

Results of Clarke County Board of Supervisors Meeting Aug 18 2010

Alice Harrington and local VFDCB members, as well as many others, worked very hard on this proposal trying to strike some compromise, even though there had been NO complaints and no reason for the new proposal. This was a very disappointing outcome and is extremely bad news for breeders in Clarke County. This sort of law is undermining the breeding of dogs throughout the country.

*Sharyn Hutchens
VFDCB Legislative Liaison*

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In spite of a roomful of people ALL objecting to the proposal to require dog breeders to have to get a \$5000 special use permit to breed a litter of puppies, the Clarke County Board of Supervisors approved it. The vote was 3 in favor, 2 opposed.

It is not clear yet what the exact wording will be. But if you have 15 dogs or more you will need a special use permit to breed a litter of puppies. Since many people talked about having to put their retired animals down because they could not afford the \$5,000 fee to breed a litter, current breeders in the county will be grandfathered, but they have to notify the zoning administrator, Jesse Russell, in order to receive grandfathered status.

The fees for a breeder's SUP may be adjusted, but that was not voted on. As it now stands, any breeder moving into this rural county will have to pay an exorbitant fee if she owns more than 15 dogs.

This outcome was orchestrated by Supervisor Pete Dunning. He has been either a Board member or Board Chairman for over 30 years.

His current term expires December 2011. Through the last 6 months of attending meetings, he has been the only one pushing this. NO ONE ever showed up saying there was a problem with dog breeders. His co-conspirators were Board Chair J. Michael Hobert and Supervisor John Staelin.

To set the stage, Mr. Staelin asked staff to describe the dog limit laws in the surrounding counties. Then comments were taken from the audience, but it was clear they already knew what they were going to do. Sharon Howse, Shawnee Kennel Club President, spoke about the advantages all the various clubs' dog shows bring to the county. She handed out AKC's brochure on the economic benefits of dog shows. She and representatives of Old Dominion and Warrenton kennel clubs said they would have to find other locations to hold their shows if the county was going to be so unwelcoming to dog breeders. Other speakers included Gary Fisher, Alice Harrington, Gary Howse, Kathy Mills, David Simmons, James Lamphier, Michael Wilson, Cliff Nelson, and Susan Markley. There were at least 30 people from the dog world in the audience.

The only Supervisors that supported the breeders were Barbara Byrd and David Weiss. Mr. Weiss stated that there have been no complaints about breeders, the fees are prohibitive and the action is typical government overreaching. Ms. Byrd felt the ordinance was too broad and did not recognize the variations in dog ownership – that some dogs are just pets, others are part of a breeding program, others are being evaluated for possible inclusion in the program. She also expressed concern about what would they be regulating next--her ponies? A farmer's pigs?

No matter – the triumvirate of Dunning, Hobert, and Staelin decreed that they knew best what the county needed and the community's concerns were set aside.