

Dogs may bark no more in New Hope

Borough toughens its noise ordinance

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Owners of barking dogs and other noisy pets who are a nuisance, beware.

The New Hope police now have an easier way to protect your neighbors' ears.

The borough council has revised its animal noise control ordinance so that police have more latitude in responding to noise from animals.

Previously, a dog or other animal had to bark or make a noise constantly for 15 minutes before police could consider it a nuisance.

The updated ordinance, approved by the council this week, sets no time frame for an animal's noise to be declared a nuisance.

The new ordinance says it shall be a nuisance and unlawful for any animal owner or person in control, willfully or through the failure of exercising proper control "...to disturb or annoy any person of normal and reasonable sensitivities," whether on public or private property.

The revised ordinance was requested by Police Chief Mike Cummings.

"Under the old ordinance, a dog could bark for 12 minutes and do so hourly and there was nothing that could be done," said Cummings. He said the change was prompted by an owner whose dog barked hourly through the night but not for 15 minutes at a time. Several complaints were made about that specific dog, Cummings said.

"Barking once a night is no big thing, but when it is being done hourly it becomes a problem for neighbors," he said.

The regulation covers more than dogs. It includes birds and animals that may bark, bay, howl, cry, squawk, crow or make any other similar noise continually or intermittently for any extended period of time, day or night.

The ordinance lets first offenders off with a warning. The fine for the



GORDON NIEBURG

Police Chief Cummings introduces new officer Candice Tremblay at a recent borough council meeting.

second offense within 12 months of the initial complaint is \$100. It is doubled for each additional offense, up to a maximum of \$1,000.

Exempted from complaints are dogs that bark or animals that make noise in response to trespassers or those threatening to trespass.

Credible evidence of a violation includes the experience of the investigating officer, audio or video recordings, sound monitoring logs, photographs, maps and statements by witnesses.

There was no one to protest the ordinance at council's meeting. That was in contrast to a large and loudly vocal contingent who showed up to protest a revision in the ordinance that governs noise emanating from night clubs, restaurants and other venues. The changes were rejected because they were viewed as too restrictive by the protestors, including several business owners.