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Steven Grout

NC#8 Report to City Commission Meeting, 7 May 2019

Reporting: Steven Grout, 2916 2nd Avenue North, Official Delegate for Neighborhood Council #8. NC8's boundaries are Central Avenue north to the Missouri River, and from 12th and 15th Streets North to 36th and 38th Streets North.

Last October when I visited with you at a city commission working session, I relayed a convoluted tale of USPS mail delivery having been suspended for two months for an entire block of NC8 residents, due to an aggressive dog at large belonging to a renter in the 1500 block of 4th Ave North. The proposed Post Office solution at that time was to construct an outside bank of postal boxes for the neighborhood; this resolution—welcomed by some but not all residents—became unnecessary when the renter and his dog vacated the block, and postal delivery resumed.

At the beginning of April when I spoke with you at a commission work session, I said that NC8 had no serious problems to report. I was wrong. Since then, a resident of the 1500 block of 4th Ave North came to our neighborhood council meeting and told us that USPS mail delivery has been suspended since the end of January, due to an aggressive dog at large. It was, apparently, the same dog, belonging to that same renter in that same rental house.

So here comes another convoluted story of citizens seeking help from the Post Office, from Animal Control, and from the city, and finding little success. Mail delivery is still suspended, and the Post Office is again talking construction of an external bank of boxes. Your time tonight is valuable, so I will keep this as short as possible, but it is important for you to know and hear the level of frustration of citizens trying to get this resolved.

The city cannot control what the Postal Service does, but it does control the environment in which it works. The Postal Service will not put its workers in unsafe situations. Residents have called Animal Control. Animal Control has responded, but says that without actually witnessing the dog loose, they cannot do anything. Animal Control has suggested that residents take videos when the dog is loose, but this has not happened yet, in part because many people are at work during the daylight hours when the dog is loose. Animal Control says they have requested that USPS call them directly when a dog is loose; apparently this does not happen. Animal Control says the dog's owner has been cited twice already, but could not say for what or if the owner has yet appeared in court. City code says that if two citations within twelve months are issued for a threatening dog, a whole array of solutions can be applied, including mandatory dog obedience school for the dog and owner—but that, says Animal Control, is up to the judge, and THAT depends on the owner showing up in court. Depending on to whom one talks, the Post Office has either made sufficient communication with Animal Control, or little to none.

When I talked with Animal Control in April ~~week~~, they said that the last complaint they had received on this specific address was back in November, apparently when the renter had returned, with his dog.

At our NC8 council meeting, we advised that a citizen complaint form be filed. We even gave her a blank form to use. However, unbeknownst to us, that complaint form was for Planning and Development code enforcement, and not for canine complaint. The citizen amended the complaint for code enforcement, and some action has been taken on that. [The confusion on citizen complaint forms and report processing is a separate but related matter I will not go into right now, but will address in written form along with a list of suggestions which I will leave with the commission tonight.]

Mail delivery is still suspended, and residents have been forced to travel to the downtown post office to retrieve their mail, which has been the case for five of the last ten months. Some residents have thrown up their hands in despair; some more have filed or are filing complaints. Some residents of 1500 4th Ave North are here tonight, and one or more would like to address you on this now.

The residents are not pointing fingers tonight; they are asking for help. They do not expect a resolution tonight, but they do hope for one soon. This is a known and recurring problem, and while people have been responsive, there has been a lack of urgency and a lack of clear communication throughout. The system for dealing with this issue has failed them, and the system needs fixing.

Thank you.