

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2012

Present: Ald. Ciccone (Chair), Swiston, Yates, Schwartz, Fuller, Kalis and Johnson

Absent: Ald. Harney

Also Present: Ald. Hess-Mahan

City Staff: David Koses, Transportation Planner; Aaron Goldman, Citizen Assistance Officer; Animal Control Officer Ralph Torres and Capt. Howard Mintz, Newton Police Department

Others Present: Laura Conlee, Furbearer and Black Bear Project Leader, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife; Representatives Kay Khan and Ruth Balser and Senator Cindy Creem

#289-11      ALD. HESS-MAHAN, SWISTON, SALVUCCI, requesting a discussion with the Animal Control Department regarding the presence of coyotes in Newton and the recent attack on a dog in West Newton. [10/06/11 @ 9:07 AM]

**ACTION:**      **NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0**

**NOTE:**      Ald. Hess-Mahan, Aaron Goldman, Officer Ralph Torres, Capt. Howard Mintz, Laura Conlee, Representatives Kay Khan, Ruth Balser and Senator Cindy Creem joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

Ald. Hess-Mahan said that he docketed this item because of the presence of coyotes in the City and an unfortunate incident of a coyote killing a neighborhood dog. Mr. Goldman and Officer Torres held a community meeting to address the concerns of residents hoping to relieve their concerns. The Newton Police Department website provides a "Report Coyote Sighting" tracking form for completion at <http://apps.newtonma.gov/coyotes/report-coyote.php> and attached to this report.

Ms. Conlee provided an extensive PowerPoint presentation, attached to this report. She said that the coyote population has spread throughout Massachusetts because they are well adapted to changes in the landscape and they can now be found within rural, suburban and urban areas. Coyotes use many different food sources, and have adapted to live in a variety of habitats including urban and heavily populated areas. Almost all citizens in Massachusetts live in close proximity to coyotes. There have been five confirmed attacks in Massachusetts. Coyotes are opportunistic feeders; they will feed on whatever is most readily available and easy to obtain. Their primary foods include rodents, vegetables, insects, domestic pets, etc. They will scavenge on animal remains, garbage and pet food left outdoors. In suburban areas, they prey upon unprotected pets.

Coyotes can be active night or day. They remain active all year-round and do not hibernate. Once a coyote has established itself in an area, it will actively maintain a territory that may vary in size from 2 to 30 square miles. Coyotes are territorial. When Coyotes live in an environment, they adjust their activity and behavior where food sources are.

**PREVENTING CONFLICTS WITH COYOTES**- 10 suggestions to make your property less attractive.

**DO NOT LET COYOTES INTIMIDATE YOU:** Scare or threaten coyotes with loud noises, bright lights, throw objects, use a water hose and bang pots and pans. **HARASS** them!

**DO NOT FEED OR TRY TO PET COYOTES:** Feeding can cause coyotes to act tame and over time may lead to bold behavior.

**KEEP YOUR PETS SAFE:** Coyotes view cats and small dogs as potential food and larger dogs as competition. Keep pets restrained at all times.

**FEED PETS INDOORS**

**SECURE YOUR GARBAGE**

**KEEP BIRD FEEDING AREAS CLEAN**

**CLOSE OFF CRAWL SPACES UNDER PORCHES AND SHEDS**

**CUT BACK BRUSHY EDGES IN YOUR YARD**

**PROTECT LIVESTOCK AND PRODUCE**

**EDUCATE YOUR NEIGHBORS**

**RESOLVING CONFLICTS WITH COYOTES** - 3 options for resolving a conflict.

**TOLERANCE:** Long-term solution is for the public to alter their behavior and be aware of their environment. By adopting these recommendations, there may be a decrease in the frequency of seeing coyotes in the area.

**FENCING:** Coyotes can jump over and dig under fences that are not properly installed.

**REMOVING COYOTES:** - It is against state law to capture and release coyotes into another area. Moving wildlife is detrimental to both people and wildlife and has been against the law for many years. Coyotes are legally protected. Laws and regulations state how and when a coyote can be removed. A coyote may not be removed simply because of its presence in an area; there must be damage or a threat to human safety. Coyotes are afraid of people and their presence alone is not a cause for concern, depending on human-related sources of food, coyotes can become habituated. A habituated coyote may exhibit bold behavior around people. Behaviors indicate the coyote has lost its fear of people when it does not run off when harassed and may approach pets on a leash or approach and follow people.

If an immediate threat exists to humans, public safety officials as stipulated in the Massachusetts Regulations can take action. Coyotes taking pets are not considered an immediate threat to human safety; therefore, public safety officials are not authorized to remove these wild animals. Captain Mintz said that when the department responds to a coyote sighting, the caller is advised that state law protects them. If the coyote is presenting unhealthy behavior, it will be determined if it should be euthanized.

Ald. Johnson said that she is concerned with the number of incidents in Newton and surrounding communities and people are concerned about their pets. She asked the state delegation to re-examine the law and determine if coyote protection remains necessary. Ms. Conlee answered that in 2007; regulations were reviewed and were not changed. State delegation answered that a bill would have to be filed allowing the governor to appoint proper authorities to review current regulations.

Ald. Johnson made the motion to vote no action necessary on this item. Committee members agreed 7-0.

**ITEM RECOMMITTED TO PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION ON 03/19/12**

#60-12 ALD. YATES, requesting a report from His Honor the Mayor as to how the City can support the recommendations of the MBTA Advisory Board that the Massachusetts Port Authority assume the costs of the commuter ferries into Boston. [02/21/12 @ 8:29 PM]

**ACTION:** NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0

**NOTE:** Items #60-12 and #59-12 were discussed together. Refer to #59-12 summary.

**ITEM RECOMMITTED TO PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION ON 03/19/12**

#59-12 ALD. YATES, requesting a report from His Honor the Mayor as to how the City can support the request of the MBTA Advisory Board that the costs of the MBTA Police Department be assumed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security. [02/21/12 @ 8:29 PM]

**ACTION:** NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0

**NOTE:** Representatives Kay Khan, Ruth Balser and Senator Cindy Creem joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

State delegation said that the Transportation Bill enacted in 2009, determines fare increases, service decreases and examine patron use. The MBTA Advisory Board makes decisions independently. Legislators do not have the ability to control or modify their decisions. Perhaps in June, a Transportation Bond Bill will come before the legislators allowing them the opportunity to make amendments. They are hopeful an opportunity will arise for them to revisit service reductions. They stated that revenue and changes are necessary.

They were prepared to file a budget amendment in order to raise gas tax but this is an election year therefore, this amendment would not pass. They believe that next year transportation will become a top priority. The Transportation Committee is trying to be creative in order to subsidize public transit by possibly making changes to Medicaid. They are also reviewing ferry services, which will significantly increase fares in June 2012.

This year, the MBTA faces a 161 million dollar deficit. People have opposed the MBTA and the MBTA agreed they would not make every change. Governor Patrick has filed a bill addressing this deficit, fare increases and service cuts.

State delegation then said that people desire using regional transit transportation. The average bus cost per rider is \$1.50. Locations where service was reduced cost \$5.00 plus per rider. Decisions were based to reduce service during peak hours due to the low ridership in the City saving approximately \$460,000. The formula used to determine service cuts was an estimated net cost per passenger greater than 3 1/2 times the system wide average. Fare increases will not increase more than 23% this year.

Committee members asked them to research the following: Staff salaries, overhead costs, revenue, personnel changes, organization structure, who pays their salaries, breakdown of state debt, how service cuts were determined and the implications to people. They encourage state delegation to be proactive and advocate by reinstating service cuts.

Ald. Johnson made the motion to vote no action necessary on these items. Committee members agreed 7-0.

At approximately 9:10 pm, Ald. Johnson moved to adjourn. Committee members agreed 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Ciccone, Jr. Chairman

#289-11

## Report a Coyote Sighting

Use this form to report a coyote sighting. This feature will help our Animal Control staff to have a better understanding of where and when coyotes are seen around Newton. Please use this system responsibly, and only submit a report if you are certain that you have seen a coyote, with as much information (location, date, time, etc.) as possible.

The information collected is use for the purpose of mapping coyote sightings (seen below) and to contact you for additional details.

### Contact information

Name \*

Phone Number

Email Address \*

### Date and Time of Sighting

Date \*

Time \*

### Description and/or Comments

(NOTE: \* indicates required fields)

### Location of the Coyote Sighting

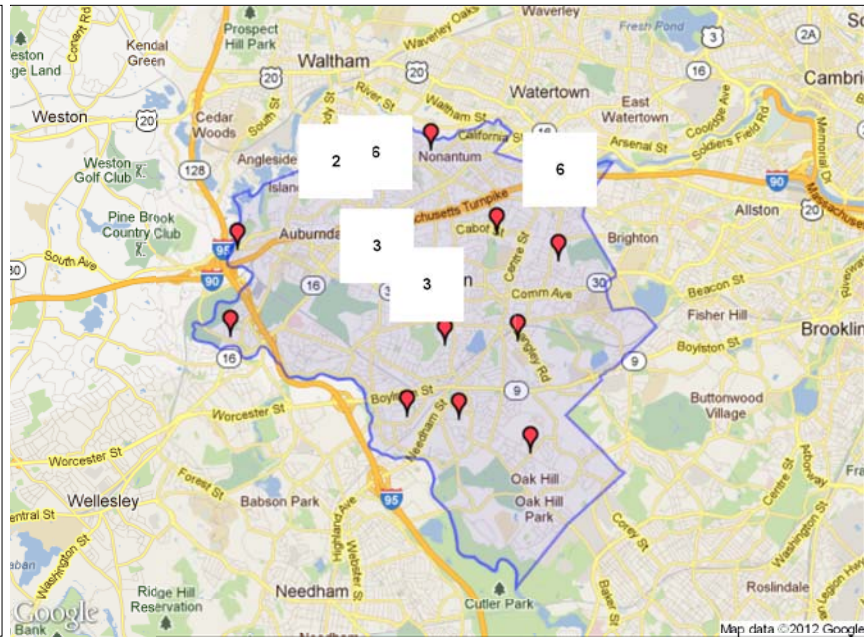
Street Number

Street Name \*

### Sightings

Most recent on top

66 Andrew St 5-09-2012 7:00 AM
136 Waltham St 5-06-2012 7:00 PM
11 Oakland Ave 5-05-2012 2:10 PM
Commonwealth Ave 5-05-2012 2:00 PM
Commonwealth Ave 5-03-2012 8:40 PM
Greenwood St 5-03-2012 2:02 PM
297 River St 4-27-2012 6:40 PM
53 Taft Ave 4-27-2012 6:30 PM
92 Morrill St 4-27-2012 5:25 PM
46 Cottage St 4-23-2012 8:30 AM
16 Jefferson St 3-28-2012 9:30 AM
7 Ipswich Rd 3-26-2012 6:00 AM



### Notes

The numbers in the middle of a marker represent the number of sightings within a given area. These numbers and the color of the markers will adjust depending on the zoom level that you are currently set at. Look at the legend to the right for the marker color and the number of sightings associated with that color. The marker colors do NOT determine a level of threat, merely the number of sightings.

When you click on a marker with a number the map will zoom in allowing you to see individual sightings (points). Clicking on a point brings up a window with the address and the date and time of the sighting. When clicking on a numbered marker you may be zoomed in to what looks like a single point. This means that there has been more than one sighting at the given location. When this point is clicked the info window will display only the most recent sighting.

The list of sightings on the left is sorted chronologically with most recent at the top. You can click any of these entries and an info window will pop up on the map pointing to the location.

### Legend



### Coyote Conflicts




- Habits
- Behaviors





### Human-Coyote Conflicts

- General presence of coyotes
  - Seen occasionally
  - Heard howling
- Denning in yards
- Disease transmission
  - Rabies, canine distemper, mange, worms




### Conflicts with coyotes

- Property Damage:
  - Unsupervised domestic pets
  - Livestock
  - Crops








Coyotes attack sheep at Stow farm

- **Individual, not population**

### Habituation

- Occurs when:
  - Acclimated to human presence
  - Lack of threats
  - Unnatural food sources
  - Behavior rewarded



### What leads to habituation?

- Direct feeding
- Indirect feeding
  - Feeding pets outdoors
  - Bird feeders
  - Garbage
  - Gardens and fruiting plants
- Lack of harassment



### Conflicts with coyotes

- Public Safety:
  - Habituated individuals
  - Attacks on leashed pets
  - Attacks on people



• **Individual**, not population

### Coyote Attacks

- VERY RARE
- 4 confirmed attacks on people in MA
  - 2 rabid, 1 suspected
  - 1 habituated



### Technical Advice to Minimize Conflicts

What can you do?

1. Modification of Habitat
2. Modification of Human Behavior
3. Fencing
4. Husbandry Practices
5. Tolerance



### Modification of Habitat

- Eliminate feeding!
  - Keep garbage areas clean and garbage in tight containers
  - Use secure compost bins
  - Remove bird feeders
  - Never directly feed a coyote!!!



### Garbage



### Compost



'Open compost' – food scraps out in the open

### Bird Feeders

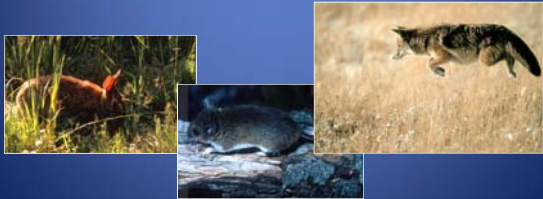


Spilled seed attracts small mammals!



### Modification of Habitat

- Make yards less attractive
  - Eliminate den sites
    - Under sheds, decks, downed trees, rock walls
  - Cut back brushy areas
    - These provide hiding places for coyotes and prey



### Modification of Human Behavior

- Keep pets leashed and supervised!
- DON'T let cats outdoors
- DON'T FEED COYOTES
  - DON'T feed pets outdoors



### Modification of Human Behavior

- Don't let coyotes intimidate you!



### Harassment

- Make LOUD noises
  - Not everyday sounds
- Throw small objects
- Squirt with a hose or water gun



**\*\*Vary your techniques!\*\***

## Tolerance

- Learn to live with coyotes
- Be proactive rather than reactive



## What should kids do?

- Make themselves look bigger
  - Open a jacket or wave arms above head
- Slowly back away- DON'T run
- Find the nearest adult to harass the coyote



## MDFW-Coyote Management

- Goal: Resolve conflict and support values
  - Regulated hunting and trapping
  - Regulate PAC
  - Public education
    - Living with wildlife



## Options

- Tolerance, modification of human behavior and habitat, harassment
- Problem Animal Control Agents
- Lethal removal - Public safety threats
  - Environmental police, town police, animal control, or PAC agents working with police

## Contact Information

- Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (M-F, 8-4)
  - Northeast District: **978-772-2145**
  - Westboro Field Headquarters: **508-389-6300**
- Environmental Police (24/7)
  - Radio room **1-800-632-8075**
- Town police or animal control in the event of an emergency