MINUTES

ANIMAL CONTROL BOARD
1st QUARTER MEETING 2026

DATE: Wednesday March 25, 2026
Location: Michigan City Police Department's Community Room
Time: 2:30 pm

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 2:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Present:

David Cooney	Chairperson / MCPD
Don Przybylinski	Michigan City Council Member
Dr. Rex Bailey	Michigan City Animal Hospital
Karen Kilander	Michiana Humane Society (MHS)

Absent:

{Vacant Position}	Director of Animal Control

Quorum: Yes

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from 3rd Quarter meeting dated September 2025.
Note: The 4th Quarter meeting was postponed (no meeting)

Motion: Approve the 3rd Quarter 2025 meeting minutes.
1st – Dr. Bailey
2nd – Councilman Przybylinski

The motion was approved by all board members present - ***Motion carries.***

Previous Business

- **Kennel Expansion Project**

- The Chief reported on the status of the planned kennel expansion.
    - IT Director, who is leading the project to construct a pole barn across from the current kennel.
        - IT is still waiting on a few estimates and expects to have them in the coming weeks, after which the Chair will discuss timelines with him.
        - The project was delayed in fall 2025 due to rapid weather changes; it had been hoped construction would start shortly after the September meeting.
        - The project is still active and must be completed by the end of the year.
        - Original plan: purchase building materials and construct the barn in-house (Andrew and Terry's department), though Terry may be retiring soon.
        - Councilman Przybylinski stated that if internal construction is not feasible, he is willing to approach the city administration to secure funding to have a contractor complete the project, noting it has been discussed for several years.
        - Item remains ongoing.

New Business

- **Feral Cat Feeding Ordinance and Enforcement**
    - Councilman Przybylinski raised feral cat feeding concerns and sought clarification of the current ordinance.
      Current ordinance reference: Section 14-131 – Feeding stray animals.
    - It is unlawful to feed stray animals by leaving open containers of food outside a structure for more than 2 hours.
    - A fine is associated with violations.
    - Another section referenced: Section 14-134 – General animal care requirements, addressing standards for care, cleanliness, nuisance prevention, and the need to keep small pets indoors or in warm structures during severe weather.

- Key discussion points:
    - The ordinance specifies a 2-hour window but does not clearly limit how many 2-hour feeding periods per day are allowed.
    - Concern that residents could feed animals during multiple windows (e.g., 7–9, 11–1, 3–5), effectively feeding all day and increasing neighborhood issues.
    - Members emphasized balancing compassion for cats with neighborhood quality of life, noting residents do not want feral cats in their yards, especially where birds are being fed.
    - Enforcement challenges were discussed, including the need for officers to document violations (e.g., with body-worn cameras and photographs of dishes left out too long).
    - Many situations involve people who feed cats long-term but deny ownership, complicating enforcement.

- Recommendations / Action:
    - Recommendation that the Chief meet with animal control officers to develop suggested ordinance changes, including clearer limits such as feeding once per day.
    - Recommendation to survey other municipalities (e.g., South Bend, Gary, Chesterton) regarding their feral cat feeding practices.
    - Board member noted that feral cats have been discussed for approximately 1.5 years and urged movement toward a concrete solution.
    - The Chief agreed to review the ordinance with staff and bring recommended changes to the next meeting.

- Indoor/Outdoor Cats and Ownership Issues
    - Question was raised about how indoor/outdoor cats are regulated compared to dogs, which must be confined and under control.
    - Animal Control explained issues typically arise when cats cause damage or become a nuisance to neighbors.
    - If the owner can be identified and admits ownership, Animal Control can address the matter and seek voluntary solutions, such as keeping the cat indoors more often.
    - It is common for residents to state “It’s not my cat, I’ve just been feeding it for six years,” which complicates responsibility and enforcement.

- Trail Creek, Long Beach, and Injured Animal Responsibilities
    - Dr. Bailey raised concerns regarding Trail Creek and responsibilities for injured animals found in the street when no owner is present.
    - Chief Cooney reported meeting with the director of the LaPorte County Small Animal Shelter and its advisory board president to clarify roles.
        - Main points:
        - Each major municipality (Trail Creek, Long Beach, Michigan City, and southern county areas) is responsible for its own animals and related costs.
        - The shelter will assist when possible but faces similar capacity and financial constraints.
        - City's kennels are currently full, limiting intake from other jurisdictions.
        - Michigan City has at times covered medical bills for animals originating from other agencies.
    - Additional discussion:
        - Trail Creek does not have its own animal control officer or dog warden; the county generally serves them, and Trail Creek has a few outside kennels but often calls Michigan City for help.
        - Long Beach has a small kennel and may use officers or a dog pound function, but frequently asks Michigan City to assist.
        - Chief Cooney noted an on-call schedule maintained with dispatch; Animal Control will respond to assist when possible but cannot always retain the animal.
        - A recent injured-dog case in the street was described where transport was difficult until the owner was located, illustrating the need for a stronger backup plan.

- Repeat Loose Dogs, Progressive Fines, and Public Safety
    - Concern raised about the effectiveness of progressive fines for repeatedly impounded dogs and whether existing ordinances are strong enough.

- Example provided of a dog reportedly picked up five times, with concern that the animal posed a risk (e.g., injuries from “chewed-up” incidents and potential bites when someone attempts to catch it).

- Animal Control response and discussion:

    - Effectiveness of fines depends on the situation, including type of dog, owner responsibility, and whether children in the home might leave doors open.
    - Many responsible owners modify fences or locks after an initial fine.
    - Officers sometimes return loose dogs without penalty but warn owners to correct the issue.
    - New Animal Control Officer Eric commented that ordinances should perhaps be stricter, so owners understand there are real consequences if animals repeatedly escape.
    - Dr. Bailey expressed that waiting until someone is bitten is not acceptable and asked what happens to a dog after a bite incident.
    - It was acknowledged that working with the city attorney to determine additional permissible legal steps can be difficult; nonetheless, this is a public safety concern and may justify ordinance review.

- Systematic Review of Animal Ordinances

    - Board discussed the overall number of animal-related ordinances, noting there are more than 10–15.
    - Suggestion was made to review a limited number of ordinances each quarter rather than all at once.
    - Chief Cooney proposed the following process: he will pull a set of ordinances and send them to board members for review prior to meetings.

Review of Michigan City Animal Control Activities for 3rd and 4th Quarter 2025 presented by Chairperson Cooney:

3rd Quarter Report 2025

Total impounds: 96

Dogs: 56

Cats: 37

Other: 3

DOGS

Returned to Owner: 26

Michiana Humane Society (MHS): 11

LaPorte County Small Animal Shelter: 3

Valparaiso Lakeshore Paws: 4

Other Rescues: 0

Fostered: 1

Deceased: 3

Euthanize: 0

CATS

MHS: 12

Fried's Cat Shelter: 14

LaPorte County Small Animal Shelter: 1

Owner reclaims: 5

Fostered: 0

Deceased: 4

Euthanize: 1

Other

One (1) opossum to Humaine Indiana

Deceased: 1 – Goose, 1 - Racoon

4th Quarter Report 2025

Total impounds: 35

Dogs: 31

Cats: 4 *(minus deceased/euthanized: total 11)*

DOGS

Returned to Owner: 18

Michiana Humane Society (MHS): 9

LaPorte County Small Animal Shelter: 3

Valparaiso Lakeshore Paws: 0

Euthanize: 4

Deceased: 1

CATS

Owner reclaims: 1

MHS: 1

LaPorte County Small Animal Shelter: 0

Fried's Cat Shelter: 2

Fostered: 0

Deceased: 6

Euthanize: 1

Other

Deceased: 1 - Groundhog

Discussion:

None

TNR Program Update (Oct 2025–Mar 2026)

- Monthly Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR): Oct (4F/6M), Nov/Dec (2F/2M each), Jan (3F/3M), Feb (2F/2M), Mar (4F/10M); total 17 females/25 males sterilized.

- Impact: Prevents ~60–70 kittens/year (females average 1.4 litters/year, 3–4 kittens/litter); sterilizing ≥30% every 6 months reduces colonies 30–60% over years, minimizing kittens.

- Success factors:
    - Consistent trapping (esp. intact females/new arrivals), limit feeding/migration, adopt friendlies; risks include dumped cats or halting program.
    - Officers praised progress despite seasonal challenges and trap placement learning curve; board commended efforts.

Public Comments:

None

Board Comments:

- Chairwoman Kilander: ACOs going a great job and welcome New ACO Eric Stantz-Jackson.

- Chairman Cooney: ACOs are continuing to do a great job. Continue to be available 24/7 and essential for our day-to-day operations with MCPD. Appreciative of the city council and mayor's office for the raise provided to Animal Control in January 2026, was much needed.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.
1st – Councilman Przybylinski
2nd – Dr. Bailey

Motion carries.

Next meeting: Wednesday June 17th, 2026

Notes:

- ***This meeting was very informative, covering several important issues related to animal control in Michigan City.***
- ***Several action items were assigned to address these issues, and the board showed commitment to finding solutions.***
- ***The board expressed appreciation for the hard work of Animal Control and their dedication to the well-being of animals in the community.***

Approved by the Board: 09/30/2026

/s/ AC David Cooney PE248