



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** HCC-181-FY21, **Version:** 1

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Submitted by: Schaible  
Submitting Department: Legislative  
Agenda Section: Discussion

**Item Title:**

**Animal Welfare and Community Safety Act**

**Suggested Action:**

I move the Mayor and Council authorize the City Attorney to draft legislation to edit Chapter 52 of the City Code for the purposes of achieving the following goals as described in the supplemental documentation.

**Goals:**

- 1) Update animal welfare provisions to reflect modern standards and to be consistent with Prince George's County legislation, such as restrictions on tethering and exposure to severe weather;
- 2) Categorize animal control violations as a Public Nuisance violation (less severe) or a Public Threat violation (more severe);
- 3) Clarify enforcement procedures by:
  - a. Requiring the City to designate persons responsible for responding to Chapter 52 municipal infractions;
  - b. Specifying when municipal infractions require a citation and/or coordination with the Prince George's County Animal Services Division;
  - c. Requiring the City to review and adapt Police General Orders to the requirements of Chapter 52 and applicable Prince George's County laws;
  - d. Requiring the City to develop a Standardized Response Protocol for violations;
- 4) Enhance public awareness and preparedness on animal control issues by:
  - a. Ensuring residents are informed of incidents that may present a threat to public safety;
  - b. Requiring the City to collect and maintain data on animal control complaints and on actions taken in response to complaints and violations;
  - c. Requiring the City to prepare an annual report on Chapter 52 complaints and actions to present to the Mayor and City Council, and to be made available to the public.

**Summary Background:**

Current regulations and enforcement of animal control issues in Hyattsville are unclear, haphazard, and have contributed to tragic outcomes for Hyattsville residents and companion animals. This amendment to Hyattsville Code Chapter 52 creates clear expectations for preventing and responding to animal aggression in Hyattsville and creates new protections to promote the humane treatment of companion animals.

In a meeting with Chief Rodney Taylor of the Prince George's Animal Services Division (PGCASD) on 11/13/2019, Mr. Taylor offered to provide Hyattsville with a "read only" software license for Chameleon; the software system that PGCASD uses to log its actions and record locations of confined and quarantined animals. Once obtained, this software will provide Hyattsville with valuable information regarding any confinement or quarantine orders that have been issued by PGCASD within City limits.

Much credit is owed to the Hyattsville group Residents United for Furry Friends (RUFF) for helping identify shortcomings in our existing code and researching and recommending improvements.

*Council held an initial discussion on this item on December 7, 2020.*

**Next Steps:**

The City Attorney, in consultation with Council Member Schaible, the Hyattsville Chief of Police, and the Hyattsville Director of Community and Economic Development, will review and edit (as needed) the ordinance for discussion and action by the Mayor and Council.

**Fiscal Impact:**

There will be additional requirements to report and follow-up with PGCSAD in cases of animal aggression incidents. Hyattsville will continue to rely on PGCSAD to adjudicate dog bites, as well as maintain the list of dangerous animals, quarantine orders, and confinement orders. Code enforcement responsibilities will be expanded modestly with clear expectations regarding implementation of Chapter 52, and enforcement of the new rules regarding restrictions on tethering and exposure to severe weather. Additional part-time staff support will be required. Cost to be determined.

**City Administrator Comments:**

Staff comments are provided in consultation with Police Department and Community & Economic Development input. There will need to be ongoing discussion and coordination on the overall modifications. The staff can provide a contact number/email for dissemination to the community to capture animal control calls. Most incidents will continue to be handled by PGC Animal Control, but we can coordinate to leverage PGC Animal Control data through GIS and create a report and mapping tool for animal control incidents. Staff will support by publishing a report on a bi-monthly schedule and an annual report, commencing in FY2022 without the need for additional resources. The captured data can include the City response to Chapter 52 incidents. Additional staffing resources will be required to oversee reports, track emails/calls, respond to residents, and follow-up with PGCSAD on status/requirements.

**Community Engagement:**

TBD

**Strategic Goals:**

Goal 3 - Promote a Safe and Vibrant Community

**Legal Review Required?**

Pending