

It's official: Don't feed waterfowl in Port, or else

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
Wednesday, 21 August 2013 18:19

Council OKs law calling for fines of at least \$100 for violations on city property

It's now illegal to feed ducks, geese and migratory birds on City of Port Washington property, and anyone receiving a ticket for it will be fined between \$100 and \$500.

The Common Council on Tuesday approved an ordinance outlawing the feeding of the birds, but the discussion had less to do with the merits of the prohibition and more to do with the fine.

Ald. Dave Larson initially proposed a fine of between \$25 and \$500, saying the side range would give police officers and the municipal judge "room to work."

But Ald. Paul Neumyer, a retired police officer who two weeks ago warned that imposing too high a fine might discourage officers from issuing tickets, suggested a fine starting at \$100.

"I don't think \$100 is out of line," he said.

Officers can issue a warning to someone before writing a ticket, Neumyer said, adding that if circumstances are right they could even issue two warnings.

But Ald. Mike Ehrlich said \$100 is a steep fine for an activity traditionally enjoyed by tourists and local residents alike.

"Although I understand the importance of it, boy, that's a lot of money to start off," Ehrlich said.

He suggested a \$50 to \$500 fine, echoing Neumyer's original concern.

"Are we going to have officers not wanting to enforce this?" Ehrlich asked.

City Attorney Eric Eberhardt noted that whatever fine the Common Council sets would only be the start, noting that court costs and surcharges are added to the fine to determine the amount a violator pays.

Mayor Tom Mlada suggested the city post signs, particularly at the marina and lakefront parks, that not only warn people they shouldn't feed the birds but also tell them why they shouldn't.

That might serve as a better deterrent to feeding the birds than the ordinance, Ald. Bill Driscoll said.

Not only do the birds leave a mess, it's a mess that can cause a health hazard for humans and other birds, he noted.

It's official: Don't feed waterfowl in Port, or else

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
Wednesday, 21 August 2013 18:19

"People feeding the ducks don't want them to die," said Driscoll.



"If someone reads that and still feeds the ducks and gulls, I have no problem fining them," Mlada said.

Aldermen adopted the ordinance with a fine ranging from \$100 to \$500. If the fine is not paid, the judge can jail violators for as long as 30 days, they agreed.

No matter what the fine, aldermen noted that police officers are likely to issue tickets only after warning someone.

"I don't see an officer hiding behind a boat and waiting for the first person to come along with a bag of corn to issue a ticket," Neumyer said.