

Bakersfield Special Select Board Meeting
Wednesday, May 17, 2023
6:30pm

Meeting called to order at 6:34pm.

Members present: Josh Goss, Lance Lawyer, John West

Members absent: Todd Cosgrove, Terri Goss

Residents/Guests present: Eric Wunderlich, Ahn Klein, Heidi Moberg, Marci Wunderlich, Granger Heinlein

The board introduced themselves and John told those attending that they were meeting tonight to talk about the puppies. He said they have bit 4 people as far as has been reported. John said that Vermont state regards a qualifying bite as one that has taken place off the property of the residence where the dog lives and the victim had sought medical attention for the bite.

John then read over the bite reports at the meeting.

1st bite- took place in Derby, Vermont on 1/9/2023 and the person bitten was Paul Forsey, a Federal Customs officer. Eric had needed medical attention and the dogs were in a locked parked car and the officer reached in to get medical papers that were needed, and the dogs bit him. The officer said that it was clear that the dogs had been living in the car and he clearly felt that the dogs were protecting their owner's property. John said that the officer sought medical attention for the bite.

2nd bite- took place in Lake George on 2/11/2023, at a Walmart Auto Service Dept. The car was there for service and a mechanic named Orlando was bit, although he did not know he had been bitten until he was at home later. He found a hole in his clothes and saw the broken skin. John said that he had declined medical attention, but 12 days later, his doctor convinced him to get rabies shots because he couldn't contact Eric.

John said that he understood that if a dog has rabies that it will die within 10 days. He said that we know that the dogs are still healthy.

3rd bite was a neighbor that was bitten on the bottom half of her body while on the resident's property. The report had no date and time, and the victim did not initially report it or seek medical attention. Since it happened while on the dog's own property, it doesn't qualify according to State law.

4th bite- happened on Witchcat Rd on 4/01/2023. Nigel Churchill was riding his bike past the dog's residence and the dogs ran off the property and attacked him, pulling him off his bike. John said this one qualifies under the State statute. John asked Eric if he remembered this event and Eric said yes. Eric said that at that time he told the person on the bike to stop. He said that the dogs came to him, and he got them in the house and laying down and then

he went back to talk to him. Nigel had wanted to run, and the dogs would chase him, but he got them to stop and put them away. Eric said that he thought Nigel thought there was nothing at the time and then he said the dogs bit his ankle. John said he probably looked quickly right away and with the adrenalin rush, he probably thought that he was fine. John said that Nigel said that he had 37 puncture wounds. Eric said that he pulled them off as soon as he got there, and Nigel wanted to get on his bike and go and I told him to stop, and he got them in the house. Lance asked if that was because if he had run, the dogs would have pursued him and Eric said, right.

John said that 37 puncture wounds would not mean 37 bites, since there are a lot of teeth in a dog's mouth. John said that the dogs left the property and the victim had to seek medical attention. Lance said that it is irrelevant how many punctures there were, the fact is the dogs bit.

John said that we have a little bit to discuss here with the puppies. Eric said that they went over too much, and he said he thinks we're going to put them down. Lance said, may I ask a question. Lance said he didn't want to be presumptuous at an open meeting, but he said he knew there had been some mental health issues and he suspected that the dogs had stepped up and had been more protective of their owner. Lance said that he was speaking on behalf of the dogs. He felt it was not their fault and if they can be rehomed, they may be able to be retrained. Lance said that the board is asking Eric to give up his dogs, they were not asking him to kill them. Eric said Thank you. Eric said that he has a brother. He said that I am not a dog person. Lance said that Eric has gained the devotion of two dogs, and they have taken care of him. Eric said I understand, I am out of that, I've done too much, I can't take it back.

Eric's sister Ann said, do you understand what they are saying? You have to give up the dogs. Eric said, I know. Lance asked if Eric's brother wanted the dogs. Eric said no. Eric said that his brother had the power that he wanted and he overcame. Marcie said that Eric was talking about when they were in Hamilton, and they got into the crates.

John asked how old the dogs were. Marci said they were 5 years old, a male and a female. The board asked if the family could rehome these animals. Eric's sister Heidi said that she can reach out to the breeders, as these dogs are full breeds, and other places. Josh said that the board will need the info when they are rehomed as they need to make sure that the town that they are rehomed in is aware, in case the dog bites again. Heidi said they want to get them to somebody so they can be retrained before they are placed in a home. She said they are genuine German Shepherds. She said we are going to have to start with the breeder. John said that he agreed the place to start is with the breeder. He said if they could get separated from the pack, Eric being the leader of the pack, into two separate homes, they might be able to be retrained. He said you could also try the Humane Society. Josh said we just need a timeline. Lance said that we have several citizens that are concerned with their safety on Witchcat Rd., and one concern is that the kids are going to be getting out of school in the next couple of weeks. Heidi said that she has reached out to the ASPCA, and they said that since Covid, they have been overwhelmed

with dogs. She said she had no idea that the dogs were biting people, she just didn't realize. She said she is co-guardian, with her sister, for Eric and she has learned that nothing happens quickly. She said they all bring their realities with them, and this is not going to be placed on the back burner, but it will take time. Lance asked if we could shoot for June 1. Heidi said how about if we come back and tell you where we are on June 1, and if I'm making all these phone calls and getting nowhere. Lance said that she could give them ongoing reports of her progress. Heidi said she and her sister were both managing two separate families, and that she would document all her calls and is hoping that they get lucky, and all happens quickly. Lance said that what they are looking for is that our kids in town are going to be getting out of school and we would like the dogs removed by the time that school gets out on June 14. Josh said if we get to June 1st and we're not making any progress... Eric said we can put them down? Josh said we have a month to rehome and if not then it will probably be that they have to be put down. John said if it was a child instead of Nigel, it would have been much worse. Eric said no we don't want that. Heidi said we don't want that. John said until then, we need you to get Beware of Dog signs and put them on your property, and we need you to make sure that if they are outside that they have to be contained or on a leash. Marcie said that she would get the signs. Josh asked Eric if he had something that contains them. Eric said no.

The board asked Granger Heinlein if that was acceptable to him. Granger said yes. He said that he was there to hear the course of action. He said if he lived alone, he probably wouldn't be too concerned because he's a grown man and can take care of himself. But he said that he has a girlfriend with a 10-year-old son and a 5-pound dog. He said if he gets bit, that's one thing, but if they get bit. He said that's the only reason he is here. Granger said he has no problem with Eric as a neighbor. He said that Eric pulled him out of a ditch one night. He said he is just concerned about his girlfriend and her son. Ann said that she agreed with everything. She said to Eric, that I love you so much, but we need to take care of the dogs. John said that we have a game plan, that team Wunderlich is going to find a place for training and rehoming. Heidi said that the ASPCA has a list and in New York, she had started the process. She said she is never done this before, but she thinks in two weeks, we should know if we can rehome them or not. Lance said that if you have anybody interested, feel free to have them contact us. John said that he will email all 3 parties, his email address to be able to contact him.

The board asked Eric is he was good with this plan. Eric said yes. The board thanked everyone for being a part of this. Lance said he know that it must be especially hard on Eric. John said the 5-year pups are young and that they hope to find a place to rehome them. He said that he strongly suggests that they be separated.

Lance made a motion to adjourn the meeting. John seconded the motion and the motion carried with a vote of 3-0.

Meeting minutes were recorded by Tami Brennan.

