



THE SUNRISE CITY
ANIMAL CONTROL

FORT PIERCE
Florida

TO : The Honorable Mayor and City Commissioners

THROUGH : Nicholas Mimms, City Manager

FROM : Peggy Arraiz, Code Compliance Manager

SUBJECT : Anti-tethering efforts

DATE : November 14, 2017

On August 15, 2016, the City Commission adopted Ordinance 16-015, which amended Chapter 4 – Animals, to make it illegal to tether your dog outdoors without someone being present to monitor the dog. When the Commission adopted this ordinance it was with the understanding that staff and local volunteer organizations would face an uphill battle because the keeping of dogs chained outdoors has been ongoing for generations. The first step towards addressing this matter would be an educational campaign to try and educate the public to the dangers of tethering and the changes required by the ordinance.

During the first year, the Animal Control Officers and local organizations handed out hundreds of flyers to support the educational component of the ordinance amendment. We were all faced with the anticipated resistance. Multiple written warnings were also issued and when faced with continued resistance to comply, citations have been issued. Below is a chart of the key complaints as well as possible solutions.

One significant change that staff has recently initiated was to decrease the time allowing the dog owner to comply and increasing the frequency of writing citations. Because the Commission amended how citations are processed and brought them 'in house', staff has the ability to easily amend or void citations. Therefore, the message to the animal owner when the citation is issued is that they have 30 days to comply. If it is complied within the 30 days, the citation will be voided. Instead of spending money to pay a citation, use the money to install a safe enclosure for the dog. This has raised another problem in the fact that the citation is only a Class A - \$50 citation. It is actually cheaper to pay the citation than to install an enclosure. For this reason, staff is recommending that the ordinance be amended to increase the penalty for tethering to a Class C - \$250.00 citation.

On a positive note, staff has started to see some compliance with the ordinance. The actual number of properties in compliance is miniscule compared to the number of dogs still on tethers, but it shows some positive progress. While it is a challenging task and will take time to overcome the generational mindset of how dogs are to be kept, staff will continue to work with the residents to find solutions to improve the conditions for dogs and eliminate the use of tethers.

| Complaint | Possible Solution |
|---|---|
| <p>This is how it has always been done... I can't bring the dog inside – it sheds; barks; chews things; climbs on the furniture; etc.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with the education efforts explaining the dangers of tethering. • Progressively increase enforcement efforts of written warnings followed by citations. |
| <p>Why do I have to be outside with the dog?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ordinance states: “The animal must be in view of the person responsible for the animal at all times while tethered.” This is open to interpretation and staff has been instructed to enforce it as meaning a person must be outdoors watching the animal. • The Commission may wish to amend this section of the ordinance to clarify its intent. • The more stricter amendment would state that the person must be outside within view of the animal. • A more lenient amendment would state that a person must be home whenever a dog is tethered outdoors. • The Commission may also wish to clarify the definition of a person to specify an age. |
| <p>It costs too much to install an enclosure.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with the education efforts and emphasize that there is a penalty for not complying. • It would make more sense to use the money to install an enclosure than it would to pay a citation. • Staff recommends increasing the penalty to \$250.00 to make this option more enticing. |