

News

Animal control quarantines dog after attack

by **ANDREW MATLOCK**
 Staff Reporter

Tuesday morning at approximately 7:35 a.m., Jim Richardson was taking his miniature Schnauzer for a walk in his Holmes Street neighborhood when the pair were attacked by a Great Dane owned by Calimesa Councilman Jon Winningham.

According to Richardson, the Great Dane came up behind him and started attacking his dog. When he tried to pick up his dog, Richardson said the Great Dane started biting him.

Richardson fell and while on his back punched the Great Dane several times in the face before the dog finally left.

Richardson said he was bitten at least 10 times on the hand and had to miss work because of his injuries.

Meanwhile, as of Tuesday afternoon, his dog was still in surgery and listed in serious condition having sustained broken ribs and a punctured abdominal cavity.

According to Robert Miller of Riverside County Animal Control, Winningham's dog was impounded and placed in quarantine for 10 days while rabies tests are run.

According to Miller, during that 10 day period, a hearing by an independent, impartial hearing officer would probably take place to determine if the dog should be considered as "vicious" and if so order it to be put down.

Winningham could appeal the put down order to Riverside Superior Court, but the dog would remain with animal control during the appeal process.

Miller indicated the investigation would focus on two issues. The first being safety related and the second being the dog's previous history of attacks.

"Because of the severity of this incident and the past, we are taking a serious look at this," said Miller.

According to the Riverside Superior Court's website, in June of 2004, Winningham was charged with three counts of violating mandatory dog licensing for the same dog.

The charges were apparently the result of a pair of attacks within a span of nine months on another dog owned by Richardson.

Winningham eventually pled guilty to a disturbing the peace charge in January of 2005 and paid a fine of \$151.80.

As for Richardson, he doesn't understand why this was allowed to happen again. When asked about the prospects for his dog, Richardson said, "I'm really scared about this right now."

When reached for comment, Winningham said, "We're terribly sorry for the pain suffered by Jim."

He went on to say, "We're going to be responsible and take care of things" referring to any medical or other costs Richardson has incurred as a result of the incident.

Meanwhile, Winningham is due back in court on Aug. 9 for a felony settlement conference hearing stemming from charges of possession and intent to distribute child pornography.

If Winningham's attorney, Clay Presley, and John Henry, the assistant district attorney (DA) handling the case can reach an agreement, a plea could be entered at the hearing.

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If not, it is expected that a preliminary hearing would be scheduled, at which time the DA would lay out the case against Winningham and the judge would rule if there is sufficient evidence for a trial.

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