

Canine complaints continue to dog town

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Port officials consider new regulations after residents say man has failed to stop animals from barking, running at large

Complaints continued against a Town of Port Washington man whose dogs bark incessantly and run uncontrolled through the area.

Dog owner Rick Goebel was recently cited by the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department for having a dog at large and for having a barking dog that causes a disturbance, according to court records.

And Monday, Gerald Wiskow of 2091 Lower Ridge Rd. told the Port Washington Town Board he has been bothered by Goebel's dogs for years.

"I'm behind anything you can do to help alleviate the situation," Wiskow said. "My yard's small, but they manage to find it."

He's particularly annoyed by the barking, which continues for a significant amount of time, Wiskow said.

Just days after a recent Ozaukee Press article about neighbors' complaints about the dogs, Wiskow said, the animals were running loose in a field behind his house during the afternoon.

"I don't think they just happened to get free," he said.

Town Attorney Steve Cain, who wrote to Goebel last September about dog-related complaints lodged against him, sent him another letter after neighbors asked for help in dealing with the problem last month.

"It has become apparent that you have failed to rectify the issues outlined in my last correspondence," Cain wrote. "The town's concerns demand immediate attention."

Cain also asked Goebel to address complaints of rubbish and junked vehicles on his property.

In reply, Goebel said he generally tends his dogs between 9 and 10 p.m. to try and avoid disturbing neighbors.

"I do not feel my animals are causing a noise disturbance," he wrote.

"I have an electronic kennel silencer that goes off at any loud noise. All of my neighbors who have been here with me the 22 years I have lived here have no problem with my dogs."

Goebel, who said he has been breeding English pointer hunting dogs for the past 15 years, said in his letter that he would build a higher fence on his property, and asked for 30 days to complete the work.

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He would also try to dispose of a couch left outdoors, Goebel said, adding he does not have junked vehicles in his yard.

Town officials Monday noted that Cain is looking at potential regulations for dog breeders and limits on the number of animals housed in residential areas, while planners are also looking at the concept of requiring a conditional use permit for dog breeders operating in residential areas.

They noted that they have fielded complaints about Goebel's dogs for some time.

Last month, a group of neighbors asked the Town Board for help in dealing with the animals, which they say have made it impossible for them to enjoy their homes and yards.

Some said they are afraid to let their own pets outside for fear Goebel's animals — he has as many as 14, they said — will attack them, while others said their children are afraid of the animals.

Goebel and one of the neighbors got into a verbal argument about the issue while dropping refuse off at the town dumpster recently, officials said.

"There were a lot of exclamation points and bad words used," Town Chairman Jim Melichar said. The dump superintendent asked Goebel to leave, he said, adding both Goebel and the neighbor returned later to apologize.

Officials said that Goebel had been cited in the past, but he has pleaded not guilty and, when no one has shown up at pre-trial hearings to complain about the animals, the judge has dismissed the tickets.

Goebel has recently been issued four citations from the Sheriff's Department — on May 21 for having a dog at large and on April 3, May 21 and May 30 for having a barking dog causing a disturbance, according to court records.

A July 8 trial date has been set in connection with the April 3 ticket, according to court records, while hearings are pending on the other cases. Each ticket carries a maximum fine of \$162.70.