

MINUTES
ALTA TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 2018
4:00 – 5:30 PM
ALTA COMMUNITY CENTER
ALTA, UTAH

1. Call the meeting to order

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Mayor Harris Sondak and Council members Margaret Bourke and Sheridan Davis were present. Council members Cliff Curry and Elise Morgan were excused.

Others in attendance were John Guldner, Kate Black, Piper Lever, Mike Morey, Bekee Hotze, Karen Travis, Annie Mattison and Gage Kazichas.

2. Citizen Input – 00:00:50

There was no citizen input.

3. Discussion on certain sections of the Town of Alta Animal Control Ordinance – 00:01:14

The Mayor explained that much of the ordinance had been reviewed by the town council and what was left to address was the location(s) where a person could walk a dog and leash laws.

Ms. Bourke wanted the record to reflect that the language proposed in the version of the dog ordinance before the council was not agreed upon by all or necessarily a majority of council members.

Ms. Bourke felt that that much of the review process of the dog ordinance has been driven by the issue of watershed and the USFS Special Order that was only brought to our attention recently. To that end, Ms. Bourke drafted some proposed language for a possible amendment to the USFS Order that she felt would bring the town into legal compliance with the language of the order. Ms. Bourke provided the council with that language>

In Section D. of the current USFS Forest Order the language prohibits all animals in the canyon, and reads: "All national forest lands within the Little Cottonwood Canyon Watershed Area lying east of the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon. Ms. Bourke suggested that the following language be added to the end of the aforementioned sentence: "except within the Town of Alta to Alta licensed dogs which hold current Salt Lake City Department of Public Works and Salt Lake County Health Department watershed tags".

Bekee Hotze, District Ranger, entered the meeting at this point and reviewed the history of the issues related to dogs in the canyon and the USFS Forest Order. Ms. Hotze asked if there was a way the Town of Alta and USFS could agree on where dogs can be allowed Ms. Hotze also cited the increase in complaints the USFS has received on the issue of dogs in and around the Town of Alta over the past three years as driving this change in USFS action with respect to the Special Order

Ms. Hotze reviewed the process to amend the Special Order, asserting she had no guarantee that it would even happen, if she proposed it.

Ms. Davis asked Ms. Hotze why is the issue of dogs in the Town of Alta such a high priority when there are so many things impacting the watershed in a much more negative way? Ms. Davis also pointed out the long history of self-regulating in the Town of Alta with agency oversight and requested that the USFS provide the town with a copy of the complaints.

Ms. Hotze recognized the other impacts to the watershed and stated that the USFS is doing what it can to address these impacts with the resources they have.

The Mayor recognized that Ms. Hotze's attendance at this meeting was not on the agenda – Ms Hotze was invited by the Mayor. The Mayor asked the council if they wanted to proceed with reviewing the dog ordinance or have a discussion with Ms. Hotze on the issue of dogs in the town as it relates to the Forest Order and possible amendments to the same.

The Mayor asked Ms. Hotze what will it take for the USFS to allow the Town of Alta vis a vis the federal law to have the same authorities that it has via a vis the county regulations? Using a trail map, Ms. Hotze reviewed areas trails she felt would be areas that dogs could be walked within the Town of Alta, specifically North of U-210 – she did not think that allowing dogs from 'rim to rim" in the town would be acceptable.

The proposed language in the town's ordinance relative to staying 100ft from a waterway and trail was discussed. Allowing people to walk off trail was also discussed as problematic

00:27:00

Non-licensed dogs in the town was brought up and how to address this issue.

Ms. Davis mentioned that having a dog license in the town was a privilege and Salt Lake City Public Utilities has mentioned that the reason Alta is treated differently than other canyons is that the Town of Alta has laws governing dogs and 24-hour enforcement of those laws.

The issue of the increase of service and emotional support dogs in the canyon was also discussed. Mike Morey spoke to this issue.

Ms. Hotze questioned the relative time frames of the council working on changes to the dog ordinance versus how long it would take the USFS to change the USFS special order.

The Mayor pointed out that the Forest Service Supervisor and District Ranger both know that there is probably a zero chance the Town Council would vote new ordinance into effect that complies with the USFS Special Order on this matter.

Ms. Hotze said the level of complaints has gone up recently related to dog in the canyon and on the trails.

00:44:30

Ways of demonstrating the town's commitment on restricting the number of dogs was discussed including the issue of grandfathering certain dogs that are currently licensed in the Town of Alta. Also,

there was discussion whether issuing temporary dog licenses for those getting married in Alta ought to be continued to be allowed. .

Ms. Davis expressed that it is a privilege to have a dog in Alta – it is not given or a right.

There was further discussion on whether any changes to the current dog ordinance would be enough as it relates to the current USFS special order on this matter.

Ms. Hotze wanted the town to try and find areas in the town where dogs would be permitted and other areas where they would not be allowed which would address the USFS concerns about dogs on forest land within the town. Ms. Hotze went on to recommend that the town address all the changes in its ordinance first before the USFS uses its best efforts to address any changes to the Special Order.

00:57:10

The issue of changes to the USFS staff and its effects on efforts to address this issue was discussed.

The issue of finding better ways to endorse our regulations was brought up as well as areas in Alta that the USFS feels dogs could be allowed on USFS and private land.

Ms. Hotze suggested trails where owners could walk their dogs: Alta/Brighton (Michigan City) and the Mt. Superior trail neither being USFS lands Ms. Hotze will review the merits of the Devils Castle trail. And whether it could be dog permissible. Generally speaking Ms. Hotze did not have a problem with dogs on land located north of highway 210.

The Mayor followed up by asking about dogs in the “Commercial Core”, in the residential sections of the town west of the commercial core in the town and pathways to the commercial core, the Grizzly Gulch neighborhood and the Albion Basin homes. In addition, the summer road specifically from the Grizzly homes to the commercial core and the summer road from the Albion Basin to the Grizzly homes was also discussed.

Ms. Hotze expressed her confidence in the Town of Alta’s efforts to address the concerns of the USFS on the issue of dogs on federal land within the Alta community.

Ms. Hotze stated preparing a map addressing areas in the town where dogs can or cannot be would be helpful – addressing where dogs can be versus where they can’t be might be a better approach.

The effects to the environment and wildlife of dogs off leash was reviewed.

The issue of dogs off - leash on private land north of highway 210 was discussed.

The discussion continued on the number of dogs in Alta and complaints about those dogs.

The Mayor and council thanked Ms. Hotze for her time and her willingness to address and respond to questions from the council on these issues.

01:23:11

The Mayor reviewed the current issue with requests from individuals having weddings this summer and their desire to bring dogs to those events. The mayor wanted to make sure that he followed the wishes and desires of the Town Council on this matter while acknowledging that he could act on his own.

Piper Lever verified that there were about 7-10 people holding weddings in Alta this summer that were waiting to hear whether they could bring their dogs to their weddings.

Mayor Sondak laid out the pros and cons of allowing the licensing of “wedding dogs” this summer while the ordinance is being reviewed.

The Mayor sought input from council members Davis and Bourke about issuing the temporary licenses this summer. Both council members expressed concern about issuing such licenses and the signal it sent that the council was not taking seriously the USFS concerns regarding the number of dogs.

Hearing those concerns, the Mayor directed Piper Lever to communicate with the interested parties that he would follow the counsel of the council and not issue temporary wedding licenses this summer.

01:31:34

Hearing no further business before the Council, there new as a motion by Margaret Bourke to adjourn and the meeting with a second by Sheridan Davis. The motion was carried.

Passed and approve this 21st day of June 2018.

s/Katherine S.W. Black
Town Clerk