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ANIMAL CONTROL: Ordinance Draws Attention

COUNCIL COMMITTEE RECEIVES FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED CHANGES

By Steve Caraway

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SPRINGDALE — The City Council Ordinance Committee received the feedback it wanted Tuesday from opponents and proponents of suggested changes in Springdale's animal ordinance.

Those interested in the changes packed the room, with speakers opposing the changes while others asked for stricter enforcement by animal control officers.

"That is what this meeting is about," said Alderman Mike Overton. "We need to hear the ideas our residents have."

The committee meeting came before the council meeting. The ordinance committee plans to refine the proposal and bring it back to its next meeting on April 14, Overton said.

The new regulations came after proposed animal ordinances came before a City Council committee last summer. The changes would place more responsibility on pet owners, said Brett Harris, director of animal services. Harris and Amber Roe drew up the changes, using ordinances already in effect in cities all over the country, Harris said.

The changes include requiring a chip to be placed under a dog or cat's skin for identification. Chips would help owners recover their lost pets, said Charlotte Venable, a volunteer with the animal shelter.

Animals do lose their tags and the shelter would have no method of finding the owner without chips, Venable said.

The shelter euthanized 1,599 pets in 2009, Harris said.

The cost of chipping animals is too much, said Kerry Teems.

"It could cost \$55 to \$65 per animal," Teems said.

The cost could lead people to abandon more animals during tough economic times, said Craig Campbell.

"It's a bad time to bring up any extra expenses," Campbell said.

The shelter would offer chipping under the direction of a veterinarian at a cost of \$20 per animal, Harris said. The chipping cost would replace an annual \$5 license fee with a one-time fee, Harris said.

The city has a problem with dogs running loose, said Herman Sizemore. Animals running loose would be chipped when they are picked up, Harris said, which would allow identification of owners if the dog is picked up a second time.

Habitual offenders of letting their pets run loose should be cited instead of warned, Christian Scott said.

The changes would boost fines for repeat offenders, Harris said.

At A Glance

Springdale City Council**Officials On Tuesday:**

Approved a conditional use of a communication tower at 406 W. Emma Ave., for Ozark Electric

Approved rezoning 0.5 acres at 2125 W. Sunset Ave., owned by James and Michelle Duggar, from general commercial to large-product retail for an Enterprise car rental business

Approved a conditional-use permit at 1300 Backus Ave. for a mobile vending business which would sell snow cones

Approved a conditional-use permit at 1112 S. 48th St. for The Harbor Church of NWA

Denied a waiver of a sidewalk at 245 E. Robinson Ave.

Approved a change in the police department to allow money from the sale of used police vehicles to purchase of replacement vehicles

Approved change orders of \$50,630 and \$12,356 for changes in construction of driveways

Approved a settlement of \$8,000 with J&J Dentmasters for flooding off their business at 1004 Maple Ave.

Source: StaffReport