



Merrimac: Dog restricted to yard after biting woman twice

By Robin Thomas
Correspondent

MERRIMAC — The victim of a dog attack asked selectmen this week to destroy the animal, but after discussion, an alternative solution was found.

Lisa Nihan-Demeule of 21 S. Pleasant St. said that she was bitten twice last October by a Bernese mountain dog owned by Clifton Bixby of 82 River Road.

Animal Care and Control Officer Madelyn Cirinna told selectmen that Nihan-Demeule was attacked while walking along a narrow and dangerous part of River Road. The 4-year-old dog was on a retractable leash, so it was free to move away from its owner. Cirinna added that this same dog had bitten another individual two years earlier.

Nihan-Demeule said that the dog's aggressive actions were unexpected because a Bernese mountain dog has a reputation as a gentle breed.

Bixby said he adopted his pet from the New Hampshire Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and he acknowledged that he was unaware of the dog's treatment prior to adoption. The NHSPCA receives nearly 4,000 neglected or abused animals each year, according to its Web site.

Nihan-Demeule said that because this was the dog's second offense, "A warning is just not enough."

"I was in fear for my life," she said. "The dog is vicious."

Immediately after the attack, Nihan-Demeule had wanted the animal destroyed, but at the recent hearing she suggested an alternative method of control should be requiring the animal to wear a muzzle.

Bixby insisted that he no longer walks his dog in public areas and that he now confines his pet to his home and fenced-in yard. The dog leaves the property only to visit the veterinarian or groomer.

In addition, Selectman Carol Traynor told Bixby that he must post "Beware of Dog" signs, which he agreed to do.

Nihan-Demeule said that she was "satisfied" with the resolution.

"I'm glad to know that he is under control now," she said.

Traynor agreed, "At this point, they've rectified the problem."

Selectman Earl Baumgardner said, "It sounds as if you've more or less remedied the situation."

But he warned the pet owner, "Know that if it happens again, you'll be back before us."

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