

University Area Community Council Comments on Amendments to Titles 17.05.010 AND 17.10.010. 1-28-21 (We request a response)

Animal Control re leashes

The UACC concurs with the changes to Section 17.05.010 and 17.10.010 of the Municipal code. But we would like far better clarity in the Muni rules as to when Animal Control vs. Code Enforcement is the responsible party for violations at particular locations. Many of our members experience being sent back and forth between municipal departments when animals are involved. When “animal” is mentioned in the realm of Planning, we are automatically directed to Animal Control. When park, or other land use is mentioned then Animal Control directs us to the folks at Title 21. Last month, we asked Animal Control for clarity, and are still waiting for a definitive answer.

We recommend that the enforcement responsibility be clearly defined when and where it deviates from Animal Control in the update of Title 17. Funding is obviously a problem with enforcement. It’s important to identify if a department is not meeting its obligatory functions, so additional budgeting can be requested with the justification that a need is not being met.

In addition, to making needed changes to the code intended to reduce problematic animal behaviors related to leashes, we request that the Muni develop an action plan for more effective enforcement of the Muni titles, otherwise the title amendments provide little benefit to the city.

Additional Issue for Animal Control – Clean-up of feces

While many dog owners do well in controlling their dogs, many others simply ignore leash laws as well their obligation to clean up their animal's feces in public places. We think Animal Control Officers of the Muni Health Department do their best to respond to specific distress calls related to dog-person or dog-dog encounters. However, they don't seem to have time to deal with animal owners who refuse to clean up and properly dispose of their dog's feces whether the dogs are on or off leash.

The result is that other users of the same public places are confronted with a mess. This is a great inconvenience for skiers, hikers, bikers, joggers, other dog walkers, skijorers, ice skaters and anyone just walking in a public place.

Furthermore, feces from dogs and any other pet animals promotes eutrophication of public lakes. It contaminates fresh and saltwater, damages nesting and feeding birds such as loons, grebes, and ducks as well as beavers, muskrats, fish, frogs, essential small/microscopic critters, etc. Feces deposited directly onto lake ice, near or in wetlands, creeks and drainage basins, degrades the ecosystem and health of people of all ages.

To make it a little more vivid and personal, coliform bacteria from your and/or your neighbor's dog feces quickly gets into waters that your and/or kids play and swim in and frequently inadvertently swallow. It causes intestinal and dermatological problems.

We request the Muni Health Department to start now to find more innovative solutions to the problems created by 8+ million pounds of dog feces per year.