

## STM 9 – Dog License Fees

*minutes from 1/27/16 A&F meeting*

Larry Pizer, Town Clerk, presented STM Article 9. The town is looking to increase dog licenses by \$5 from \$20 to \$25 for not neutered dogs and \$10 to \$15 for neutered dogs. Fees were last raised in 2001, 15 years ago, for not neutered dogs and in 2006, 10 years ago, for neutered dogs. This increase is requested to cover various costs which have increased including postage, dog tags, and staff pay. The goal is to keep costs as low as possible but enough to cover costs. Revenue projections are as follows:

		<u>Fee</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Revenue</u>
<u>Not Neutered</u>	Current (FY2016)	\$20	832	\$ 16,640
	Proposed (FY2017)	\$25	832	\$ 20,800
	Projected Revenue Increase:			\$ 4,160
<u>Neutered</u>	Current (FY2016)	\$10	8,232	\$ 82,320
	Proposed (FY2017)	\$15	8,232	\$123,480
	Projected Revenue Increase:			\$ 41,160
<b>Total Combined Projected Revenue Increase:</b>				<b>\$ 45,320</b>

Questions:

- Why do dogs have to be licensed? (S Stephenson) State law requires it and dogs must have received rabies shot in order to receive license so it is a way to protect public health.
- What is the method for enforcement? (M McGraw) Vet clinics are required to give information to the Town Clerk for every dog it administers rabies shots to. The Town Clerk's office sends letter to every dog owner informing them of the license fee and deadline to purchase the license. If the deadline is not met, a second letter is sent. The Town has a bylaw where dog owners can receive a non-criminal violation if they do not obtain a dog license where they are summonsed to court. Some to to District Court and explain why they did not obtain a license. For those that do not show up, the violation becomes criminal and they are arraigned, if there is still no compliance, a warrant is issued for their arrest. 95% of dog owners license their dogs before the deadline outlined in the first letter. Compliance from the second letter makes the second letter worth mailing. Each of the next steps get another group to comply, making each step worthwhile.
- Can licenses be renewed online? (P McPherson) Yes
- Anyway this can be done by email to avoid postage costs? (P McPherson) Only for those that provide email addresses which we have for about 15-20% of dog owners. When we purchase the Munis Animal Licensing module it will make the entire process easier and more efficient. When the Town Clerk first began working in this town decades ago, only 8% of dogs were licensed in town.

**Betty Cavacco made a motion to recommend STM Article 9 to Town Meeting. Patricia McPherson, second. The motion carries (11-1-0). Robert Cote, opposed.**

*draft minutes from 3/2/16 A&F meeting*

Melissa Arrighi, Town Manager, presented STM Article 9. The Advisory & Finance Committee heard the dog license fee increase portion of this article previously but did not hear the dog license fine increase portion. The Town Clerk's Office proposes to increase the fine for Failure to License Dogs from \$50 to \$75. Before the fine is assessed, dog owners receive two letters inviting them to purchase a license. Approximately half of the fines are issued to individuals who have received fines previously. The Town Clerk believes that the increase to \$75 will convince many of them that timely licensing is a better option than payment of fines. It had always been \$50 so this would be the first increase.

Questions:

- This fine is monthly correct? (H Helm) Yes.
- Do they then receive notice monthly? (S Stephenson) Not sure but there are definitely reasonable standards and there is the ability to waive the fee in special circumstances like when they fail to notify us that their dog has passed away.

**Patrick O'Brien made a motion to recommend approval of revised STM Article 9 to Town Meeting. Patricia McPherson, second. The motion carries unanimously (13-0-0).**