

Council also declares six more sites as nuisance properties

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Two of the topics on Monday's city council agenda dealt with animals in the community, as well as discussion again on nuisance properties.

A request from the Imperial Police Department asked that the council consider an escalating fine be placed in city code that would make it more expensive for repeat offenders who own dogs that are caught running loose.

Based on the discussion Monday, the first fine would be \$25, the second \$50 and the third \$100.

Currently, the owner of a dog running at large, if found guilty in county court, pays a \$25 fine. With court costs of \$48, it ends up totalling \$73.

That has been the basic fine in the past without any change if it's a repeat offender.

If the proposed changes are approved, the first offense would stay at that level, the second would grow to \$98 (\$50 + \$48) and the maximum fine to \$148 (\$100 + \$48).

If a year occurs between offenses, the fine would stay at the \$25 level, according to the discussion.

Sgt. Ryan Wisnieski was at the meeting and said the September police report showed about seven dogs "running at large."

Four of those, he estimated, were repeat offenders.

City Attorney Josh Wendell was directed to develop a draft with the changes for the council's consideration at their next meeting Oct. 21.

In a related area, the council also will likely be removing the option for city residents to apply for "excessive animal permits."

The permit, if approved by the police department, would allow a city resident to have more than the maximum of two dogs and one cat, or one dog and two cats at a city residence.

With the excessive animal permit in code, people could apply for that and keep more animals, if approved.

The council just dealt with that issue last month. A resident was denied the permit, but came to the council to ask them to consider allowing her to keep more animals.

Some concessions were made in that case, but the resident has to comply with the animal limit by March 1.

By removing the permit application from code, that option would no longer exist.

City Clerk/Administrator said the excessive animal permit also violates the city's zoning ordinances. More than the two dogs/one cat or two cats/one dog limit defines a kennel, she noted, which are not allowed in residential areas.

City Attorney Wendell will also draft the documents on removing that permit option from city code for an upcoming meeting.

Nuisance properties

Six properties, two of which are back on the list, were identified in resolutions as in violation of the city's nuisance codes.

CJ Poltack, representing West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD), the city's nuisance officer, presented information and pictures at the meeting showing why they were in violation.

The properties are located at 1245 Park, 226 West 11th, Winter's Court #26, 234 East 18th, 533 Park and 325 East 4th.

The violations included unfinished siding/construction, unlicensed vehicles, an unsafe structure and items in yard including car batteries, car parts, etc.

The council approved resolutions on all six properties identifying them as violating nuisance code. Owners will be sent letters notifying them the resolutions were passed and giving them a timeline in which to correct the situation.

A seventh property at 500 Broadway was also on the list from WCNDD and involved a broken window. Since other windows on the property had been taken care of, the council asked Poltack to send a letter asking that the additional window be repaired, rather than declaring it a nuisance.

The council also voted to abate (nuisance items removed) an unlicensed vehicle at Winter's Trailer Court #22, and were updated on abatement progress at 226 West 13th.

The latter property has sold, according to the discussion, and the new owner plans to remove the problem structures and tree.