

Statement on Revisions to Section 78, the Animals Section, of Huntington Town Code
Ginny Munger Kahn, President
Long Island Dog Owners Group (LI-DOG)
Tues., July 12, 2016

Good afternoon, I'm Ginny Munger Kahn, the president of the Long Island Dog Owners Group. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access to public parks and beaches for LI dog owners and their dogs. Since our founding in Huntington 18 years ago, we've worked successfully with elected officials to get 10 dog parks created around LI, including Huntington's dog run in 2004.

We also serve on the Huntington Greenway Trails Citizens Advisory Committee, where we have worked with our colleagues and the Town to get five new trails designated for on-leash dog walking in Town parks. These new trails are a wonderful addition to the recreational resources available to Huntington dog owners, and we want to thank the Town Board for continuing to move this initiative forward.

Today, we are here at the invitation of Councilman Mark Cuthbertson to provide our input on revisions to Sect. 78, the Animals section, of the Town Code.

We strongly support the Town's efforts to protect the welfare of animals, especially in regards to the tethering of dogs outside for long periods of time and by means that can cause pain and suffering. As animal lovers, it's hard to understand why any animal is ever subjected to abuse, and we are grateful that Huntington has joined other jurisdictions, including Suffolk County, in seeking to limit this practice and make it more humane.

We also want to commend the Town for addressing the issue of dogs being left unattended in hot cars by providing officers with the ability to immediately rescue animals in such situations.

We also welcome the Town's efforts to require people to immediately pick up after their dogs and properly dispose of pet waste. We strongly believe in protecting the environment and everyone's enjoyment of public spaces by requiring people to scoop-the-poop.

The Town has done excellent work on the Code revision, but we have recommendations on four modifications we believe are important to clarify the law and improve public safety. In making our recommendations, we have kept the practices of other jurisdictions, especially Suffolk County, in mind. We believe conformity with the County helps community understanding and enforcement of the law.

First, in regards to the running at large rules, we recommend carving out an exception to the rule for the Town's off-leash areas. Most jurisdictions with dog runs, dog parks and other authorized off-leash areas have a provision that allows people to let their dogs off-leash **"in an authorized off-leash area."**

Second, in regards to the tethering of dogs, we recommend that it be clear that the use of choke collars and pinch collars are not allowed whenever a dog **is tied "to any object"**. As written now, the rule would outlaw the use of choke collars in all circumstances, which we do not believe is the intent of this revision.

Third, in regards to the creation of “nuisances’ by dogs, the Code now requires dog owners to put their dogs in the street--“ in that portion of the street lying between the curb lines”-- to do their business and then they are required to follow them into the street to pick up after them. This is dangerous not only to people and dogs, but to drivers. Other jurisdictions have updated their rules regarding nuisances on public property by getting people off roadways and out of harm’s way. We recommend that the Town do the same.

In any case and in all cases, we fully support the following rule that people **immediately** clean up after their dogs **wherever** they go and that they properly dispose of pet waste in a garbage receptacle.

Finally, we are recommending that the Town clarify the section that deals with Menacing by dogs. We are concerned that the section is vague and open to misinterpretation. We recommend the Town clarify this section so dog owners with enthusiastic or rambunctious dogs are not subject to penalties because their dogs’ behavior is misinterpreted by people who are not familiar with dogs.

Once again, we commend the Town for taking these important steps for improving the welfare of animals. Today, Americans spend \$60 **billion** a year on the care of their pets. This reflects the increasing status and concern for the welfare of dogs and cats in our society and more specifically our families. We are very appreciative of the Town’s efforts to address this increased concern by the public and we look forward to moving these important changes that will protect animals forward.

More info:

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