

# Riverview to review animal control bylaw

**Council defends bylaw but agrees, in wake of near-demise of Lexi the Terrier, 'minor tweaking' may be in order**

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Riverview's animal control bylaw

— which came under the public microscope last week following the near death of a family pet — will be reviewed.

Town council agreed unanimously last night to send the document to its bylaws committee for review and recommendation for the next council meeting in September.

However, most councillors defended the bylaw and felt only some minor tweaking be made to improve it.

A few did feel that residents who could not afford to get their pet back

after it was picked up by the animal control officer should be allowed to pay fines in instalments. They argued this was preferable to euthanizing a pet.

The bylaw came under severe criticism from the public after Lexi — a three-year-old black terrier, a pet of a Riverview family of five which included three young children — came within minutes of being put down. The family could not afford to pay

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## Bylaw to be reviewed

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the bill up front after Lexi had been picked up by animal control.

Ward 4 Coun. Clarence Sweetland said the media painted Riverview's animal control officers as being "blood thirsty," when they were only upholding the bylaw. "If anyone got a black eye from this and made to look overzealous, it was the animal control officers. I take exception to that because they were only doing the bidding of the town."

But Sweetland supports the review. Maybe some procedure for paying to get your animals back, in exceptional cases such as Lexi's, could be included in the bylaw, he said.

Coun.-at-large Ann Seamans — who secured a 24-hour reprieve for the terrier minutes before Lexi was to be euthanized — said she was glad to have been able to save the little dog. Moncton residents Jim and Darr Houssen paid the \$168 owed for the dog the next day and gave her back to her owners, the family of Rick and Carla Newton.

At the same time, Seamans said she still supports the bylaw. "It is there for a reason. We can't have dogs running loose in the community."

Ward 1 Coun. Gordon Cowan said he was concerned to see words like "inhumane" being used in the newspaper to describe Riverview because of the Lexi incident or the SPCA saying "We (Riverview) would kill the dog if we didn't get the money for it."

But regardless of the bad publicity, Cowan said the Newtons should have been allowed some of kind of payment plan to get their dog back. "The SPCA does it, so why can't we do it here? There has to be some compassion, considering the family was willing to pay on time and the dog was the pet of three young children."

Deputy Mayor Charles Broderick said when he first joined Riverview council, a survey was conducted and the citizens identified animals running loose as their No. 1 concern. He said residents want to be able to walk through town without being attacked by big dogs or tormented by small ones.

"I didn't think a lot about it until one day, I was working in my garden and put my hands in a big pile of 'you know what,' compliments of a neighbourhood cat, said Broderick, adding the bylaw is straight forward" and does what it is supposed to do — discourage owners from letting their animals run at large.

Coun.-at-large David Burrell said animal control officer Joe Leger told him any councillor can get a 24-hour reprieve for a dog or cat about to be euthanized. Seamans' requested reprieve allowed time for the media to inform the public about Lexi and, fortunately, the little dog was saved.

But having said that, Burrell noted there are a lot of elderly residents in Riverview and others who like to go for a walk but are scared of dogs running loose. The public good has to be taken into account, he added.

Ward 2 Coun. Bill McBeath said the town did not make licences mandatory for dogs because it wanted to collect the \$10 per dog licence fee. "It is there to protect the dog as well as the public. If the Newtons' had their dog licensed, this situation (Lexi's near euthanization) would never have arisen," he said.

Ward 3 Coun. Gerry Forsythe said the town's animal control bylaw, which was approved in 1998, is in "good shape" as far as he is concerned. But some minor changes should be considered, such as exempting dogs for the deaf and other specially trained canines, he said, reminding guide dogs for the blind are already exempt.