

## Selectmen ban dog following attack

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By Mali Lim

News Correspondent

FAIRHAVEN —The bull mastiff that attacked and mauled a Fairhaven resident's pet dog has been banned permanently from the town, following a dog dangerousness hearing and unanimous vote by selectmen Monday night.

In the first dog hearing to come before the board in several years, selectmen heard testimony from Claudia Martin and neighbors who came to her rescue when Sweetie, her fox terrier-poodle mix, was attacked on June 29th by a bull mastiff on a private beach near Martin's Turner Avenue home.

"It was a nightmare," recounted Martin, who calls the 5 year-old Sweetie her "little baby." The bull mastiff, owned by Don Cordeiro of Acushnet, was unleashed when it attacked Martin's dog. "I was walking down the beach throwing seashells for her, and this bull mastiff came down the lane and made a run for her."

The 200-pound bull mastiff grabbed the 9-pound Sweetie in its mouth, Martin testified, before turning on her.

"(Cordeiro) told me to run for my life, as he jumped on his dog."

Martin displayed the blood-stained t-shirt she was wearing when her neighbors rushed her and Sweetie to the Mass-RI Veterinary ER in Swansea where Sweetie was resuscitated and treated for a punctured lung and broken rib.

The veterinarian bills totaled close to \$10,000, said Martin, who brought a recovering and quietly docile Sweetie to the hearing to show selectmen. She told the board that she made several attempts to contact Cordeiro at his home and finally called him at his place of work to discuss compensation for the veterinarian bills but was met with verbal abuse.

Martin produced statements from residents in Acushnet, documenting at least four other instances where his dog has attacked other animals, including a cat and a golden retriever. Two of Cordeiro's neighbors were present to testify about incidents when their pets had also been attacked by the bull mastiff, although they expressed reluctance to see the animal put down.

Fairhaven's animal officer, Tiffany Tripp, was called in to testify on the results of her investigation into the incident, where she relayed that Cordeiro had been cooperative, and his story concurred with Martin's accounts. She also added that Acushnet did not have any documentation of the previous four attacks as those had occurred in Cordeiro's yard, and none of the animals' owners had chosen to file reports.

Cordeiro, who was not present at the hearing, sent a letter through his attorney, Patrick Walsh, in which he agreed to keep the dog out of Fairhaven, and selectmen accepted that arrangement.

"The decision will be conveyed to the town of Acushnet, and it will be up to Acushnet to decide what they want to do," Board of Selectmen Chairman Michael Silva told Martin. "Unfortunately, we're limited as to action we can take regarding dogs not in this town and not in our jurisdiction."

"The most serious action this board can take is to ban the dog from Fairhaven," agreed fellow selectman Brian Bowcock. "Acushnet has to be made aware that this is an aggressive dog, and hopefully there will be no tragedies in Acushnet."

In other dog-related issues before the board, Animal Control Officer Tiffany Tripp requested that selectmen look into the legalities of rabbit hunting with beagles, particularly on town property.

"We have the issue of people hunting with beagles on town property," said Tripp. "They're using shock collars as a method of controlling the dogs, but as far as I'm concerned, that's not really controlling them — dog doesn't know a private area from a public area when tracking rabbits."

She asked for a clarification of hunting laws, particularly in connection with using dogs instead of guns to hunt rabbits in the Little Bay area.

The board agreed to check with legal counsel, as well as with the game, fisheries and wildlife department, to see what current dog hunting laws are in effect as well as what is or isn't allowed in conservation areas."

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