

## City council decides dog will be put down

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The Austin City Council denied an owner's appeal Monday of a city dangerous dog declaration and voted that her dog should be destroyed.

The owner's appeal for her dog came after it killed another dog on March 9.

"We have a responsibility to the people in Austin," said Mayor Tom Stiehm.

A Yorkshire terrier died from injuries it suffered after owner Susan Strack's pit bull attacked it. The pit bull also bit a man who was walking the leashed Yorkie on a sidewalk along 10th Avenue Northeast, according to Austin Police Chief Brian Krueger.

The appeal by Strack, filed March 21, was two-fold, according to City Attorney David Hoversten. Strack appealed the dangerous dog declaration and appealed that the dog be destroyed. Had the council chosen the option to declare the dog dangerous but that it should not be destroyed, Strack would have needed to comply with a long list of regulations, including a proper enclosure, warning signs and proof annually of a minimum \$300,000 insurance policy.

Austin City Council member Steve King said it was necessary to separate fact from emotion during the hearing. Based on the evidence presented, he said, it was clear that the dog needed to be euthanized and referred to this particular pit bull as "a public safety issue."

Community Service Officer Ernesto Cantu, who responded to the scene, recommended that the dog be destroyed because it could happen again.

Strack disagreed with Cantu, saying it would never happen again because she'd go through the necessary steps Hoversten described. She also wanted to make the point that her dog has been fine with other dogs in the pound, where it's been since the incident.

Strack fought back tears while addressing the council and said she was sorry that this happened, called it a tragedy and said she hasn't been able to sleep.

She's never had any issues in the past when she's let her dog outside, Strack said. Her dog is also "obsessed with squirrels" and watches them daily from inside the house, she said. On the day of the attack, Strack had told Cantu she came running out of the house and tried to pull her dog off of the Yorkie, according to the police report.

"She didn't see the man," Strack said of her dog. "All she saw was a dog, which looked like a squirrel.

"I don't think my dog would have done that if she had known it was somebody's pet. She's not like that."

Donald Petersen, who was walking the Yorkie owned by his daughter, Mary McGrane, said his biggest concern was the responsibility of the dog owner. He said the dog should be on a leash and that it is irresponsible of the owner to let it run as it did.

"The minute she opened that door, that dog was in attack mode," Petersen said. "It was an instinctive thing."

Afterward, McGrane said, "I don't think anybody wins in this. It's a tragedy all around."

McGrane said the dog has been with her through a divorce, a move and other significant events.

"It was the most I cried in my whole life," McGrane said. "I don't have my dog anymore."