

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD
VICIOUS DOG HEARING MINUTES
ALL PARTICIPATION BY ZOOM TELECONFERENCING
MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2021

Present:

Selectboard Members: Mike Dunham, Beth Foy, Nat Kinney, Eric Osgood, Eben Patch

Others: Brian Story, Tracy Myers, Taylor Smith, Johna Keefe, Kyley Hill, Shayne Spence

Eric called the hearing to order at 6:30. He explained the quasi-judicial dog hearing process. The selectboard has the power to decide whether to declare the dog vicious and if so what orders to give regarding the dog. The board has the power to euthanize a vicious dog. Eric swore in everyone who planned to testify.

Eric asked Tracy Myers to describe her findings. Tracy said she got a call on April 10 from a neighbor of the person whose dog was attacked and she later talked to the owner of the dog. She was told that Taylor Smith was trying to get the leash on her dog to get it out of the car when it saw Nate's dog and bolted past her to attack it. Nate and his girlfriend got some bites while breaking up the dogs. Tracy went to Taylor's house and met her dog, Stella, who was very calm and friendly. It came to light that Stella has a problem with littler dogs, but not big dogs. The dog spends half its time in Johnson and half its time in Morrisville with its co-owner. Brian and Tracy determined that during its quarantine the dog should stay in Johnson. It was licensed in Morrisville and Taylor said she would license it in Johnson. Nate's dog is licensed in Johnson. Tracy advised Taylor to get a new leash and muzzle for the dog and that night she got a new leash, harness and muzzle. She has been very cooperative and very forthcoming with information about the incident. Both dogs have their shots and both are licensed. Taylor has now licensed her dog in Johnson as well as in Morrisville.

Johna Keefe said her boyfriend Nate was taking out her dog and she was inside. She heard a scuffle and screaming, looked out and saw someone on top of a pitbull that was on top of her bloody dog on top of her boyfriend. He was pushing his hand into the attacking dog's mouth to keep him from biting down more. She ran out and tried to lift up the pitbull, then started choking the pitbull until it let go. She believes the fight would have been a lot worse if she had not done that. Her boyfriend had no ability to unclench the dog's jaw and neither did its owner. She does not think the dog is a bad dog but she has been approached by other owners of little dogs and parents of children who are worried because of what happened. She thinks there should be stipulations so this type of event doesn't happen again and if it does it isn't worse than what happened. Taylor has been very cooperative and they have been working together in terms of bills, etc.

Taylor Smith said she had taken the dog's leash off in the car because it was wet. The dog is normally leashed and harnessed anytime she is not inside. She usually parks closer to the building but on that day she parked toward the end of the driveway. She wasn't able to hook the leash onto the harness in time. Stella saw the other dog and ran over. When Taylor got over there her boyfriend and Nate were on top of both dogs. Stella's jaw was locked onto the other dog and she put her hand in her mouth to release it. Sunday she took Stella to a vet because she was

acting off. She had been punched in the head a couple of times, which was not anyone's fault. They were just trying to get her off the other dog. It turned out she had a broken tail. She has had Stella for 2 years. She was adopted from South Carolina. She hasn't had any issues with her. Her adoption paperwork said no cats because of testing that was done in the shelter. She doesn't know if the other dog was so small that it looked like that to her. Stella was found in the streets. She doesn't know why they said no cats with her. She never bites people. She would rather give kisses. Taylor has never had an issue with her until that day. Her mother went and bought a new harness that goes over the dog's head, not her shoulders, so she can't get it off. She bought two new leashes and got a muzzle if it is needed. She tried putting the muzzle on the dog but she wouldn't walk with it on and wouldn't go to the bathroom until it was taken off. Stella is friendly with other dogs. Taylor doesn't know what made her react like that, but it is not usual for her. She hasn't had issues with other animals.

Nat asked if Stella is always leashed when Taylor walks her. Taylor said yes. She always wears a harness and Taylor leashes the harness, not the collar, so she has better control. Stella is pretty strong.

Mike asked, if that dog bolted again is there any possibility she could get away from Taylor again? Is she strong enough to snap the leash out of Taylor's hand? Taylor said no. When she walks her she can control her. She puts the leash loop around her dominant wrist. Stella isn't overpowering her. She has contacted Ian with Vermont Dog Trainer and his assistant is calling back tomorrow so she can get more basic training for Stella.

Eric said Taylor will receive the board's findings within 10 days.

The board entered deliberations at 6:49 and came out at 7:00.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths