

Townpeople turn to board for relief from pack of dogs

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM

Wednesday, 08 May 2013 17:20 - Last Updated Wednesday, 15 May 2013 15:44

Rural Port residents say man's 14 pets have made life in neighborhood intolerable

A pack of dogs that bark day and night and run through their neighborhood on Highway KK is making life intolerable, residents told the Port Washington Town Board Monday.

"We can't enjoy our property because of these animals," said Bill Worth, 3434 Hwy. KK. "I'm fed up."

Worth said his neighbor Rick Goebel has about 14 dogs but doesn't control them when he lets them out. They roam the neighborhood, tearing up lawns. They bark constantly, he said, and frighten children in the area.

Neighbors have called the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department to complain about the dogs, he said, but usually the animals are quiet by the time deputies arrive.

Dan Scheftgen, 3446 Hwy. KK, provided photos of the some of dogs running through a neighbor's property, saying they jump fences.

"I've got 3-1/2 acres. I can't even let my dog go out," he said, noting he's fearful Goebel's animals will chase his. "His dogs run my property. It's not fair."

"We moved out here nine years ago for a reason, for peace and quiet. We feel like we're being held hostage."

"We as a neighborhood would like to have a nice summer for once."

His wife Diane concurred, telling the board the dogs bark so much that it's difficult even to sleep.

"We can't sleep without a fan in the room because they're barking all night," she said.

Neighborhood children are afraid of the animals, Worth said.

Jeff Unger, 3480 Hwy. KK, said he won't allow his 3-year-old daughter to play outside alone.

"I don't feel safe having my daughter in my own back yard," he said. "If something doesn't

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change, I'm going to have to sell my house and move."

The neighbors said they have tried to talk to Goebel to no avail.

"You just don't get anywhere," Scheftgen said.

Goebel could not be reached for comment.

This isn't the first time the Town Board has fielded complaints about Goebel and his dogs.

In a Sept. 19, 2012, letter to Goebel, Town Attorney Steve Cain informed him that complaints about the dogs "are now reaching nuisance level. The town is considering its legal options to seek an injunction, removal of your dogs and other legal remedies to put an end to this nuisance situation."

The letter states that the Sheriff's Department provided reports going back to 2003 that detail "regular and ongoing dog-related complaints."

"Please treat this letter as the town's final request that you put an end to the excessive dog barking, dogs at large and other dog related nuisances," the letter states.

The letter states that the Sheriff's Department indicated there were 15 dogs at the home at the time, and that Goebel had licensed 10 dogs in 2010 and 2011 but none were licensed at the time.

Immediately after the letter was sent, Goebel applied for and received licenses for the dogs, officials said.

Supr. Mike Didier said the Sheriff's Department has cited Goebel in the past, but he has pleaded not guilty and, when no one who complained about the dogs showed up at pre-trial hearings, the judge dismissed the tickets.

It's not just the dogs, Worth said, noting their owner has a number of abandoned vehicles in his yard as well — including one that's been there since Worth built his house in 1997.

"Not only is it an eyesore, it's bringing down property values," he said. "The town has ordinances against these things, and I would like to see them enforced."

Worth told the board he would like to see the number of dogs that can be owned by a property owner limited to three.

The town does not limit the number of dogs that a person can own, something Supr. Jim Rychtik said the board should consider.

"If there's no limit, how do you define a kennel and when someone's keeping dogs as a business?" he asked.

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Town Board members were sympathetic to the neighbors' plight, and said they would direct Cain to take further action.

Town Chairman Jim Melichar said he would go to talk to Goebel about the situation.

"We want to address the nuisance," he said. "This is not going to continue."