

To: The Selectmen
From: Joyce Charbonneau
Date: 7/16/18

Re: Current dog fees.

I would like to give you some current information regarding dog licensing and the work involved in this office. It is my goal to be allowed to go up a \$1.00 in each category as the State permits. We are almost at the end of our 2018 dog season, and currently, just have 28 more dogs to license. I would like the new fees if approved to be effective for the 2019 dog season which starts January, 1, 2019.

Our current dog fees are \$6.50, (neutered or spayed, \$9.00, (not neutered or spayed), and \$2.00. (Senior citizens). These fees are applicable from 1/1-5/31.
New fees allowed by the State: \$7.50, \$10.00, and \$3.00.

We receive the new dog tags in January. We post on the website that the new dog tags are in as the first reminder to come license your dog. We also put reminder notices up around the Municipal Center. We start sending out reminder email notices as well. We license about 1550 dogs a year. On average, a new or renewal for a dog license takes about three minutes. This is an average. Some can take just one or two minutes, and some can take five or six minutes if it involves calling the Veterinarian. We often have to do that if the customer does not come in with their updated rabies certificate. Rather than turn them away and having the possibility of them not coming back, we call the Vet to get the information. (All through the year, we receive rabies updates from the Vets that we enter into our dog system. However, we still end up making many calls to the Vets if we don't happen to have the update on that particular dog for the customer at the counter.) When we are licensing new dogs, or doing renewals, we make sure we have current phone numbers and current emails.

From January 1st through April 30, we register about half of the dogs that need to be licensed throughout the year. We are also keeping the records current, again as far updating rabies information, adding new dogs, and deleting dogs.

May 1st, we send out letters for the overdue dogs. This is about 750 letters that are printed, stuffed and posted. This reminder letter gets about one- half to two thirds of the owners in to license their dogs during the month of May. (May is a grace month, so there are no additional fees.)

June 1st, a \$1.00 late fee is added to the dog licenses.

Between June 1st and June 20th, I prepare the list of owners of unlicensed dogs. The Selectmen then issue a Civil Forfeiture warrant to the Chief of Police. This warrant states that all dogs must be licensed or accounted for by August 31st.

This July 1st, about 170 Civil Forfeiture notices were printed, and then prepared to be mailed. We write each dog's name on each letter, and the total cost including late fees. We have to look in our system for each dog to determine if it is spayed or neutered, or if the owner is a senior citizen, as this will affect the price of the license in addition to the Civil Forfeiture fee. The notices are stuffed and posted, and then mailed. The Civil Forfeiture fines become effective July 1st. We use police envelopes. We make copies of the police letterhead and use that for the notices. The Chief's signature is on these notices. I give the Police copies of the letters, along with a list of owners and their phone numbers. The secretary starts to make phone calls to the owners about a week or so after the notices have gone out. This year, she made about seventy phone calls starting July 12th. She will then give me back her list, with notes on it. I will follow up with any phone numbers she could not find, and research as well as making phone calls on numbers that I was able to find.

Once the owner has received the reminder letter or the Civil Forfeiture notice, we start to receive calls from the owner if they have moved, or they no longer have their dog. We update our dog program on a daily basis. If I receive letters back from the post office labeled "moved, left no forwarding address", I research on where they moved, as they could very well still be in town, but at a different address. I do an updated report every few days on how many dogs are left to license.

We receive about a 75% response on the mailed Civil Forfeiture notices. I then give the Chief the remainder so he can hand deliver them. For the last two years, this has been about 25 notices. We print up 25 new Civil Forfeiture letters, add the fees again, as they could have changed, (Each month, a \$1.00 late fee is added). I keep copies of all Civil Forfeiture notices mailed or hand delivered. I know the Chief makes several calls on these 25 notices. If they still do not come in, he goes out to the homes.

The above information is basically a summary of what is involved in licensing 1550 dogs in Stratham. Below are the costs involved:

Estimated Costs for licensing dogs in Stratham	
Supplies and Postage:	
Reminder letters	\$400.00
Civil Forfeiture Letters	\$100.00
Time & Labor:	
Cost for time and labor	\$7904.00
(Avg. 8 hrs/wk @ \$19/hr	
X 52 weeks)	
Total Cost & Labor	\$8404.00

375.00 in postage.
 (150 notices sent.
 75.00 in postage, 25 in
 paper, envelopes,
 toner.)

Dog fees from 5/1/2017 through 4/30/2018:

Fees Collected for all dogs	\$9238.50
Minus fees sent to State	-3412.00

Net fees to Town \$5826.50

In summary, I believe the cost of ensuring that every dog is licensed in Stratham far outweighs the revenue we collect. (\$8404.00 in expenses versus \$5826.50 in revenue.) The dog fees that Stratham uses that were set by the State have been in effect since 1990. The State of NH allows an additional \$1.00 increase to the fees that the Town can keep per RSA 466:39. This was approved several years ago. The majority of the surrounding Seacoast towns show that the extra \$1.00 has been adopted.

While it is true that my office does far and above what is required by law, I believe I would just be pushing these costs onto the Police Department if I did not. I only have to provide the Police Department with the Civil Forfeiture list, and his department would have to send out these notices, either certified or hand delivered. Instead of 25-30 follow ups, his Department would be working on over 750 follow up notices. (This is approximately the remainder of dogs to be licensed once they become officially late May 1st). (The Chief estimated hand delivering just 200 Civil Forfeiture notices would take the Police Department about 40 man hours to accomplish. This does not include any phone calls.) Note: (His estimation was given to me in 2013, I was not able to follow up with a current estimate.)

I would appreciate your consideration in this matter. I thought I would send this report for you to consider, and then if needed, I could meet with you at a public meeting if you wished.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joyce Charbonneau