

Chris Taggart

From: James Laird <james.p.laird@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2021 2:20 PM
To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Cc: sammcfro@gmail.com
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Dog Barking Ordinance
Attachments: Video.mov

Good Day Commissioners,

I will start as saying that I am not pro new law or ordinance in anyway. I do feel however that we should all have the ability to maintain a peaceful area in which we live.

I have served honorably in the military for 22 years conducting extreme search and rescue and law enforcement as a Coast Guard Surfman. Although I am proud to have served the American public, it has also taken a toll on me mentally and physically.

My family and I reside off of Dry Gulch Road in a small house on 3.5 acres. It is our home and I am proud to be raising my 2 small children here. We love it. Recently, some new neighbors have moved in next door. We have been extremely welcoming to them in our neighborhood. They have decided to take up dogsledding and have acquired 8 dogs that they keep in a small dog run in their backyard. Both the owners appear to work long hours at which time they leave all 8 dogs outside. We immediately noticed that our peaceful area was not so peaceful anymore. A few weeks passed and I politely asked them to please do something to mitigate the dog barking and the owner offered support and said she would purchase a bark collar for 1 of the dogs that barks more than the others. A few weeks passed with no change in the constant barking and howling all day and I asked the owner again if they could "please do something", at which the owner stated "we will continue to work on it". I offered to help pay for additional bark collars and the owner didn't respond. A month passed with no change and I then decided to show the owner video (see attached) of the dogs barking and howling while they were gone via a text message and the owner responded by saying "we moved to the country to build a dog sledding team, and they will work on it, however dogs are going to be dogs". We are not talking about occasional dog barking, these dogs aggressively bark from sunrise till roughly 630 PM when the owners return from work. A few days later, while the owners were gone, multiple dogs escaped their yard and started to chase my neighbors horses and growl and bark at my wife and 1 year old son in my driveway. After calling the owner to let them know what was going on, the owner then left work and came and retrieved her dogs from my property. A few days later the dogs escaped again and again a week later. We have called the sheriff and the owners have been warned about their dogs escaping. The responding deputy took notice to the loud barking and howling while at my residence and stated he couldn't do anything because Ravalli County does not have an ordinance in place for loud dogs.

I am 100% in support for people to live their dreams, and have whatever animals they want, however, when one's dreams come at the expense of other's dreams of reasonable peace, I feel it is a problem. An occasional dog barking, rooster crowing and a donkey neighing are all normal and acceptable forms of living where we live, however this massive amount of noise and disruption from these unattended dogs would be found to be unacceptable from any reasonable person.

As a person who is diagnosed and suffers from PTSD and anxiety, the constant noise of 8 barking/howling dogs has been having negative effects on me on a personal level. Just last week I had to leave my residence and drive for 2 hours to escape the barking and howling. I feel threatened and helpless on my own property. Plain and simple, this is not fair to me or my other neighbors.

I have continued to make contact with the dog owner about the everyday barking and they now ignore my texts messages. I have spoken to the other residents in our neighborhood that have also complained to the Ravalli County Sheriff's Office (see SO2112-0137). The deputies have all stated the same thing, that there is nothing they can do.

I am writing this email as piece of documentation and a request to please consider a noise ordinance for the future. As we all know, the Bitterroot is growing immensely and with that, what was one time an easy conversation and respectful resolution between neighbors may not be the same as it used to be in today's world. New people from different areas may have opposing feelings on what is acceptable or not. I can say as a long time law enforcement officer, a reasonable and prudent person would take up issue with what our neighborhood is being subjected too. The owners need to do something effective to control the dog barking and howling, as well as the constant escape of their dogs. I am now even in fear of my two young children (both under 4 years of age) being outside of the small fenced area of our property.

I will be also in contact with my other neighbors who are also planning on trying to resolve this issue with the county commissioners and county attorney. I love our community and our neighborhood and will do everything I can to fix this issue, however I am fearful we will have limited options without legalities in place.

I thank you for your time.

Very Respectfully,

James Laird
Chief Warrant Officer
United States Coast Guard

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