

## Dog attack re-ignites call for a leash law



*Written by Susan Shultz*

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The cries of a dog being attacked at Old Town Hall Houses was likened to 10 babies crying together by Carole Tyler, who said the incident took place just outside her window Saturday night.

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Owner Allen Delaney didn't have to just hear it. He had to watch his Bichon Frise get suddenly attacked by a golden retriever, one of four dogs being walked, unleashed, by another man on Old Town Hall Houses property, where Delaney lives.

Delaney, a retired Darien police officer, also has bite marks on his hand. He is not entirely sure if the bites are from the other dog or his own, as he jumped in the middle of the fight to save his smaller dog. He also said that the other dog owner attempted to break up the fight as well.

Remy was left in serious condition. He is currently being treated in Norwalk. The attack happened fast, and could have been prevented by a town leash ordinance, Delaney said.

"I absolutely think the town needs a law," he told The Darien Times Wednesday. Delaney said he worked hard to change rules to allow Old Town Hall residents to have small dogs. But he sees dogs unleashed around the neighboring areas all the time.

Delaney said Remy is expected to make a full recovery in 10 to 14 days.

"The town needs a leash law and they need to be strictly enforced," his neighbor, Carole Tyler, wrote in a letter to The Darien Times this week, after hearing the incident.

"Strict rules and regulations were set up by the Darien Housing Authority to allow tenants to have small dogs at the Old Town Hall Houses. The owners of these small dogs here have abided by these rules at all times. However, whatever happened to Darien's leash law? We need it!" Tyler wrote.

Tyler said the dog was severely injured with "four huge puncture wounds in his spine."

According to Darien Police Capt. Fred Komm, the investigation has gotten more complicated because the owner of the bitten dog also reported being bitten.

"It happened at 11:55 p.m. on May 30," Captain Komm said.

The other dog owner was walking three unleashed dogs and attacked the complainant's dog, he said.

"The dog has injuries to his face and is being treated at Norwalk Animal Hospital," he said.

Although the owner of the dog that allegedly attacked was initially fined almost \$200, Komm said that because the injured dog's owner called the police after the incident saying he had suffered a bite also, the investigation has been reopened.

In May 2009, a dog leash ordinance was brought before the Representative Town Meeting.

A group of dog owners who meet mornings at Cherry Lawn Park opposed the proposed leash ordinance, which would require dogs be on leashes at all times when off their property.

Complaints about the lack of flexibility on the proposed ordinance led to the RTM pulling it from the agenda.

Last month, Karen Armour, the Representative Town Meeting moderator, said that the ordinance has not returned to an agenda since. She said there were meetings with dog owners and last she heard, the dog owners in question were going to return with a proposal of a dog park or some ideas but she has not heard back.

Dog owners said that funding a dog park is not practical in today's economic times. Money for a dog park in the town's budget has been removed every year before even reaching the RTM for final approval.

Chip Stahl, the animal control officer, said that a leash ordinance could have prevented the attack this past weekend.

"There was someone walking three dogs off-leash," he said. "If the dogs had been on the leash, it would not have occurred. It would make more sense to have a leash law."

The walker of the three off-leash dogs received two tickets as per the state's law against having dogs roam and for nuisance biting.

Opponents to a town-wide leash law say the state's laws are enough. However, Stahl says that the wording of the state law is not enough to prevent incidents.

"The issue is that you have to wait for the dog to do something to prove it is out of control or allowed to roam before you can give someone a ticket. So if a dog was off the leash, I'd have to wait for it to run into the road before I could give a ticket. With a leash law, I could give the ticket before that happened," he said.

Stahl said that he gets a report of a dog bite every three weeks. In addition to this past Saturday, he cited April 23, April 19 and March 10 as the last three incidents.

Stahl said that the small dog was injured quite severely but is expected to be all right, and the owner had a couple of puncture wounds on the back of his hand.

The incident is still under investigation by the Darien Police Department.

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