

Hamden cat policy remains in limbo

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HAMDEN - People who believe their rights have been infringed and their properties damaged by feral cats, and people who believe the cats need more assistance, all marched to the Town Hall podium Monday night.

But in the end, the Legislative Council again postponed action on an ordinance regulating feral cats, and damage all cats may cause, because members felt the measure was flawed.

There was no testimony more dramatic than that offered by sisters Sydney Simpkins and Candace Walcott of Wilmot Road. For the last three years, the sisters have lost sleep and enjoyment of their property from the stench of cat urine. They spent \$4,782 to keep cats off their property and repair damage.

The feral cats are fed by neighbors across the street, and at one point, there were 30 in the neighborhood. The sisters said they wished people's rights and health would be put ahead of animals.

"The cats don't pay mortgages, the cats don't pay taxes. They don't do anything except eat and have sex," Simpkins said.

The proposed ordinance is a result of the sisters not getting any satisfaction in the last three years from officials. As a result, Mayor Craig B. Henrici asked Police Chief Thomas J. Wydra to develop an ordinance. If the ordinance isn't approved, the sisters said they would sue the town.

The ordinance calls for people who "keep" feral cats to vaccinate and sterilize them, and register them within a year of the ordinance being approved or face a \$100 fine. Owners or keepers of cats that cause property damage may also be subject to infractions.

The question of where the cats would be housed and how the ordinance would be enforced was a sticking point for council members who wanted the ordinance to be studied further.

"We have no plan (of where) to put them at this point," **Animal** Control Officer Christopher Smith said, adding that a facility would need to be found

first.

Councilman Michael Colaiacovo, D-7, said that more work was needed on the fee structure and the tools needed to move the ordinance forward, and suggested an arrangement with a non-profit.

Susan Spetrini read comments from Dolores Giannini, a founder of the organization trying to build an animal shelter in town. Giannini said the ordinance would be doomed if there was no shelter, since there are only six kennels reserved for Hamden animals at the North Haven shelter. She suggested a partnership with nonprofit organizations to plan the ordinance.

The council passed a resolution allowing the mayor to apply for state money for the development of engineering plans for the shelter proposed for Rocky Top Road and Sherman Avenue.