

Bull mastiff banned from Fairhaven after brutal attack

August 12, 2008 6:00 AM

FAIRHAVEN — The Board of Selectmen voted Monday to ban a bull mastiff from town after it brutally attacked a 9-pound foxy-poo on a private Fairhaven beach in June.

As Don Cordeira, the bull mastiff's owner, is not a Fairhaven resident, banning his dog from town was the maximum penalty selectmen could impose. Mr. Cordeira lives in Acushnet.

Mr. Cordeira did not attend Monday night's meeting, instead sending a letter through his attorney promising to never bring his dog into town again.

However, Sweetie, the foxy-poo, still encased in a cast covering most of her tiny body, was present, along with owner Claudia Martin.

"Obviously, we have an aggressive bull mastiff," said Selectman Brian Bowcock. "Hopefully, nobody will be harmed in Acushnet."

Selectmen also voted to send notice of the ban to Fairhaven police and to the town of Acushnet.

Ms. Martin gave impassioned testimony about the June 29 attack and its aftermath.

"It was a nightmare," she said.

Ms. Martin was walking Sweetie on a private beach near her Turner Avenue home when the bull mastiff ran onto the beach and lunged "right for the throat," she said.

Mr. Cordeira stopped the attack by sitting on his dog as he told Ms. Martin to "run for her life," Ms. Martin said.

A neighbor drove Ms. Martin, clutching Sweetie to her chest, to the animal hospital; Ms. Martin brought the blood-covered shirt she was wearing that day to the meeting as evidence of the severity of her dog's wounds.

Despite the extent of Sweetie's injuries, the dog is expected to recover, according to Ms. Martin, who said she has spent about \$10,000 on veterinary bills since the attack.

"If that was a child with me, I seriously think that child would be dead," Ms. Martin said. "I seriously think (the bull mastiff is) a menace to society."

About 10 people attended the meeting, two of whom testified that Mr. Cordeira's dog had attacked their pets — one dog and one cat — as well.

Ms. Martin said she is aware of at least five animals that have been attacked by the bull mastiff.

"When I saw this dog, it scared the hell out of me as to what this dog is capable of," she said.

In a story in The Standard-Times last month, Mr. Cordeira said his dog is very friendly with people but does attack other animals.

However, outside of the June incident, no attacks had been reported to the police or the animal control officers in either Acushnet or Fairhaven, according to Tiffany Tripp, Fairhaven's animal control officer.

"We are limited" in the sanctions we can impose, said Selectman Michael Silvia, but "we should not take this gentleman at his word" that he will not bring the dog back into town.

"If you see this dog in town just one time, please call the police," Selectman Charles Murphy said.

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