

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 19, 2024**

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Raj Chawla, President; Marcus Certa, Clerk; Amber Thibeault.

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Robert Kissinger, Essex Police Lieutenant; Joanne Nichols, Animal Control Officer.

OTHERS PRESENT: Jamie Blake, Alise Certa, Jessica Gamelin, Chris LeCoz, David Macomber, Dan Maxon, Amanda Sayles, Joshua Sayles, Marcus Wilson, Bob, 802-999-0637.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councilor Chawla called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

None needed.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda

None.

5. VICIOUS DOG HEARING - CONTINUED

Jamie Blake, the new owner of the dog Dozer, explained how she came into ownership of the dog. She said that Dozer had previously been owned by a family that recently had a newborn and decided they couldn't keep the dog, so the dog was given to Jessica Ploof. She noted that Ms. Ploof was staying with her for several days, but is currently unhoused and cannot provide for herself, so Ms. Ploof has given ownership of Dozer to Ms. Blake. Ms. Blake emphasized that Dozer is a good dog and is good with people and children, though he does have issues with other dogs sometimes. She said it is unfortunate that someone was bitten by Dozer and that another dog was also hurt by Dozer. She said apologized that Ms. Ploof let the dog get out without supervision. She said that she is going to give Dozer stability and a home and ensure that he is in a fenced-in area when he is outside and on a leash when he is not. She said that she registered Dozer today and ensured that he is up-to-date on his vaccines.

Councilor Thibeault asked whether Ms. Blake received a copy of the complaint and pictures of the dog bites. Ms. Blake confirmed that she did. Councilor Thibeault asked whether Ms. Blake was present for the dog attack, and Ms. Blake replied that she arrived home after the attack occurred and the police were on the scene, which was when she and Ms. Ploof (who was staying with her at the time) realized that Dozer had gotten outside. Councilor Thibeault asked whether Ms. Blake would be open to training Dozer, and Ms. Blake replied that she would be amenable to training him.

Councilor Certa asked when the fenced-in area on Ms. Blake's property was installed, and Ms. Blake replied that it was installed 2-3 years prior. Councilor Certa asked whether Ms. Blake has had experience with bully breeds of dog, and Ms. Blake replied that she has owned four pit bulls prior to Dozer, yes. Councilor Certa asked for more detail about why the previous owner (with the newborn) gave up Dozer, and Ms. Blake replied that they did not have the time for taking care of Dozer in an adequate way.

Councilor Chawla asked if there are others living at the property who would also help to look after Dozer, and Ms. Blake confirmed that her family members are all willing and able to help care for the dog.

Ms. Blake provided a copy of the dog registration for Dozer, and City Manager Mahony confirmed that the dog is registered in Essex Junction.

Ms. Thibeault asked for more detail on the dog's history. Ms. Blake replied that Dozer has been with two families, Ms. Ploof, and now her, and that it is unfortunately that he hasn't had a stable family. She spoke about his interactions with other dogs, saying that they are generally positive but that sometimes he clashes with some other dogs.

City Manager Mahony noted that Dozer is good with people but not with certain other dogs, and asked if there have been issues with other dogs. Ms. Blake replied that there have not been major issues with other dogs to date and to her knowledge.

Amanda Sayles, the complainant, noted that in her original statement she had said that the dog's owner, Ms. Ploof, arrived at the scene during the attack, but now realizes that it was Ms. Blake who arrived on the scene and was present at the end of the incident.

Lieutenant Kissinger noted that the fence at 48 Old Colchester Road (where Ms. Blake resides) is not closed in and would need to be closed in to contain the dog. Ms. Blake noted that the fence by the door is closed in and that her mother's dogs use that closed-in area every day.

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by MARCUS CERTA, to close the dog hearing. The motion passed 3-0.

City Manager Mahony noted that once the Council enters into a deliberative session, it has 30 days to issue a written decision regarding this matter. Councilor Chawla noted that Dozer is impounded until the Council issues its decision, which it will try to do as soon as possible.

AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to enter into deliberative session. The motion passed 3-0 at 5:20 P.M.

6. **ADJOURN**

MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 3-0 at 7:42 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt