

Derry resident assails town's attitude towards dog bite

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DERRY — Four months after requesting the Town Council investigate Town Administrator Russell Marcoux for alleged unprofessional conduct, Derry resident Janet Fairbanks said she intends to take her concerns to the state with a letter to the governor.

In August, Fairbanks was bitten by a dog at the Derry dog park while she tried to free her four-pound chihuahua puppy, Taz, from the jaws of a Siberian husky.

She was not surprised when the town said insurance would not cover the \$250 in medical expenses she was left to pay after her own insurance footed the rest of the bill.

She was surprised, however, by how she was treated by the Town Administrator Russell Marcoux, who she claims was "arrogant" and "aloof" when she came to see him after the ordeal to discuss the response to the attack by the town.

Marcoux yesterday declined to comment on Fairbanks' accusations.

In a letter filed to the Town Council stamped received on Sept. 13, Fairbanks alleges that during a Sept. 2 meeting with Marcoux he addressed her request for information about the town's animal control duties with queries as to whether she was selling her home and statements labeling her a "criticizer." In that letter she wrote: "May I assume that you will perform an investigation into this matter, and apprise me of its outcome?"

"I have yet to hear from any town council member about the letter that I've written," she said in a recent interview. "It is difficult for me to understand how someone in his position in the town took the approach he did. It was demeaning."

Marcoux allegedly went on to assail Fairbanks' character, telling her that nobody who witnessed the attack at the dog park was able to corroborate his story "spoke volumes about (her) as a person," according to the letter.

"I don't know why he felt the need to turn the tables on me," she said. "He reduced me to mush by insinuating I wasn't a person of integrity."

She said the way the other dogs surrounded her as she and her husband tried to free Taz probably made it difficult to see what was happening. The owners of both the husky and the white dog denied their animals were involved.

Town Council Chairman Jack Dowd said he recalls receiving the letter and asked Marcoux about the incident but did not recall a demand for a response.

"He has a lot of people that come through with problems and we've never had a report from anyone else," Dowd said of Marcoux, who has been the town administrator for approximately 18 months.

Fairbanks said Marcoux went on to accuse her of fabricating the incident, telling her Taz bit her at the park. If her own dog had bit her, Fairbanks said she would not have gone through the "trauma of receiving 15 rabies shots."

In requesting an investigation into Marcoux's behavior, Fairbanks said she was hoping to remedy what she believes is a consistent pattern of disrespect between town officials and any dissenters in the community.

"Mr. Marcoux is a big advocate of respect . . . respect for town employees and for town councilors, but I as a citizen wasn't treated with respect," she said. "It was degrading."

"If you don't share his views, and don't have a consistent positive outlook on the town, then he doesn't want to hear it," she said.

Fairbanks believes she was treated the way she was because she's "thought of as a chronic complainer," because she speaks up at council meetings when she feels something that does not benefit the town is about to

be approved.

Fairbank's representative on the council, Phyllis Katsakiores, said she was never contacted by Fairbanks regarding the incident aside from the letter. Like Dowd, Katsakiores cannot recall a demand for a response in the letter.

"I wish she would have called me directly. When people do, I act immediately," Katsakiores said. "Mr. Marcoux is very fair and has a good rapport with the people. He's not the type of person who would hurt or insult people."

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