or when the sighting took place.

Alderman Mayr suggested freezing the current map of coyote incidents, continue to record information on a monthly basis to determine new sightings then overlay the map to provide information to the appropriate individuals should the committee decide to move forward. Alderman Mayr asked for clarification from the insurance company on whether the city's liability would cover incidents related to trapping if a pet was harmed, and if initiating some type of a program would affect the city.

Alderman Mayr asked the members of the committee whether they felt a more intense educational program would be warranted before proceeding further. Alderman Pukaite indicated based on the information that has been gathered and presented she would not support the city developing any kind of coyote removal program, due in part, it has been tried by other communities and the results have been unsuccessful. Alderman Pukaite went on to say, she would be in favor of continuing to track coyote incidents as to what is happening and where it is happening and finding out whether the areas are welcoming the coyotes due to food sources such as compost piles.

Alderman Adams suggested mailing a newsletter to residents featuring an article on coyotes in Mequon.

Alderman Mayr stated while education is key he would like to see a response program developed so residents know what to do if they are faced with a coyote sighting and who to contact based on the different levels of interaction with the coyote. Alderman Mayr agreed a culling program for coyotes will not work based upon unsuccessful attempts by other communities.

Alderman Gierl noted the Department of Natural Resources will issue a permit to bait coyotes and suggested a group of hunters be identified to assist with removing a rogue coyote. Alderman Pukaite stated she would support some type of a response to a rogue coyote. Alderman Gierl agreed a culling program will not work and offered the idea of providing residents a tax credit should they hire a service to eradicate a problem coyote on their property. Alderman Gierl stated the map of the coyote incidents should be kept up to date.

Alderman Adams stated she would like to see the city hire someone who is bonded to eradicate a problem coyote.

Alderman Mayr reiterated the need to develop a response plan to include; the levels the city will respond to as a result of a coyote incident and how the city will respond based on the incident, and who the resident should call based on their coyote incident. Alderman Mayr suggested contacting an animal control business to find out what can be done and how much they would charge for their services, and determine whether there would be money available in the budget this year, and present the cost as a budget item for next year

Alderman Mayr opened up the meeting to the public at 7:36 PM.

Jenny Hero, 2508 W. Chestnut Road, offered suggestions related to baiting coyotes. Iris Binor, 2928 West Woodland Court, supported the continued use of educating the community and suggested a mailing go out to residents to take the survey on the city's website in order to obtain information from the whole community. Jeff, a resident trapper, stated the easiest and most logical way to get rid of a problem coyote is to use an individual that is licensed and bonded.

Alderman Mayr directed staff to develop a newsletter with information on coyotes to be presented at the next meeting. City Administrator, Will Jones, requested more time to put together an action plan on how to approach the ideas discussed by the committee.

Alderman Mayr mentioned rather than having staff bring a newsletter back to the committee, he requested staff to bring the key points that would be covered in a newsletter to the next meeting and to provide information on who residents should call based on the level of the coyote incident. Staff was directed to continue to collect data, and post the pamphlet information handed out at the meeting to the city's website.

Adjourn

Action: Motion to adjourn the meeting (Gierl/Pukaite)

Result: Motion passed by voice acclamation. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Lina Prosser, Executive Assistant

CITY OF MEQUON PUBLIC WELFARE COMMITTEE