

MAURICE RIVER TOWNSHIP
Special Meeting
Trap – Neuter & Return (Feral Cats)
Monday, February 11, 2019 at 6:30 pm

This meeting has been advertised in accordance with the statutes of the State of New Jersey.

Present: J. Roy Oliver, Mayor
Ken Whildin, Deputy Mayor
Bill Ashton, Committeeman
Frank DiDomenico, Solicitor
Denise L. Peterson, Municipal Clerk

Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Oliver at 6:30 pm and the pledge of allegiance followed.

Roll Call: Mr. Oliver, present
Mr. Whildin, present
Mr. Ashton, present

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss a Trap-Neuter & Return program in Maurice River Township due to the feral cat population.

Public Comment

Mr. Whildin made a motion to open the public comment session noting the time at 6:34 pm; seconded by Mr. Ashton.

Roll Call: Ayes – Whildin, Ashton, Oliver Nays – None

Ms. Dorothy Dayton, Leesburg, asked what territory will this cover. Mr. Oliver stated that it will be for the entire township with concentration on ‘hot spots’ as a priority. Ms. Dayton asked that all meetings be placed on the bulletin boards. Mr. Oliver asked if Ms. Dayton felt the cat population was a problem; she replied ‘yes’. Mr. Oliver also asked if she believed that neutered/spayed would help reduce the number of cats; she replied ‘yes’. Ms. Dayton was in favor of a TNR program.

Mr. Bob Whildin, Heislerville, asked what residents were to do about cats walking all over cars and trespassing on their property. Mr. Whildin stated ‘if’ a cat has no owner it is better to euthanize them. Mr. Whildin was against the TNR program but agreed that there was a cat population problem and that a cat that was fixed could not reproduce.

Ms. Ashley Hughes, Millville, asked how many cats will a sanctuary hold such as Carol’s Cats and added that cat colonies are a secondary problem.

Mr. Oliver stated he did not want to get ahead in this meeting but does not want a repeat of the August 2017 meeting where nothing was done for this problem. Ms. Hughes asked if ‘rabies’ vaccination will be given also. Mr. Oliver confirmed. Ms. Hughes was against the TNR program. Mrs. Hughes advised that her daughter was bitten by a cat and the treatment was very complex which required going into Philadelphia as the hospitals here do not carry the treatment.

Ms. Sharon Johnson, stated she was for the TNR program.

Mr. Bob Whildin, asked if the township ordinance provided that is someone feeds a cat that they are the owner of the cat.

Mr. Oliver provided that picked up cats will be held for 7 days and if not picked up or adoptable they will be euthanized. Additionally, TNR cats will be chipped and ‘caretaker’ will need to pick up if feral cat. However if the cat is picked up as a nuisance a second time and the caretaker does not accept responsibility the cat will be euthanized. Grants will be solicited from various sources and the program is proposed for a one-year trial period.

Mr. John Campbell, Leesburg, asked what will happen once the grant funds are used; where will money come from in the future. Additionally, Mr. Campbell stated that what will be done for ‘dumping’ of cats.

Mr. Oliver reiterated that no tax dollars will be used toward the program. Mr. Campbell stated he is more against the TNR as he believes it is only a short term fix.

Mr. Tomlin stated he is for the TNR program. Mr. Tomlin expressed concern over a recent encounter between his self and Mrs. Gross regarding this subject and pointed out that 'social media' is adding to the conflict. Mr. Tomlin stated the feral cat population problem is a 'human problem' and that there are many areas affected with this problem. Mr. Tomlin stated that to date he personally has taken 29 cats over that last few years for spay/neuter and presently only 12 cats remain. Mr. Tomlin added that vacant houses contribute to this problem.

Ms. Bonnie Defelice, Leesburg, stated she is for the TNR program. She has taken some cats for spay/neuter but needs help to get others done.

Mr. Oliver stated that only cats located in Maurice River Township will be permitted in the program which will require volunteers from the township.

Mr. Whildin made a motion to close the public comment session noting the time at 7:00 pm; seconded by Mr. Ashton.

Roll Call: Ayes – Whildin, Ashton, Oliver Nays - None

Discussion

1 Township Committee

Mr. Oliver advised that grants will be solicited to cover the expense of the TNVR program. Mr. Oliver stated that the primary problem is there are 'too many feral cats' in the township. Currently the township has a contract with the South Jersey Regional Animal Shelter (\$12,000 annual fee); the SJRAS will hold a cat for 7 days and if the cat is adoptable it will be placed and if it is not than it is euthanized. Caretakers of feral cats will be notified and must take responsibility of 'nuisance' cats. On second pickup the caretaker must take responsibility and if not picked up the cat will be euthanized.

Mr. Whildin explained that he has spoken to several experts over the past couple months and two concerns expressed are toxoplasmosis and that cats kill birds. Mr. Whildin added that TNR is difficult because cats continue to be 'dropped off' which contributes to the problem. Additionally the feeding of feral cats is a problem as it contributes to the vacuum effect which is the more food in an area the more cats will live in that area. Mr. Whildin explained that TNR does not reduce the number of cats over the long run because these two variables cannot be controlled. Ultimately the reduction in cat population due to TNR will last one year to 18 months because of the feeding and drop off cats.

Mr. Whilden added that one person he spoke with suggested removing kittens from the mother ASAP and further, the SJRAS will take the kittens and place them for adoption.

Mr. Oliver asked the public to address problems, concerns, etc. directly to the Township Committee and to not address the opposing opinions with their fellow residents.

Mr. Ashton questioned taking of the kittens would decrease the problem. Mr. Whildin suggested both TNR and removing kittens asap from the mother and place for adoption.

Mr. Ashton pointed out that feeding the cats is a humane thing to do. Mr. Ashton asked if the fee for spay/neuter is the same for everyone or is it lower for cats being done through this program. Mr. Ashton suggested starting the program and deal with getting additional funds after the trial period, if the program works.

Ms. Dayton, Leesburg, asked if 'hot spots' would be addressed first.

Ms. Carol Hickman, TNVR coordinator, stated that township records show a decrease in cats being picked up by Animal Control between the years 2017 and 2018. This she believes is because of the residents who already do TNVR for feral cats on their own.

Ms. Hickman, states that toxoplasmosis is not such a big problem and that CDC does not keep track of cases nor does the County Health Department. She stated cats get toxoplasmosis from eating raw meat. Pregnant women should avoid litter boxes.

Ms. Hickman, stated that she works with many people in Commercial Township regarding feral cats but currently they do not have an official program. The previous grant for Commercial Township was for \$25,000 and they were able to do 525 cats due in part to collection of copayments from the caretakers of the feral cats.

Ms. Hickman stated that municipalities have better chances of acquiring a grant versus non-profit organizations. Ms. Hickman furthered that both sides must come together to properly address the feral cat population.

It was discussed and determined that if grant funds are acquired that the 'Ward Avenue' area will be address first.

Mrs. Gross questioned if the land use ordinance will be addressed. Mr. Oliver stated the ordinance will be addressed at a later date.

Adjournment

Mr. Whildin made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Ashton.

Denise L. Peterson, Municipal Clerk