

During the upcoming City Council meeting you will hear a great many emotional arguments regarding pit bulls. There is a danger in allowing emotional thinking to cloud the lawmaking process. I would like to provide a factual foundation about the situation in Ohio for your thinking prior to any change in your current proactive law.

The Ohio communities noted here all had breed bans and they all accepted the pit bull talking points that you will hear. These communities dropped their breed bans to benefit breed activists, primarily non-local, leaving their residents to suffer the injuries, death, and financial disaster.

Cincinnati was the first Ohio city that gave in to the demands of "responsible pit bull owners." Within weeks of dropping Cincinnati's pit bull ban in 2012, there was a fatal pit bull attack in Cincinnati. Ronnel Brown owned a pit bull designer-mix dog but kept it under the radar. With the fall of the ban there was no longer any reason to hide the dog so he got two more of the same mix. His original dog attacked him in his apartment; first responders had to wait for police to arrive to shoot the dog before they could get to Brown. By that time Brown was dead. <http://www.fox19.com/story/18997840/man-dies-after-being-mauled-by-dog>

In June 2014, a six-year-old child named Zainabou Drame suffered a near-fatal mauling in Cincinnati. Zainabou's medical bills soared above a million dollars in the first weeks. The child was in a medically induced coma for weeks, lost her tongue, her face was massively damaged and she is unable to speak or swallow. Zainabou is fed via tube through her abdominal wall; she is unable to swallow her own saliva. She will require many more surgeries and a lifetime of medical care. Before you welcome countless unregulated pit bulls, I urge you to watch this video of Zainabou. <http://www.wwt.com/news/girl-mauled-by-dogs-comes-home-from-hospital/27321338> Zainabou lives in a city that had a pit bull ban but dropped it because of pressure exactly like what is currently seen in in your city.

Virginia Conlan Whitman, the wife of a Cincinnati judicial candidate, was mauled by a pit bull as she campaigned for her husband. She was hospitalized for five days and required home nursing care after hospital discharge. <http://www.wtsp.com/news/article/277462/58/Dog-attack-hospitalizes-candidates-wife>

Cincinnati senior citizen Beulah Sheafe was mauled by two pit bulls as she walked in her own neighborhood. She lost part of her scalp and a quarter pound of flesh from her leg and remained hospitalized for an extended period after the attack. Mrs. Sheafe favors a return to a pit bull ban. <http://www.local12.com/template/cgi-bin/archived.pl?type=basic&file=/news/features/top-stories/stories/archive/2014/04/IRNJnn6A.xml#>. VMRzQ9LF8eh

Cincinnati pit bull owner Tammy Tucker was attacked by her own pit bulls as she attempted to start her lawnmower. Police describe the dogs as "eating her alive" as they arrived at the scene. <http://www.local12.com/template/cgi-bin/archived.pl?type=basic&file=/news/features/top-stories/stories/archive/2014/05/PZqVxVrE.xml#>. VMR0j9LF8eh Tucker was hospitalized for an extended period after this attack.

This attack was not Tucker's first. The same pit bulls attacked her a year and a half earlier. At that time she saw a specialist in aggressive dogs for help because she wanted to "change herself" and to look for triggers but she finally admitted that it was the dogs that were the problem after all. <http://www.local12.com/template/cgi-bin/archived.pl?type=basic&file=/news/features/top-stories/stories/archive/2014/05/FJNj3ox5.xml#>. VMR0v9LF8eh

Who is paying the medical bills for the Cincinnati victims? Not the dog owners who typically had no insurance. Taxpayers pay the medical bills for victims through Medicaid. Taxpayers pay for first responders, police, life flight transportation, and rehabilitation costs.

Newark, Ohio had a breed ban that was continuously challenged, eventually led by breed activist and councilman Jeff Rath. The Newark City Council made a VERY generous compromise with pit bull advocates, and agreed that all pit bulls that passed the ridiculously easy AKC Canine Good Citizen test would be completely exempted from the breed ban. <http://www.newarkadvocate.com/story/news/local/2015/01/20/pit-bull-supporters-push-breed-specific-law/22085207/> In the first year after this offer was made only three Newark pit bulls achieved exemption considered. <http://www.newarkadvocate.com/story/news/local/2015/01/30/newarks-third-dog-bite-month-attributed-pit-bulls/22621143/> Attacks have continued because residents choose to break the law and harbor out-of-control pit bulls,

In early 2015, statistics showed that pit bulls were the top biters in Licking County (Newark is located in Licking County).

<http://www.newarkadvocate.com/story/news/local/2015/01/31/mixed-breeds-pit-bulls-labs-bit/22665563/>

This quote comes from the Newark Advocate: "So far in 2015, Newark police have taken reports for three bites, all of which were by pit bulls, (Newark Police Sgt) Davis said. Pit bulls tend to make up the majority of bite calls that police get".

Breed proponents say the dogs are misunderstood and unfairly judged. This Newark Advocate quote from Marysville resident Steffen Baldwin: "If you take a dog out of an environment and you put it into a new one, its behavior and temperament will change," Steffen Baldwin, president and CEO of the Animal Cruelty Task Force of Ohio, previously told The Advocate: "It's not the breed, it's not some genetic thing from 200 years ago. It's all about the environment the dog is being put in."

I find the argument that a change of address will change a dog unconvincing. Pit bulls were bred for an activity so violent that it is a felony in all 50 states and all of the civilized world. The criteria for inclusion into the breed/type gene pool was the ability and desire to attack unprovoked and to continue that behavior until death occurs. Steffen Baldwin will speak at your city council meeting.

The 2015 attempt to change law in Newark failed but was brought back in 2016 by the same advocates. In February 2016, prior to the vote to drop the Newark pit bull ban, a police officer was attacked by a pit bull that was not insured and did not have the required tags. <http://www.newarkadvocate.com/story/news/local/2016/02/29/newark-police-officer-bitten-pit-bull/81115706/>

Many non-local pit bull owners appeared in Newark City Council to support changes in Newark city law as well. The Facebook page for a Mount Vernon, Ohio dog advocate and owner of a pit bull service dog photographed in the Newark City Council chambers (link to the photo is below) shows more than one dog in her household wearing the same service dog vest. Her name is found under her photo- feel free to check her Facebook page. Service dog vests are easily purchased online without any required documentation. A google search for "service dog vests for sale" got 635,000 results in 0.57 seconds. A google search for "service dog fraud" got 4,410,000 in 0.51 seconds. <http://www.newarkadvocate.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2016/04/04/city-council-votes-on-dog-law/82638344/>

The date of the final, and successful, vote in Newark was April 4, 2016 (vote count was 5 in favor, 5 against, with the tie broken by the City Council President). On May 6th, just one month after pit bulls were deregulated in Newark, a Chihuahua was killed by a pit bull.

<http://www.newarkadvocate.com/story/news/local/2016/05/06/newark-pit-bull-kills-chihuahua-injures-other-dog/84026546/>

The death of this small pet prompted the Newark city council to revisit the law they had just passed to beef it up. This action was taken June 20, 2016.

<http://www.newarkadvocate.com/story/news/local/2016/06/20/newark-passes-change-vicious-dog-law/86140898/>

The city of Avon Lake, Ohio had a pit bull ban until 2012. This proactive law was challenged for years by breed advocates. Councilman David Kos took this on as a project. Mr. Kos lobbied for 3.5 years to drop the Avon Lake breed ban. Mr. Kos finally found a tactic that worked. He told city council that local law must "mirror state law." The Ohio Legislature had just passed HB 14 to deregulate pit bulls in Ohio. This was a false statement but it worked, Avon Lake city council dropped the proactive law they had a perfect right to retain. <http://patch.com/ohio/avon-oh/avon-lake-city-council-votes-or-not-on-vicious-dog-ordinance>

Last summer saw two pit bull attacks in Avon Lake, both fatal to peaceful pets. The owners of both small dogs were injured while attempting, unsuccessfully, to save their pets. Residents of Avon Lake attended city council meetings demanding proactive law, many demanding a return to the breed ban. An uphill struggle doomed by Mr. Kos' refusal to consider a return to BSL. A return to the breed ban did not suit his vision for the city.

<http://chronicle.northcoastnow.com/2015/08/21/avon-lake-residents-demand-toughest-vicious-dog-ordinance/>

After refusing to consider the demands of his residents, Kos hired Dana Pannella, an animal rights lawyer working for the Holland and Muriden law firm. Pannella is also a very public pit bull advocate. She serves on the Board of Directors of Ohioans against Breed Discrimination. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/11/pit-bull-pac_n_7242318.html A brief digression, the pit bull PAC, Ohioans Against Breed Discrimination announced an ambitious plan to raise \$5 million to promote a ballot initiative for a constitutional amendment that would bar any city or county in Ohio from enacting or enforcing breed-specific legislation. This project was apparently abandoned after months of fund raising brought in \$635 to their gofundme page. Ohio voters simply did not support this project.

The new Avon Lake law was passed in October of 2015. It is very complex and may be difficult to enforce for that very reason. <http://www.morningjournal.com/article/MJ/20151014/NEWS/151019830>

Councilman Shondel voices his concerns in this article and they are valid.

Washington Court House, Ohio had a breed ban that was dropped in 2014 in response to the exact same tactics seen in Bexley. One year later the Fayette County Shelter saw an uptick in the numbers of stray pit bulls picked up in Washington Court House that was big enough to make the local newspaper.

<http://www.buckeyecountry105.com/articles/local-news-stories-226193/fayette-dog-shelter-sees-increase-in-13415032#ixzz3V9TfnK7q>

The overcrowding of shelters by pit bulls in cities where pit bulls are not regulated is a serious problem and costs are covered by the taxpayer. Checking the websites of local shelters is an eye-opening experience. Pick any day, this count was done 11/6/2016.

As difficult as it is to review a site this large, the Cincinnati Humane Society website shows 191 available dogs. Of those 191 available dogs 154 are pit bulls and some of these pit bulls have been in the shelter for a very long time. One of the pit bulls admitted January 30, 2015.

The City Dogs website, run by the Cleveland City Dog Pound shows 66 available dogs, 60 of them are pit bulls.

Lucas County Animal Care and Control has 77 available dogs, 66 of them are pit bulls.

The Franklin County Dog Shelter has 84 available dogs, 53 of them are pit bulls.

Shelters all over the United States report similar results, and nobody wins here. The dogs are warehoused endlessly and they suffer. High profile programs are designed to encourage adoption of dogs using emotional appeals and fanciful relabeling of breeds. Those running shelters and city pounds have forgotten that their organizations were set up for the purpose of public safety. Improving live release stats becomes the goal and unsuitable and dangerous dogs are pushed upon the public with passionate appeals that backfire when known dangerous dogs are adopted by kindhearted people only to be attacked by dogs that should never have been offered for adoption. Here are a few examples, there are hundreds of others.

A pit bull attacked the daughter of the new owners within minutes of arrival at their home. <http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Rescued-Pit-Bull-Attacks-Teenage-Daughter-Euthanized-325519571.html>

A privately placed pit bull killed his new owner in Virginia. http://pilotonline.com/news/local/n-c-woman-killed-by-dog-she-had-adopted-from/article_bbec153e-4449-5a8c-b690-fb4f5708abff.html

This shelter pit bull attacked his new family on day two in the new household. <http://6abc.com/news/woman-2-children-attacked-by-recently-adopted-dog-in-ne-phila/563725/>

An Ohio pit bull named Bosco was placed by the Lucas County Pit Crew. Bosco bit his new owner just days later starting a chain of events that led to charges against the president of the Lucas County Pit Crew and two volunteers, and the eventual transfer of Bosco across state lines for the purpose of rehoming.

<http://www.toledoblade.com/local/2016/10/31/Pit-Crew-reaches-plea-deal-with-Fulton-County-over-dog-bite-quarantine-case.html>

In summary, I would like you to consider that attempts to repeal bans on pit bull type dogs are generally instigated by non-local advocates; that these advocates have a great deal of power over city councils; that advocates rely on council members not having sufficient information to counteract their claims; that the cost of pit bull attacks is an economic issue to the taxpayers of the city; and the cost of pit bulls in shelters is an economic burden to taxpayers and a poor solution for pit bulls.

Bexley has invited experts to speak on this issue, I suggest that additional speakers be limited to actual residents of your city. A sign-up sheet requiring the speaker's local address is a useful tool. Local law is local business, the thoughts of your actual constituents should be heard. If there is any doubt in your mind about what is best for your community, put the pit bull issue on the ballot. Let your actual constituents have the final word.

I make a full disclosure here, I am the survivor of a pit bull attack, I am a Registered Nurse, I serve on the Board of Directors of Dobsbite.org, I work with Daxton's Friends for Canine Education <http://www.daxtonsfriends.com/>,

11/10/2016

The City of Bexley Mail - FW: How dropping pit bull regulations has impacted Ohio communities

and am active with National Pit Bull VictimAwareness.org.

Sincerely,

Carol Miller