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# Mother wants changes in Lebanon dog law after attack on toddler

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**By Gene Hartley**

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LEBANON, Mo. -- A play date at a neighbor's house ended in heartbreak for two families. Now the parents of a toddler ask the city to re-examine its ordinances for dogs.

The idea that an otherwise good-natured dog can snap at anytime is a nightmare. Now the family that woke up in it wants to keep it from happening again.

Trains, of all kinds, are one of Sean King's favorite things -- and 2-year-old Sean is one of his mother's favorite things.

"He knows his manners. He loves to go outside and play. I would cut the grass and he would push a stroller thinking he would cut the grass," said Rhonda King.

Sean's social nature makes him a popular playmate. On June 19, the Kings' neighbors welcomed him over.

"We talked for a little bit and I said, 'Sean, it's time to go,' and she said, 'No, it's fine, he could play,'" said King.

As Sean and another child played in a sandbox, King returned to her backyard.

"All of a sudden, I just heard what sounded like a dog tearing up another dog," she said.

But there was no other dog. The neighbors' bull terrier had gnarled Sean's ear.

"What went through my mind was, 'Is he going to blame me in the future because I let him go over?'" she said.

Doctors were able to reattach part of the ear that was ripped off.

"It just makes me cringe when something like this happens," said Lebanon Animal Control officer Joe Majerak. "We probably have a serious bite once maybe every year."

The idea of a dog ban has been brought up before but the city is happy with its vicious dog ordinance. Animal Control waits until after a dog bite and, depending on how serious it is, decides whether to euthanize the dog.

In Sean's case, that wasn't an issue. The neighbors euthanized the dog right after the attack.

King feels that more should be done before another child is changed forever.

"How many skin grafts? I don't know. How many plastic surgeries? I don't know. I just know we've got a future," she said.

Sean has more medical procedures in his immediate future. He had some more surgery on Monday morning, and his mother is happy to report 75 percent of his ear is intact.

His hearing seems stable for now, and the next step will be plastic surgery to replace some of the cartilage.

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