

The Ad Hoc Feral Cats Committee for the Village of Monroeville met in Council Chambers on Monday, April 6, 2026, at 11:00 am, for the purpose of discussing a proposed feral cat ordinance.

Present were: Committee members Chris Raftery, Tammy Schlachter, Sue Rogers, & Jim Ehrman; Village Administrator Tom Gray; Fiscal Officer Eunice A. Collene; Police Chief Jon Earl; Tracy Koch & Amanda Fearing, from the Huron County Humane Society; and Tracy Sellers.

Ms. Raftery opened the meeting for discussion. Chief advised that he has received complaints from the areas of Monroe Street, Ridge Street, and other locations concerning stray cats being fed by various residents. The cats tend to remain in the areas where they are fed, defecating on the lawns of other residents and damaging flower beds. This situation leads to neighbor disputes and numerous calls to the police department. The police department is unable to take any action as the village lacks an ordinance that addresses this matter. Ms. Rogers asked whether Chief believes an ordinance would resolve this issue, or if there is an organization residents can contact for spaying and neutering. Chief said that he is aware of other municipalities that have spayed or neutered stray cats; however, this did not resolve the problem of the cats being fed, defecating, and causing property damage. The issue remains as long as there is no ordinance and individuals continue to feed them and/or provide shelter; the police department has nothing to enforce. Ms. Raftery said that the Humane Society cannot assist, as they do not have the facilities to care for the cats. Mr. Ehrman questioned what language is needed in the ordinance that allows the police department to enforce it. Chief said that he has been working with the mayor and Mr. Barney, and they have reviewed ordinances from other municipalities to create an ordinance for the village. The proposed ordinance could define what constitutes an at-large cat, outline what residents can and cannot do regarding providing food and shelter, and allow the police department to issue citations to residents who violate the ordinance. Mr. Ehrman asked how the citations would be enforced and what would happen to the cats at that point. Chief said the cats will remain if they are provided with food and shelter. If they are not fed and sheltered, they will look for other locations to fulfill their needs.

Ms. Fearing and Ms. Koch presented themselves as the Medical Director and the Kennel Director for the Huron County Humane Society. Ms. Fearing said that feral cats are a problem in numerous communities. A cat's health improves when they are provided with food and shelter. However, when feeding bans are created and enforced, the situation gets worse. The cats will rummage through people's trash, cross streets more frequently, and will be injured or killed by vehicles. The Humane Society encountered similar issues when the Norwalk Reservoir instituted a feeding ban. People continued to feed the cats, which exacerbated the problems, leading to increased damage caused by the cats. While some cats may move away, they tend to become lazy and remain in the same place once they are fed. The Humane Society is committed to helping communities address these problems. The FC3 (Firelands Community Cat Coalition) is another organization in Norwalk that assists with TNR (trap-neuter-return) in Huron and Erie counties. The Humane Society does snip-and-tip operations annually, using funds raised to assist up to 100 feral cats in the county. Their focus is on areas with large cat populations. If Monroeville has a location with 10-15 cats, they are willing to work with residents for snip-and-tip. Ms. Koch said that it's irresponsible for residents to allow their unspayed or unneutered cats to roam freely, as this is the cause of the problem. Cats reproduce quickly, leading to an increase in the cat population. She said that residents can use deterrents in their flower beds to prevent cats from entering. Ms. Fearing said that people complain when having to purchase deterrents to keep the cats out, but unfortunately, there is no perfect remedy for the situation.

Ms. Sellers stated that she is a licensed veterinary technician with more than twenty years of experience. She said that the office where she previously worked would explain the term 'owner-harbinger' to their clients. If a cat is fed, it will remain in the area. The City of Sandusky established a cat ordinance. The hospital where she used to work would capture nuisance cats, keep them for three days, and then euthanize them if they were not claimed. Very few individuals would claim the cats, as they would be fined under the ordinance. Euthanizing stray cats had very little impact on the stray cat population, which made the ordinance useless. If the police department intends to

issue citations for feeding or sheltering stray cats, they should first identify the cat's owner. Not feeding the cats doesn't resolve the issue; it just shifts the problem elsewhere. TNR programs help manage the cat population, but a caretaker for the cat colonies is necessary. People like to feed the cats, but they often don't have the financial means to spay and neuter them. Programs like Snip-and-tip and FC3, which have a long waiting list, can help. These programs are funded privately and also depend on donations. It's important to educate residents about spaying and neutering to help reduce the cat population. There are free services available in Upper Sandusky and Toledo, although they are an hour away. The clinic in Wakeman also offers reduced rates. Ear tipping can be performed to indicate that a cat has been spayed or neutered, or tattoo ink can be applied to the incision site once a cat is spayed or neutered. If a resident feeds or provides shelter for a cat, they assume ownership of the cat at that point.

Ms. Schlachter asked for suggestions on what the Chief could communicate to residents when addressing complaints. Ms. Sellers said providing a list of community resources for spaying and neutering would help, along with educating residents. A well-managed cat colony will take care of itself. The cats in a colony tend to be healthier, spayed and neutered, do not transmit diseases, will not spray, will not cause property damage, will prevent other cats from entering, and will eventually reach the end of their lifespan. If cats are trapped and killed, more cats will appear. Using live traps can help capture the cats for spaying and neutering, after which residents can reach out to a local veterinarian for service.

Chief said that the primary issue is with residents who complain yet do not provide food or shelter for the cats. These residents are resistant to the idea of being required to pay for the spaying or neutering of the cats. They resort to shooting or poisoning the cats themselves. Chief said he is unable to assist, as there is no existing ordinance that addresses the issue. This leads to neighborhood conflicts that extend into other problems. Ms. Raftery proposed that residents should be allowed to contact the Village Administrative Office with a list of their grievances. Ms. Collene responded and said her office is not responsible for enforcing this issue. Ms. Collene asked whether the committee members had reviewed the ordinance language that Mr. Barney had provided in November 2025, noting that this matter had been under discussion for a long while. Ms. Raftery said some of the issues extend beyond what the proposed ordinance can address. Ms. Collene said that the police department is currently limited in what they can do and that establishing an ordinance would help address this problem. During the last discussion regarding an ordinance, Ms. Collene remembered that Ms. Rogers wasn't comfortable with the proposed fine amount. Since that time, no further discussions have taken place. Ms. Raftery said that imposing a fine will not resolve the issue. Ms. Collene noted that property owners invest in maintaining the appearance of their properties, yet the police department is unable to assist when a neighbor feeds and shelters cats, which in turn causes property damage to those who do not. Ms. Collene said that a lot of discussion has occurred, but action needs to be taken at this point. Ms. Raftery said that the community is facing a significant problem and that people need to have compassion. Chief then asked Ms. Raftery at what point she prioritizes compassion for the cats over compassion for those suffering property damage. Ms. Raftery responded that homeowners have a responsibility to place deterrents in their gardens or flower beds, similar to how they would address other pest issues. Ms. Rogers explained to Ms. Raftery that it should not be the responsibility of homeowners to manage the issues related to the cats if they are not the ones providing food and shelter for them. Ms. Rogers said that not everyone has the means to pay for spaying and neutering stray cats. Mr. Gray suggested revisiting the proposed ordinance to address these concerns and come to a resolution. Ms. Schlachter agreed, stating that it is similar to a situation where a neighbor plays loud music. A noise ordinance exists that allows the police department to address the matter. An ordinance needs to be created to allow the police department to address the issues with the stray cats. Chief referenced the language in the proposed ordinance, which states "the need for a cat to travel in an uncontrolled manner beyond the limits of the property owner or keeper of the cat," and explained that the terms harbinger and keeper are all defined. Chief explained that this term pertains to an individual who is feeding and sheltering the cat, while the cat ventures onto another person's property. The intention is not to be heavy-handed; rather, it is to help those who approach him with complaints regarding their property being altered or damaged.

Ms. Rogers asked Chief whether the Village of Milan has an ordinance that could be referenced. Chief said that he does not believe so, but that he had reviewed three other community ordinances with Mr. Barney and the mayor. Language from these ordinances was used to create a proposed ordinance for the village. Chief doesn't want to insert police officers in something they shouldn't be involved in and create liability issues. Ms. Sellers asked whether a proposed ordinance had been created, noting that this meeting is the first instance she has heard of it. Ms. Raftery confirmed and clarified that it is currently a proposed ordinance. The committee needs to determine whether an ordinance would help or exacerbate the problem, and have further discussion. Ms. Sellers requested a copy of the proposed ordinance, to which Ms. Collene responded that she would provide her with one. Ms. Schlachter asked if anyone had a contact number for FC3, and Ms. Fearing, along with Ms. Koch, indicated that they could arrange for the woman in charge of FC3 to reach out to Ms. Schlachter. Chief asked the opinions of those present regarding a situation where a specific homeowner has taken in a group of cats, had them spayed or neutered, and allowed them to reside in a barn, leading to the cats causing damage to neighboring properties, particularly to trash and flower beds. Ms. Sellers proposed that the ordinance should include language stating that if the owner is feeding and sheltering the cats, they are responsible for ensuring the cats remain on their property. Should the cats become a nuisance, the owner could face citations. Ms. Koch said that there are fencing options available for cat owners to confine their cats to their yards. Ms. Raftery said she thinks the committee should start educating the public and seeing what kind of opposition they are up against. Ms. Fearing suggested inviting the woman from FC3 to visit the village and provide education to the residents. Ms. Schlachter said it all comes back to residents feeding the cats, not claiming the cats, and the cats remaining and going into neighbors' yards. An ordinance needs to be pushed through that at least addresses the issue of feeding the cats. Discussion regarding a responsible feeding ordinance, but no significant points were observed. Ms. Koch, Ms. Fearing, and Ms. Sellers exited the meeting at 12:01 pm.

Ms. Rogers said she thinks Council should proceed with an ordinance regarding this matter. Ms. Raftery responded no and said that the ordinance requires further discussion to ensure that all avenues have been explored. Ms. Rogers stated that she believes it is clear which actions must be taken, and the Council should move on the ordinance at the next Council meeting. This issue has existed since November 2025 and has taken too long to be resolved. The police department needs to have the ability to assist residents with their complaints. Ms. Schlachter asked Chief whether he believes the proposed ordinance contains the necessary language. Chief confirmed that it does, as it pertains to residents feeding the cats and ensuring they remain on their property. Ms. Rogers questioned whether a schedule should be added to the ordinance, to which Chief recommended that she reach out to Mr. Barney for clarification. Ms. Raftery suggested that everyone should review the ordinance, consider any potential amendments, email Ms. Collene with their proposals, and proceed accordingly.

There being no other business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Eunice A. Collene, Fiscal Officer

*The minutes of this meeting were recorded by Administrative Specialist Heather Alicea. Fiscal Officer Eunice A. Collene examined them for both form and content and subsequently approved them as transcribed.*