

Some Suggestions For the City re: Animal Control , USPS

One common denominator in the “failed system” for trying to resolve the USPS/Animal Control/resident snafu is a lack of clear and **timely communication**. The following suggestions could help:

1. The City Manager and/or Mayor could draft a letter to the USPS requesting, emphatically, that if and when mail delivery is being suspended within the city due to unsafe neighborhood conditions, that the Postal Supervisor notify the City Manager. The Supervisor has sent notification to the residents affected last year—why not notify the City Manager of the unsafe situation as well? The City Manager would then be in a position to assign whatever resources are called for to resolve the situation. The same notification would apply to when delivery resumes. Currently, no city staff (including Animal Control) are notified when mail delivery is being suspended.
2. If a citizen must complete a complaint form, then insist that the Postal Service complete a complaint form as well (written or online). Currently, the Postal Service calls in the problem to Animal Control, and that’s the end of it, apparently. This would eliminate confusion on exactly what was reported when and to/by whom.
3. Amend city code (Title 6.1) so that a formal complaint by the USPS about a loose and threatening dog constitutes prima facie evidence of the transgression, and allow a citation to be issued, without having to wait and wait for Animal Control or a neighbor to catch the dog in the act, either literally or on video.

Some confusions arise when a citizen, especially an agitated citizen, uses existing tools to make a complaint. To that end, consider the following suggestions to **avoid confusion**:

4. Create one common citizen complaint form valid for ALL complaints and departments.
5. Alternately, create separate complaint forms for different departments/actions and clearly label each. On the city website, a search for “citizen complaint form” now brings up the one intended only for Planning and Development. Why not make that clear?
6. If one digs deep enough on the city website (under the Police page, under Department Structure page, under Support Services Bureau page, and then under Animal Control Officers page), one will find a “Barking Dog Complaint Form.” Why not a “Dog-at-large Complaint Form”?
7. Under that same Animal Control Officers page, an office phone number is listed, but for leaving messages. Why not supply what number to call (Police Non-Emergency) and which option to use (see item 9 below) for a dog currently on the loose.

8. On the city website, under “How do I...Report...Issue/Concern”, when listing related departments, make “Animal Control” a departmental choice. Yes, I know, Animal Control is part of the Police Department, but how many people seeking help realize this? The goal is clarity. Or maybe make “Report a dog-at-large” an option itself under “How do I...Report”?
9. When a person calls the Police Non-Emergency line (727-7688), the wording can be confusing. Imagine that you are a distraught citizen calling in about a loose and threatening dog. Listen to the current options:
 - a. If this is an emergency, hang up and dial 911.
 - b. To file a report, press 1.
 - c. For support services, including Animal Control, Community Policing, etc. press 2.
 - d. For investigations, press 3.
 - e. For patrol, press 4.
 - f. For 911 Dispatch Center, press 5.

OK, which would you press? The one that says Animal Control, or the one that begins with the “911” code from which you already backed off?

Pressing 2 takes you to the Animal Control office (where you can leave a message).

The correct answer is “press 5.” Why not remove the scary “911” wording? Or...

Why not include an option for “to report a loose dog? Make it clearer.