

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Robert C. Williams
Catherine I. Workman
Kris E. Roberts

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works
Director/Assistant City Manager
Patricia Little, City Clerk

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting. He noted that all MSFI Committee members are present tonight.

- 1) **Edward Coppola – Expressing His Concern Over Local Wildlife and Asking that the City Council Consider Measures to Minimize the Number of Birds and Small Animals That Domestic Cats Kill with their Free-range Hunting Habits in Keene Neighborhoods**
- 2) **Vicky Morton – In Support of the Licensing of Outdoor Cats**

Chair Greenwald stated that the first item is a communication from Edward Coppola. He invited him to speak. He continued that the second item is a letter from Vicky Morton, and he will recognize her to speak after the discussion of item 1).

Edward Coppola of 72 Ridgewood Ave. stated that he is an animal lover and a pet owner. He continued that he does not dislike cats, necessarily, but is concerned about the declining bird populations, globally, nationally, regionally, and locally, primarily due to cats, pesticides, habitat loss, and window collisions. Forty percent of bird species lost due to extinction can be attributed to cats. Pamela Hunt from the NH Audubon Society wrote “The State of Birds” in 2020. He sent that 60-page report to the City Clerk’s Office, if the MSFI Committee members have an interest in the data.

Mr. Coppola stated that the following is an excerpt from an email Ms. Hunt sent him following the attention this issue received after the City Council meeting:

“We can generally assume that species declining in NH as a whole would also be declining in the Monadnock region, since there are no significant changes to pervasive threats on that human-defined boundary. Never forget that most of our declining species are highly migratory,

which serves to mix individuals from different regions together over the course of the year. For example, while adults tend to return to their nesting areas in successive years, this is far less common in young birds. Thus birds fledged in Keene last year, which survived migration in winter, are just as likely to return to breed in Concord, VT or even further afield, and vice versa. Even if we lack NH data, I see no reason to believe cats here would operate any differently than those anywhere else in North America or Europe. The data are out on cats: cats kill birds. The solution is out there: keep them inside. Will keeping cats inside in Keene make a measurable difference? It is possible. It depends on the scale, but it will, by definition, mean fewer birds are killed by cats.”

Mr. Coppola stated that he was happy to see Vicky Morton write a letter to the editor, and even happier to see that she is on the agenda. He thanks Ms. Morton for her perspective and for coming to the meeting to share her thoughts. Since the last meeting, he has been contacted by former City Councilors, a current State Senator, friends, and colleagues, and everyone seems interested in this cat issue. They said it is a hot issue and a “third rail issue” for local politics. A Facebook comment said something like “*I bet [Mr. Coppola] is the same kind of person that helps amphibians,*” and it is true. He spent Saturday night on Arch St., helping eight tree frogs cross. The City Council has closed down streets in the city [for amphibian crossing nights] because it is important to wildlife and to the community. The City is progressive, and he thought it would be appropriate to bring this issue forward for dialogue. The City Council bravely approved a mask mandate for the greater good. Even though enforcement was challenging to impossible, citizens just did the right thing, based on the leadership of the City.

Mr. Coppola continued that people say cat licensing might be impossible, and he is not sure if cat licensing is the solution, but he disagrees with the people who say that cat licensing would be a way for the City to get more revenue. His goal is to help create a system that provides a framework for responsible pet management, benefitting cats and the community. Someone told him to look at RSA 466. He is not an attorney. He read the RSA quickly, and it seems to address many of the issues he and Ms. Morton are bringing forward, such as cats as nuisances. How is a municipality financially responsible for damage? Can a cat or dog maim or pursue wildlife? When is it okay to kill a cat or dog on your property? What is the penalty for damage by your pets? There is quite a bit on this issue. The community or State just does not address it.

Mr. Coppola continued that towns that require cat licenses are far and few between. There are probably half a dozen in MA, and it is because they wanted to track rabies vaccinations. He could not find any towns in NH that require cat licenses. Across the country, there are probably hundreds of towns, so this does exist in some communities. His thoughts go in a couple different directions, [such as] requiring all cats to be indoor pets, or on leashes, or contained in escape-proof areas when they are outside. [He does not recommend] licenses or fees, but wants the City to make that the policy, regulation, mandate, or whatever it would be called. A study in 2021 by Nottingham Trent University interviewed 5,000 cat owners globally and learned that 40% of cat-owners who keep their cats indoors do it for the cats’ protection. He has heard it is dangerous for cats that go out.

Mr. Coppola continued that secondly, he thinks the City should require proof of rabies [vaccination] for all cats. Third, he thinks they should create a licensing program for cats, requiring proof of rabies' vaccinations, but they could waive these requirements and fees for indoor cats. If someone plans to license their cat and allow it outdoors, the City should require a license collar, and possibly have the owner track the impact on bird wildlife, hold the cat owners liable for damage the cats create, and let people know what property owners' rights are related to cats that do damage. He views cats and dogs as companion animals. It is incomprehensible to him why they are treated so differently when it comes to regulation.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee had any questions.

Councilor Roberts stated that he has four cats, and three are cats he captured as kittens from the woods in his backyard, and none of them have left the house since they have come in. He continued that regarding peer review, the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and US Fish and Wild Game Service said about 3.7 billion birds are killed each year by outdoor cats in the US, and said that unowned, feral cats kill 2.6 billion of those birds. He would like Mr. Coppola's opinion on whether it would be in everyone's best interest to have the City work with the Monadnock Humane Society to address the feral cat populations that are responsible for about 70% of bird deaths.

Mr. Coppola replied that he spoke with Kathy Collinsworth from the Humane Society, and she has her own perspective. He continued that the Humane Society is a downstream beneficiary of feral cats. [Addressing] feral cats on a parallel path with pet cats is a great idea, but he does not think the City should necessarily pursue one versus the other, simply because one in three [birds] is killed by a domestic house cat versus a feral cat. He does not know much about feral cats in Keene. He knows where the cats in his neighborhood live, and they are not feral.

Councilor Workman stated that she wants to thank Mr. Coppola for highlighting this issue. She continued that she is a cat owner and did not realize how big of an issue this was until he brought this communication forward and she did some research on the issue.

Chair Greenwald stated that he was asked to read the following letter from the Monadnock Humane Society into the record:

"Dear Keene City Council,

I have read the statements provided by the two Keene residents related to stray cats, and I understand the concerns brought forward. I am not speaking in favor or against the statements, but I want to share that as with any law or mandate, it is only as good as the ability and the capacity to enforce it. Our current reality is that Keene no longer has an Animal Control Officer on staff, and any animal concerns or complaints would fall on the shoulders of our already short-staffed law enforcement. I believe that most of us would agree that they are extremely busy

handling challenges related to people in our city. In addition to this, they do not have the training or expertise to be handling animal populations. Is there a plan to bring an Animal Control Officer back? In addition, I do understand the concerns related to unvaccinated feral cat colonies, and agree that the risk of rabies is a public health concern. There are two well-known colonies in Keene. Monadnock Humane Society recently took in 130 feral cats from one location in our region (not Keene). These cats are spayed/neutered and either adopted out to a home or through our barn cat program because they are too feral to be domesticated. We have at least ensured that these cats are not reproducing and are vaccinated. This is all at a cost to the Monadnock Humane Society for the staff time, medical care, microchip, feeding, and caring to help manage the city and towns' cat populations. For services, we do offer our low-cost spay/neuter clinics to the public and have recently added pet vaccine clinics for income eligible residents of Keene. Both services, again, help manage the cat populations and health in our region. Feel free to contact me with questions or for clarifications.

Kathy Collinsworth of the Monadnock Humane Society”

Chair Greenwald asked the City Manager to address the Animal Control Officer topic.

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated that the Animal Control Officer also had duties related to the city's street lighting system, and after a long time with the City, he recently retired. She continued that the job has been restructured. The streetlight responsibilities have moved to the Public Works Department, and the Animal Control Officer position is downgraded to a 25-hour per week position, but the position does still remain and does a variety of things related to animal control and other miscellaneous duties at the Police Department.

Mr. Coppola stated that Ms. Collinsworth also shared that letter with him. He continued that he agrees; he does not necessarily see that the burden of pet management should lie on the shoulders of KPD and law enforcement. That is a recipe for failure. He cannot imagine anyone, Animal Control or KPD, trying to catch a cat that is out hunting birds. He thinks it should be a law that cats are kept indoors; then you do not need an Animal Control Officer.

Loretta Symonds of 179 Woodburn St. stated that she is a retired wildlife rehabilitator and her specialty was birds. She continued that she trained rehabilitators all over the country to do what she did, for many years. Cats, whether feral or domesticated, kill 80% of the birds and eggs in their hunting area/territory. That was proven in three studies in three different countries: America, Canada, and Great Britain. Cats are a huge detriment to the bird population. The ones that they go after the most, for the nests and chicks, are the warblers, which are insect eaters. Warblers are having the most difficult time in surviving and holding their numbers. Many are now endangered. For decades, she has been a proponent of a leash law for cats. Cats are perfectly happy inside. It takes three or four weeks for them to adjust, and they stop wanting to go out. A cat inside is safe from coyotes, fisher cats, cars, and mean people. She has had her cats killed all of those ways. A man bludgeoned one of her cats to death with a ladder rung. She had other cats eaten by coyotes and fisher cats. She learned a long time ago, especially after

seeing firsthand the devastation cats cause to the bird population, to keep her cats as indoor pets. For two or three decades now, when she has had cats, they have been indoor cats, regardless of whether they were indoor cats before she got them.

Ms. Symonds continued that a bird caught by a cat has to be [brought to a rehabilitator] within six hours, and then it has to get IV Amikacin right away, or else you will lose that bird. It is a 100% chance of death after six hours of catching that, because of the bacterial load in cats' paws and teeth. Amikacin has to be given IV. She got very good at hitting the vein on a 30-gram animal, which is what has to be done. Not everyone can do that, not even experienced wildlife rehabilitators. She lost probably 60-70% of the birds she got, mainly because they did not get to her within the six-hour window, but even within the six-hour window, she still lost some. Cats are vicious and devastating to the wildlife population. Every single person in the studies swore that their cats did not kill birds, only mice. However, they [induced vomiting] in all those cats after they were outdoors, and bird guts, feathers, and beaks came out of the cats' stomachs. One hundred percent of the cats in the study were killing birds.

Councilor Williams asked what happens to an ecosystem when you take out the predators. If Keene did not have cats around outdoors anymore, would there potentially be a rat problem in a couple years? He asked if there are any studies of the ecological effects in places where cats have been taken out of the ecosystem, and what replaces them. If Keene gets rid of [outdoor] cats, are snakes and coyotes going to move in to take their place?

Mr. Coppola replied that cats are an invasive species, and he is not sure what the impact is on the environment, but he assumes that other predators, including coyotes, would continue to prey on rodents. That is another rabbit hole they could go down, but the State is eradicating coyotes through its "hunting practices." That is for another day. His opinion as a knowledgeable person who is not an ecologist is that there are predators in the ecosystem that are non-invasive that will take care of whatever it is that needs to be killed.

Vicky Morton, of 275 Water St., stated that there are numerous foxes and coyotes in her neighborhood, and both take mice and rats. She continued that she does not believe that cats take rats, just mice. She sees bobcat tracks in her driveway, and her neighbor has chickens and frequently finds coyote tracks around the chicken pen. These predators are in Keene neighborhoods. Thus, she does not believe there will be an increased rat problem if outdoor cats are no longer wandering. Mr. Coppola added that there are also birds of prey, like hawks and eagles.

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from the City Clerk.

City Clerk Patricia Little stated that she wants to start with some history. She continued that State law allows a municipality to license cats, in much the same way that a municipality licenses dogs. Keene started licensing dogs in 1912. Over the course of 110 years, a comprehensive process has been enacted, with obligations for pet owners, veterinarians, local

clerks, municipal governing bodies, animal control officers, and police officers. In 1994, legislation passed allowing a governing body to require the licensing of cats. Since that original authorization, no NH community has chosen to enact a local ordinance. If Keene City Council voted to do so, they would be the first community in the state.

The City Clerk continued that before getting into the differences in State laws on cats and dogs, she wanted to review a process that would be used to license a cat. If cat licensing were authorized, local veterinarians would be required to send the City Clerk's Office rabies certificates for cats the way they do for dogs. She spoke with local vets and other local organizations that deal with domesticated animals, and they revealed that regionally, 85% of cats do not receive veterinary care. This means that the rabies notices the vets would be sending the City Clerk's Office only identify a fraction of the cat population in the city. The Clerk's Office's obligation, under State law, is to contact these cat owners and advise them of their responsibility to license their cat. Once they know the identity of a cat owner, the City Clerk's Office staff are like a dog with a bone, consistently contacting the owners and seeking compliance. At some point, the lack of compliance leads to fines, police officers, and court. That is the way the program is set up. If the City Council decides to license cats, the City Clerk's Office would be charged with a very significant, new regulatory responsibility. Most dog owners assume when they move into a community or acquire a dog that they need to obtain a dog license. Most cat owners would not be familiar with this obligation and therefore, this program would require considerable effort and follow-through from her department.

The City Clerk continued that in terms of the actual cost to implement the program, the City Clerk's Office would need to have their software vendor modify their registration program to distinguish dogs from cats, at a one-time minimum cost of \$2,500. Operating a licensing program for cats would cost approximately \$5,000 per year. This would cover license tags, printing postcards, envelopes, postage, and so on and so forth. They would need additional support staff, at a minimum, during the months of March through July when the workload is heaviest, in terms of renewal processing and issuance of fines for noncompliance. How this would impact the Police Department operations would also need to be considered. They could license cats if they had all the necessary resources, but just because a cat is licensed does not mean the behavior of the cat is somehow changed, and in fact, there are certain laws dealing with the behavior of dogs, behavior that can be regulated, that she does not believe is applicable to cats. She is not the City Attorney, and is rather remiss for not asking the City Attorney his interpretation, but she reads many laws, and they are usually very clear about what they want and do not want. A few examples of behaviors they can regulate for dogs, that she does not think they can regulate for cats, are: a dog is a nuisance if it is at large, which means that it is off the premises of its owner and not under the control of its owner. That would not apply to cats. A dog is a nuisance if it digs, scratches, excretes, or causes waste or garbage to be scattered on property other than the owners'. That would not apply to cats. A dog is considered a menace if it, alone or in a pack, attacks or preys on game animals, domestic animals, fowl, or human beings. That would not apply to cats. State law allows the City Council to adopt additional ordinances regarding the licensing and restraining of dogs. That would not apply to cats.

The City Clerk continued that to recap, they are starting in a deficit, in terms of knowing the cat owners who need to comply. The licensing program would require a yearly expense to the City, and most importantly, a significant commitment of personnel resources. And at the end of it all, the concern that Mr. Coppola and Ms. Morton raised, regarding the number of small animals and birds that are killed by cats, would not be impacted by a new regulatory program that would license cats. She herself is a new lover of birds and has a suet feeder outside her kitchen window, and is amazed by the birds. However, licensing of cats is not the way to deal with this problem. She recommends that these communications be accepted as informational.

Chair Greenwald asked what it would cost a pet owner to license a cat. The City Clerk replied a mandatory \$7.50 for a neutered animal. She continued that much of the licensing of animals is statutory. There is very little discretion on the part of the City.

Councilor Roberts stated that the City Clerk listed a number of things that would not apply to cats, compared to dogs. He continued that if a person does not want to license their dog, they cannot just let the dog go, because chances are the vet or someone else will contact the City Clerk to know who that dog is. For example, many people in his neighborhood near the Keene State College (KSC) campus have cats. When the KSC students leave, his whole area fills up with cats. He asked what they do if they licensed these cats and people just leave the cats here and move out of town. Would the City have any recourse? The City Clerk replied that the City does have an obligation, under their contract with the Monadnock Humane Society, to take animals that they find with no identifiable owner to the Humane Society. She continued that she believes [the City is] charged annually for that.

Mr. Coppola asked the City Clerk, through the Chair, if her comments about behaviors that the City can regulate in dogs but not in cats is speculation or [if she just means] that the City currently does not do that. The City Clerk replied that as she said, she neglected to speak to the City Attorney to see if he agreed with her interpretation of the statutes, but she has read the statutes and believes that she is correct that when you license cats you get to mirror the licensing of dogs, but it does not say that you get to mirror the various statutes about the *behavior* of dogs.

Thomas Mullins, City Attorney, stated that he will not disagree with the City Clerk. He continued that the reality is just that, that there is an extensive statutory scheme when it comes to regulating dogs, dog behavior, licensing, what owners can and cannot do, liabilities, and so on and so forth. There is virtually no statutory authority with respect to cats, outside of apparently two things: the City can require the licensing of cats, and the City can require rabies certificates for cats. The other requirement for cat owners, if licensing were adopted, would be to provide some kind of identification mechanism of the owner of the cat, through a tattoo, chip, or clamp, so the cat can be identified. Other than that, there is no statutory authority. And the City Council and the Committee know, because they have heard him say repeatedly, that unless the State gives a municipality specific statutory authority in an area, the municipality does not have

any. This is not like other nearby states where if the State has not decided to regulate in a field, the municipalities are allowed to regulate in the field. That is not the case in New Hampshire.

The City Attorney continued that he looked at the general authority with respect to the City, RSA 47:17, Ordinances and Bylaws, which is probably the oldest authority in the State for activities by the City. There is no specific reference to cats in that authority. There is reference to dogs, to regulate the keeping of dogs, dogs running at large, and so on and so forth. The only possible, potential hook – although, he thinks that based upon statutory construction it would not work - is “Stocks at Large,” with a list of what the City could regulate, such as horses, cattle, sheep, swine, geese, other poultry, “*and animals,*” whatever that means. Generally, when the courts look at a statute that has a list of specific things, the general statement has to apply back to those types of specific things. Moreover, those specific things do not include something like cats, domestic birds, domestic ferrets or mice, or any other pet animal. At this point, there is just no statutory authority, other than licensing the cats, to even assist [Mr. Coppola, Ms. Morton, and others who share their views] in what they are requesting the City do. The City could require licensing and proof of rabies vaccination, but things like requiring owners to keep cats inside, or to leash the cats, are not within the statutes.

Chair Greenwald stated that a telling paragraph in Ms. Morton’s letter is: *“I am no illusion that enforcement will be any more successful than the enforcement of the mask mandate. I do not believe the City has the funds to devote to chasing cats, especially since the current Animal Control Officer has additional priorities. Therefore, I urge the Council to allow neighbors to address wandering, feline issues on their property.”*

Chair Greenwald stated that anything the City puts forth in terms of regulations or a program must have enforcement, and he thinks Ms. Morton is right on regarding the mask mandate and what the City went through in trying to get people to do it, that did not want to do it, and did not do it. He continued that if people do not want to do it they are not going to do it, and without the enforcement, he has some real concerns about it. He likes the last sentence of Ms. Morton’s letter: *“I urge the City Council to allow neighbors to address wandering, feline issues on their property.”* He thinks neighbors talking to neighbors [is helpful], pointing out that it is bad to let their cats out and that it is not a natural, normal thing for a housecat to be let out. He thinks the petitioner’s letter is right on in bringing attention to this issue. Prior to reading the letter, he had no idea [about these issues], and he thinks that is true of most people. He thought most birds died from crashing into windows and that that was the main extent of the situation.

Councilor Filiault stated that you never know what someone is going to bring forth and how it is going to turn out. He continued that they found that out with the salamander issue. When citizens first came forth [to ask the City Council to authorize temporary road closures so salamanders could cross], he thought it would be kind of a nuisance thing, but it was not. When this letter came forward he was not sure where it would go, but Chair Greenwald has made some valid comments. His concern, as they talk about licensing, is that even if they did license a cat, if you let it outside, the problem is still there. Licensing does not solve the problem. What they are

really talking about is whether the City Council is going to create an Ordinance saying they do not allow cats outdoors. A licensed cat can still be outdoors and hunt birds, unless there is an Ordinance saying a cat cannot go outdoors. Would the Committee endorse such an Ordinance? Enforcement is a completely different topic. The licensing conversation is for naught.

Chair Greenwald replied that they are having a discussion. He recognized Mr. Coppola to make final remarks, followed by Ms. Morton.

Mr. Coppola stated that they keep talking about how the mask mandate was a failure, but that is not true. He continued that plenty of people had their personal opinions and chose not to wear masks, but plenty of people wore masks because of the mandate. He believes, and heard from the City Attorney, that the discussion is moot in terms of being able to do the Ordinance, based on the RSA. He asked if that is still a path that could be pursued. He agrees with Councilor Filiault's remarks. He (Mr. Coppola) just does not want cats outside, licensed or unlicensed. If licensing cats is a fool's errand, can they focus on keeping cats indoors?

Chair Greenwald replied that that is a good point. He continued that he thinks the Monadnock Humane Society should be involved with this.

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager, stated that if keeping cats indoors is the focus, she would recommend that a legislative effort be undertaken, and that people contact their Senator. She continued that it sounds like there is an issue with the way the statutes are set up right now, and the statutes' focus on dogs and dog behaviors. If a Councilor or resident has an interest in pursuing this, the first step would be working with legislators to amend the State law.

Ms. Morton stated that she does not think the mask mandate was bad; she thinks the enforcement of it was lacking. She continued that she keeps her cats indoors for their protection and for the protection of wildlife. While they are talking about wandering, outdoor cats, she has additional information to share. If you believe in climate change, you are also likely to believe that we are in the sixth mass extinction, called the Holocene Extinction. Mass extinction is a short period of geological time in which a high percentage of biodiversity, or distinct species, in this case, bacteria, fungi, plants, animals, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates, die out, primarily caused by human activity. In applied ethics in the philosophy of animal rights, "speciesism" is the practice of treating members of one species as morally more important than members of another species. In this case, owners of outdoor cats consider their cats more important than anything that the cats kill.

Ms. Morton continued that wildlife in general is under threats of all kinds. New England cottontails are the only species of rabbit native to this area, and an important part of our natural heritage. Over the last 50 years, the range of this once common rabbit has shrunk and its population has dwindled. Today, biologists believe there are only around 13,000 cottontails in all of New England. Not only are they under threat from the loss of habitat and predation, including cats, but from a hemorrhagic disease called RHDV2, which is spreading across the US

and killing both wild and domestic rabbits. It has an 80-100% fatality rate and could be in NH at any time. It is in NY. According to Peter Marra, Director of the Smithsonian Migratory Birds Center in Washington, DC, cats kill about one to four billion birds each year in the US and have caused a minimum extinction of 33 species. Additional threats to birds include the avian flu, which is in NH.

Ms. Morton continued that with this proposal to do something about outdoor cats, they have the opportunity to make a difference in the impact of cats on Keene's wildlife and to limit the damage wandering cats do to private property. The latter is one of her main issues. In her letter of March 8, she shared that the neighborhood cats kill anything and everything that moves in her yard, which is not uncommon. They kill snakes, rabbits, chipmunks, and birds. They use her gardens as litter boxes, spray her family's vehicles and porch furniture and doors, and dig up plantings. They are very destructive. It is more than wildlife issues; it is personal property issues. She believes placing a bell on outdoor cats will inform predators like bobcats, coyotes, and fishers exactly where the cat is hiding and that they then become [the prey]. All three of those predators are in her neighborhood and she does not believe that bells or special collars are the solution. She is not against licensing cats. However, she cannot imagine the resources needed to identify the owners of wandering, unlicensed cats. She is not even sure she wants the City resources/her tax dollars to fund these efforts. She wants the City to allow property owners to address the issues of wandering cats on their own. She understands what some of that implies. This is also an opportunity for her to go on record about the damages caused by cats. At some point, some property owner is going to start asking for restitution, and she does not know how they would do that, if they do not know where the cats come from. Cats are a danger and cause damage to wildlife and personal property, and something has to be done.

Councilor Workman stated that earlier, the City Manager mentioned the City's contract or partnership with the Monadnock Humane Society. She asked for more information about that. The City Manager replied that the City does have a contract with the Humane Society and pays a fee for dogs that are brought to the Humane Society from residences in Keene. She continued that she is not sure what that looks like for cats. She will get this answer for the Committee.

Councilor Workman asked the City Manager if the City Council would have the resources to put together a public service announcement, if they wanted to do that. She asked if that would be cheaper than doing an immediate licensing program. The City Manager replied that it would definitely be cheaper, and the resource is IT Director/Assistant City Manager Rebecca Landry. She continued that Ms. Landry is the only person who does that type of thing for the City, other than the departments doing some of their own internally. She could ask Ms. Landry to help put something together.

Chair Greenwald stated that the Committee has heard from the public, and he does not see any Councilors present to give input, so now the Committee can discuss the matter.

Councilor Roberts stated that if anyone studies history or anthropology, [they know] there is no question that cats are a very invasive species. He continued that you can look at Hawaii, Australia, or any small island where cats have been introduced, and what cats have done to the local populations. His concern is that they are only looking at a small part of the picture. They have to come up with a plan that addresses the whole picture. Many municipalities around the country have banned [residents] from putting cat food and milk outside to draw in the feral cats. Feral cats contribute 70% [of the birds killed by cats]. The cities that have banned the feeding of feral cats say that they are a public nuisance. That is something the [City could do.] Yes, they can put out information. The Humane Society says they use a trap, neuter, release program, but more and more scientific evidence says that it does not work, and it puts the neutered animals at a distinct disadvantage and they could end up suffering untimely and painful deaths. One group wants to license cats, and another group wants to keep cats in the house. All of those could be part of the solution. The City Council needs to decide how to handle this. They got together to decide how to handle the salamanders. If they decide that [cats outside] are a serious problem, and he thinks it is, they need to determine how to attack the whole problem to reduce the overall death rate of birds, instead of, for example, addressing the house cats that make up 30% of the problem while leaving the 70% of cats that are feral out of it. He cannot support the request that came to them, but he can support having everyone get together and figure out how they want to handle this problem going forward, with a global solution, not a piecemeal one.

Councilor Williams stated that he agrees that the 70% is a big problem, with the feral cats. He continued that if they looked at attacking that big chunk first, it would solve many problems. He would like to see proposals regarding feral cats.

The City Manager replied that she can look at the City's agreement with the Humane Society and see if there is a way to expand that to address some of the feral cat population.

Chair Greenwald stated that he does not want to be part of "open season" on feral cats. He continued that he thinks the business of dealing with this goes back to the Humane Society. He does not think it is directly the City Council's business.

Councilor Workman stated that she, too, likes the idea of partnering with the Humane Society. She continued that the Monadnock Kitty Rescue & Adoption, in Jaffrey, does a lot of great work with feral cats as well. She likes the idea of starting with a PSA, because like she said earlier, she was really naïve about this issue and thinks many cat owners probably do not realize the danger that their outdoor cats are in nor their outdoor cats' danger to the community. She would like to start small with a PSA. They could perhaps partner with the schools or KSC to have a group put together the PSA to save some dollars.

Councilor Filiault stated that he appreciates what people are saying, and he thinks this will be similar, in a way, to how they have handled salamanders. He continued that they did not even pass an Ordinance for that; they just got the community involved, and public relations. At first [the request to help salamanders] seemed like it would be frivolous information brought before

the City Council, but now they have received nationwide attention for their [concern for salamanders], and they did it without an Ordinance, just volunteers, and it is effective. As the City Attorney said, they would run into problems with the RSA, right from the get-go, if they [banned cats from going out]. Thus, they can take the information they have received tonight and get it out to the Humane Society and the community and make a PSA statement. He thinks the Committee should accept this item as informational. They should let the community know that this is a problem and that the City needs their help. It will require people to self-enforce. No matter what law it is that the City has to enforce, it is really the people first who have to enforce it.

Ms. Morton stated that it seems like she has missed something, because when she talks about the wandering cats, she is talking about the ones that live just a few houses down from hers. She continued that she is not talking about feral cats. Feral cats are a different topic, and she understands the detriment they have to wildlife, but she is concerned with the owners of domestic cats who let their cats wander around and kill everything. She hears this conversation going down “the feral lane,” but really wants to hear something about her neighborhood cats and what she can do about them. She does not want the City wasting its resources doing an Ordinance. She wants the City to tell her it is okay for her to “get rid of those cats,” which includes trapping them and bringing them to the Humane Society.

Councilor Williams made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends that the communication from Edward Coppola recommending the licensing of cats be accepted as informational.

Councilor Workman made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends that the communication from Vicky Morton recommending the licensing of cats be accepted as informational.

**3) Relating to Stop Signs - Washington Avenue
Ordinance O-2022-03**

Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director, stated that the City Engineer was doing some review for an upcoming project, looking at Washington Ave. He continued that this street crosses from Gilsum St. to Washington St. just north of the Recreation Center. Washington Ave. has a right-turn-only lane. A question came up about the stop sign there. The stop sign was installed in about 2010. The City Engineer at that time had done some reconfiguration there as part of the reconstruction of Washington St. It was reviewed and he determined that [the stop sign was] “warranted.” The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) has a number of

criteria that identifies when a stop sign is required. The City Engineer decided to check the City Code. Any of the regulatory signs, such as stop, yield, and no parking, or any signage where a ticket can be written, are required to be placed in the City Code. That way a law enforcement officer can enforce that regulatory issue. The City Engineer found that the stop sign on Washington Ave. is not in the City Code. Thus, he recommends that they add this stop sign to the list of stop signs that are in the City Code.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked if members of the public had any questions.

Councilor Williams made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends adoption of Ordinance O-2022-03.

4) REPORT OUT: Request to Remove a Nearby City Tree – 79 Woodburn Street

Mr. Blomquist stated that this is dealing with the request from the property owner at 79 Woodburn St. to remove a City tree. He continued that that house has exchanged hands. He received a communication from the new property owners. They are not interested in pursuing removal of the tree, and have requested that this item be reported out.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee had any questions.

Councilor Filiault made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Williams.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the request from Loretta Simonds for removal of City tree be accepted as informational.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 7:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk