

Dog Watch Nova Scotia

What's Happening in the World of Dog politics in Nova Scotia

October 10, 2008

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Welcome to the third issue of Dog Watch Nova Scotia

Attached are the results of the questionnaire that was sent out to all candidates participating in the upcoming Regional Council Election in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The dog owning voting public of the HRM would sincerely like to thank all the individuals who responded to the questionnaire and took the time to write in – it really showed that they valued the questions that were being asked, which is important.

Dog owners are a large chunk of the voting – and tax paying population of the Halifax Regional Municipality, and if we want to have access to services that we think we need – we either have to stand up as a group – or we have to just sit back and let other groups take the money and services that should go to the programs we want. It's times like these – elections – when politicians are actually listening to us and what we want – so it's a perfect time for groups like us to stand up and say – we NEED off leash areas, we NEED to have our Animal Control services funded properly so that they have the resources to properly monitor and service our community. Nobody – and certainly non-dog owners – are going to do it for us. All they're going to do – is to try and impose restrictions – which we are surely NOT going to agree with!

A Clarification from the last issue of Dog Watch Nova Scotia when we listed out WHO voted for Bylaw A300 – it turns out that there were several votes for the bylaw – there was a vote when they voted to have cats included in the bylaw, and there were also a string of amendments, when it appeared like they were voting for the bylaw – but the bylaw that we have in place today – was actually only voted in at the Regional Council meeting of June 17, 2008 and became effective June 28, 2008 – and that vote was NOT a recorded vote – so we will NEVER know which councilors voted for and against it. In order for a vote to be recorded – one of the sitting Regional Councilors has to request it, and funnily enough – none of the Councilors present at the meeting – wished for this vote to be recorded.... I wonder why? I contacted Eastlink Television, thinking that I might be able to figure out the results – but they only keep the videotape for a few weeks – so it was long gone by the time I called – history will keep the secret of who voted for and against Bylaw A300 the final and definitive time unfortunately. Thank-you to Councilor Andrew Younger for clearing that up.

So on to the results!!

Results of the HRM Candidates Questionnaires:

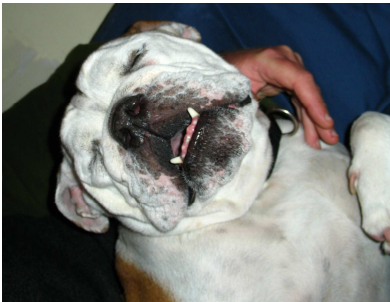
Almost 40% of the candidates responded to our request for the questionnaire that was sent out – which is actually pretty good – seeing as how it was sent out from someone who they had totally no idea who it was from, and a lot of them didn't like the questions being asked of them – and really didn't understand why the questions were being asked, and I'm sure – didn't even take them seriously. And a couple of the people who DID respond – told us that!

But that was also something we were looking at – how dismissive were the candidates at answering dog owner's questions? Who DIDN'T want to answer the questions? Because that was important too, as far as I was concerned – and there were a couple people who stood out there too.

I'm sure that some incumbents didn't answer the questionnaire because they feel fairly certain that their constituents already know how they feel and have previously acted on dog issues – so they didn't need to fill out any questionnaire like this – which is too bad, because we don't have anything to compare to their competitors who did complete the questionnaires.

Quite a few candidates had issues with sports fields being used as off-leash areas – maybe they are hearing that from their constituents? But that's an interesting tidbit that the questionnaire brought up that hadn't occurred to me before – it seems logical that large flat green spaces speckled throughout the Municipality would be great places for dogs during certain pre-determined times of the day for multi-use areas – if a poop and scoop law was being enforced by the relevant authorities.

So down to the nitty-gritty. Everyone thinks that Halifax is dog friendly, and almost everyone thinks that in the last 4 years Regional Council has spent too much time on animal issues! No one wants to put millions of dollars into a brand new animal shelter, but everyone thinks that dog owners are a very important demographic in our community. They are very concerned about where licensing money for Animal Control and fines are going - and want it to go back into Animal Control coffers - and if there's money left over that it go to animal issues. I got a few impassioned paragraphs from some candidates - so there are some politicians out there who feel pretty strongly about animal issues - so that is a GREAT thing as far as I'm concerned!



One really comical comment I got was in relation to my question about in-home doggy day cares – “I have never heard of the idea! Very interesting. This is similar to in home day care for children? How are they currently run and is there licensing involved etc. I do not know if I would call it essential in the classic sense but look what happened with the hurricanes in the U.S.A... Pets are people's family.”

Isn't that a hoot? I guess it shows how we as dog owners take the things we use every day for granted and just assume that non-dog owners understand our language and facilities! My use of the term “essential” really riled up the candidates too! Some of them really took umbrage with the term. Those of us who actually use in-home doggy day cares and have the more – how should we say it “socially special” type dogs who can't handle the institutional type doggy day cares really DO consider in-home doggy day cares “essential” to the quality of our lives and our dogs' lives – which is what I was inferring – just like a human parent with a special needs child considers special services for their child “essential” – even though not every child needs that service. But I think I might have gone a bit too “deep” with that question! But the question DID get seven yeses!

Comments made by some of the respondents:

John Stoddard, candidate for district 22 – in response to the question: do you think that bylaw A300 puts dogs in danger in the HRM? “Yes and No. It depends on how much the letter of the law is enforced. Like most things coming out of council the language needs to be clearer. I think everyone agrees that owners need to be responsible and that dangerous animals need to be controlled but we can go too far in our diligence to make HRM livable to all. Yes, I think the following part of the law needs to be rewritten.” (which is referring to the dangerous dogs section).

Jennifer Watts, who's a candidate in District 14, had some great comments at the end of her submission. She said –

“As someone who is not a dog owner I have learned a great deal from talking to people on the doorstep who are dog owners about their concerns. I have grown to appreciate the importance of the dog owner community as a valuable social networking and community builder in our neighbourhoods. Dog owners provide a regular check on parks in our neighbourhoods, they clean up garbage from our parks and walkways (not just cleaning up



after their pets), provide security and presence in areas that often do not have high traffic (especially early in the morning and later in the evenings), and they often tend to discuss the neighbourhood and issues pertaining to it which builds a sense of ownership and commitment to neighbourhood betterment. In several conversations with dog owners I have heard about the lack of clarity of where owners can let their pets off leash - I would work to find a neighbourhood solution; for example, a rotational schedule of different parks on different days for set periods of time. I think it is important to move from a position of viewing dog owners and their dog's needs from a restrictive viewpoint to one that acknowledges the legitimate need for space and consistency and also the valuable contribution that dog owners play in maintaining and promoting an active neighbourhood identity."

Andrea Hilchie-Pye – also a candidate for District 14, when answering the question about what the mandate of council should be for the next four years, and whether it should keep its focus completely away from animal issues – said: “Yes and no. Our city is faced with significant challenges which we need to address (affordable housing, homelessness population, ensuring our communities are safe, improving our transportation infrastructure, etc). These must be paramount in how council spends its energy.”

Mary Wile, incumbent for District 10 - said something interesting regarding the trap neuter and return programs – she thought that they were a good idea and should be sponsored by the city – but they should be funded through the licensing of cats.

Krista Snow, incumbent for District 2 had a really good idea regarding getting extra income for Animal Services. She said: “I have brought to Council a number of times that we should be hiring or contracting people to enforce the taxation by-law for dogs that is in place now. That alone would accumulate a huge sum of money that would go towards programs to benefit animals.” Now THAT is a great idea, I think. Spend a little money, to make a lot of money – and then the dogs are licensed, so that if they decide to go for a “walk-about” – they can get a free ride home – because Animal Control knows where they live, thus creating a win-win for the owner – the FIRST time, anyway.

Doug Poulton from District 23 said – “I'm a dog lover as well, and they add so much to a person's life. Responsible dog lovers, should take offense to the way some dogs are treated and cared for by some individuals and something should happen to them. I do sympathize with the people who complain about the messes our friends leave behind and do think it is the responsibility of the owner to clean up after them. I couldn't get at your questionnaire on my computer so I hope this will tell you where I'm coming from. Living in the rural area of H.R.M. gives us the security that our well being is protected by a loved one, who only asks for love and attention in return. Hope this answers your concern from my perspective”

Andrew Younger – who was acclaimed in his district – was very generous with his time on the questionnaire, he gave really detailed answers. There's probably been no other regional councilor in the last 4 years who's championed the dog cause more than him – so it'd make sense that he'd have the most to say. You can check out his answers on the pdf file - I'm sure his notes will answer questions that a lot of people will have about some of the issues that they've been asking as prospective Councilors have been coming to their doors.

The answers to the questions in their entirety are online in a spreadsheet at http://dogkisser.ca/questionnaire_answers.pdf

Elvis – A very special dog

This is a photo of a cocker spaniel named Elvis. He's been living over at the Dartmouth Metro shelter's SPCA for a LONG time. He was part of the original Celtic Pets seizure back in February and took quite a while to get healthy, and then was returned due to no fault of his own – so he's had a very hard knock life and deserves a soft bed in a warm home that understands that his ears need special attention and his eyes are sore, and he just wants to live out his days with the amazing unconditional love that he should have been getting his whole life – but has been waiting for – very patiently until YOU'VE come along. He's waiting for you over at 5 Scarfe Court in Dartmouth currently – and you can email them at – metrospca@ns.aliantzinc.ca and you can see his information at <http://www.petfinder.com/petnote/displaypet.cgi?petid=12063738> – and you can also go visit him. But I'm sure he'd tell you if he could that he'd rather you go and get him sooner, rather than later.



Upcoming Court Cases

Zonda MacIsaac – was back in court September 23rd, 2008 to hear the results of a psychiatric assessment to see whether she was mentally fit to stand trial. Neither she, her lawyer, or the crown attorney were in court – everyone sent representatives to appear for them. It would seem that Zonda did NOT have a mental condition that precluded her from criminal responsibility for the criminal charges that she was being faced with – because she was given a court date of November 24th, 2008 to face arraignment on her 4 charges under the criminal code and the animal cruelty act. And it MUST be noted that not ONE news agency that we could find (except for the very diligent radio station Hawk 101 in Cape Breton) carried the court proceedings on September 23rd.

Alice MacIsaac is due back in court December 4th, 2008 – she and her daughter Zonda are both charged under the Animal Cruelty Act as well as the Criminal code for neglect to animals and willfully causing pain to an animal.

Gail Benoit and Dana Bailey – were in court on June 26th and 27th on charges of neglect after the NS SPCA seized 10 puppies last fall – their trial resumes October 24th, 2008

Noemi Chapman and her husband – are due back in court November 28th, 2008 for their trial on failure to provide adequate care to 4 dogs under the prevention of cruelty to animals act – they run a puppy mill in Kilburn, New Brunswick with over 200 breeding dogs. **Sharon Orr** – is due in court on December 4th after more than 40 animals were seized from her property near Barr's Corner last October 12th, 2007 – chickens, goats, rabbits, and 2 border collies were seized from her property and she is charged with neglect and abandonment.

Upcoming Dog Events

- Bide-a-wile is hosting “Bowling for Critters 2008” on October 25, 2008 – at the Fairlanes Bowling Alley at the Halifax Shopping Centre – you can get more information at <http://bideawhile.org/events/bowling.php>
- SPCA Paws for A Cause – November 1st – 6-11pm – a gourmet 3 course meal and an auction run by Neville MacKay - \$75 per ticket – for more information you can go to - <http://spcans.ca/>
- There is going to be a demonstration against Gail Benoit and Dana Bailey on Saturday October 11th, 2008 in Digby Nova Scotia – there is a Facebook group that has almost 1,800 members at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=20025043745> – dedicated to talking about how to shut down Gail Benoit, and they're meeting up at the Waterfront by Cannons & flagpole in Digby at 1pm. If you can make it there – it's sure to be an interesting afternoon!

Other Places to find out about local dog politics

- NS SPCA Newsletter - http://spcans.ca/whats_new/index.html
- Cape Breton SPCA Newsletter - <http://www.capebretonspca.com/newsletter.html>
- Granny's Journal - <http://grannysstory.blogspot.com/>
- Me and my Dogs in Halifax, Nova Scotia - <http://dogkisser.blogspot.com/>

In the Next Issues of Dog Watch Nova Scotia



Is it a miracle? We're going to talk about the rebirth of the Nova Scotia Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals! We're going to fill you in!

Download past issues of the Dog Watch Nova Scotia Newsletter at: http://dogkisser.ca/dwns_past_issues.html

If you have a story or a story idea you'd like to submit to Dog Watch Nova Scotia – email me at dogkisser@gmail.com – as well, if you have any feedback – we'd love to hear from you!
