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Article published Aug 17, 2005

Pit bull rules dropped

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The Enquirer

Pit bulls will not be singled out in Battle Creek.

An ordinance unanimously introduced by the Battle Creek City Commission on Tuesday to regulate the treatment of animals in the city originally included a section that referred to pit bulls as nuisance animals that had to be muzzled in public.

The ordinance referred to pit bull terriers, American Staffordshire terriers, Staffordshire bull terriers and American pit bull terriers.

After hearing concerns from about 12 area residents, commissioners voted 8-1 to remove the breed-specific language from the ordinance, which was requested by the animal control division of the Battle Creek Police Department.

Commissioner Steve Franklin voted against the amendment because he said he wanted the entire ordinance to be scrapped.

"Having this be breed-specific makes about as much sense as me being intimidated by Commissioner (Sam) Bullock here because he's a different race," said Jason Pierce, who is white, referring to Bullock, who is black. "That's all it is, is a different breed. I don't know why we're here talking about this when we should be talking about animal cruelty and animal fighting laws."

Ann Lyon said the ordinance would not stop the people who are responsible for having vicious dogs.

"If this passes, the people who will need muzzles on their dogs still will not have them," she said. "It's the responsible dog owners who will be doing this to their dogs."

Additionally, it's not fair to say that all pit bulls are vicious, said Christopher Campbell.

"The problem is, it's not the dog, it's the owner," he said. "The majority of dog attacks do not happen when the dog is on a leash. Also, you hear about dogs snapping. There's no such thing as a dog snapping. It becomes vicious because it is trained to be and has learned how to be through mistreatment."

City Attorney Clyde Robinson said he has recommended against including breed-specific language in previous ordinances, but said it was added upon the request of animal control.

The recent pit bull attack on a 12-year-old Battle Creek boy was not the reason for the ordinance being introduced, Robinson said.

According to information included in Tuesday's agenda packet, pit bulls account for 80 percent of the city's vicious dog complaints, and 44 of the 105 dogs animal control picked up in June were pit bulls.

"There appears to be a rational basis for including breed-specific language in this," Robinson said.

Commissioner Ryan Hersha said labeling pit bulls as nuisances and forcing them to be muzzled would not

stop the problem.

"I don't see how this would affect those statistics," Hersha said.

"This merely penalizes people who are responsible, caring dog owners."

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