

## Holyoke family concerned with dangerous animals in town

Written by Chris Lee

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Dogs became the main topic of discussion for city council members at their Feb. 1 meeting.

Lucas and Jennifer Hayes expressed their concern about a dangerous dog living in their neighborhood. Jennifer told the council about an incident that took place in her front yard last month.

She said a neighbor's pit bull escaped from the yard, ran across the street and violently attacked her cat in the front yard.

The owner of the dog crossed the street to try to get control of the dog. Jennifer said she also tried to scare the dog away by hitting it with an object. The pit bull was then joined in the attack by another smaller dog belonging to the same owner.

Holyoke Police Department was contacted to investigate the incident. "All I got from the initial situation was I could keep a log of the incidents as they happen," Jennifer said. She said she was also told if the dog attacked a person, then it could be classified as a vicious dog. "I want to eliminate the 'if,'" she added. "Because that's my child, myself or my friends."

She was not happy with the way the situation was handled and said she was yelled at by the officer. It was clarified both parties were rather upset during the tense moment.

Councilman JC Peckham showed concern for the situation and assured the Hayeses they would look into it.

Jennifer said she did some research and got in contact with someone from the Colorado Department of Agriculture who directed her to a statute dealing with unlawful ownership of a dangerous dog.

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“I’m not here to pursue criminal action against the owners; that is not my intent,” she said. “My intent is to educate anyone who does not know about this statute because it seems very important. It could potentially keep a vicious dog from attacking a child.”

Jennifer said she would like to see the dog classified as a dangerous dog to keep her family and others from getting bit.

This incident wasn’t the only one with the dog. Jennifer said it seems to be roaming around a lot, and she is concerned for the safety of her family as well as others in the area. She said she has contacted code enforcement once, police twice and spoken with the owners roughly a half dozen times.

Hayes said she would like information and awareness to be brought to others in the community who may be experiencing similar situations.

Police Chief Phil Biersdorfer said a dog-at-large citation has been issued to the owner of the dog. Within the statute presented by Hayes, a class 3 misdemeanor is committed if a dog injures or causes the death of any domestic animal. Biersdorfer said they will be pursuing the charge.

Council members held a 50-minute work session following the meeting to discuss dog issues. City Attorney Al Wall discussed the option of looking into a dog pound in Holyoke. Some questions council members will now look at include the cost and who will run or take care of the facility.

Other workshops will likely be held in the future pertaining to dog issues, according to city clerk/treasurer Kathy Olofson.

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### **Council supports training for Bishop**

Phillips County Economic Development director Nici Bishop attended the meeting and said she would like to attend International Economic Developers (IEDC) training. A scholarship from NMPP is available and Bishop requested Holyoke support the scholarship. Haxtun has supported it in the past and requested the two towns trade off each year supporting it.

Council members approved the request. Supporting the scholarship doesn't cost the city anything, according to mayor Orville Tonsing.

### **Reports of city officials**

Council members heard reports from City Supt. Mark Brown and Police Chief Biersdorfer.

Brown reported the swimming pool boiler installation was completed and the pool opened Monday, Jan. 31.

Biersdorfer presented officer Damon Ellis with a letter of commendation for his extensive involvement and effort with a sexual assault case he worked on in Holyoke.

### **Other business**

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In other business Feb. 1, council members:

—approved 2010 year-end transfers.

—set the price of city owned lots at \$90 per frontage foot for center lots and \$95 per frontage foot for corner lots with a minimum lot size of 75 feet and that it be mandatory to sell the lots in a manner so the entire block can be sold. The prices will be reviewed the first of each year and the city furnishes curb, gutter and oil.

—signed the intergovernmental agreement for the Internet Crimes Against Children Regional Task Force.

—defaulted to the next bidder, Lizbeth Bustillos, to purchase the 1972 Ford pickup at \$1,000. The previous winner had been contacted multiple times but never attempted to pick the truck up, according to Brown.

—set wages for a new hire in the street department at \$13 an hour. After six months a review will take place and wages increased to \$13.50 an hour.

—discussed hanging city of Holyoke council values in the council chambers.