

**O'Fallon Stiffens Code for Pet Owners
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Raymond Castile, Suburban Journals**

O'Fallon pet owners must abide by new regulations designed to combat animal abuse.

The City Council on Thursday voted 9-0 to adopt the new ordinances, proposed by Ward 2 councilmen Jim Pepper and Rose Mack. The law amends the city's animal control code, making it more specific in describing acceptable living conditions and treatment for dogs, cats and domestic animals.

It is now illegal to transport an animal in an open vehicle, such as a pickup truck bed, unless the animal is confined in a secure carrier, said city spokesman Tom Drabelle. The law makes some exceptions for hunting and other activities, he said.

All outdoor animals must be moved indoors when the temperature falls below 32 degrees or rises above 85 degrees. Animals can no longer be tethered outside more than 15 minutes at a time between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Animals cannot be muzzled while on a tether or chain.

Animals confined to pens must have at least 150 square feet of space per animal. Their living areas must be cleaned regularly.

If living conditions do not meet city standards, animal control officers now have the power to remove the animal immediately.

Drabelle said the new ordinance does not outline specific penalties.

In other business Thursday, the council voted 9-0 to adopt a 2011 budget totaling \$87.6 million in expenditures, with \$70.3 million in expected revenues. Most of the difference is money the city already has in 2010, but will spend in 2011, Drabelle said. The city is expected to finish 2011 with a \$40.1 million fund balance.

The council and Mayor Bill Hennessy decided not to appoint a temporary replacement to fill the vacant Ward 3 seat of former Councilman Dan Haney, who resigned Oct. 31. Haney's seat is up for election in April. The filing period begins Monday.

Eight candidates applied to temporarily fill Haney's seat, Drabelle said. City leaders decided not to appoint one of them because it could have given that person an unfair advantage in the April election, Drabelle said.

The council on Thursday heard a first reading on a bill proposed by Hennessy that would prohibit the sale or possession of synthetic cannabinoids, such as K2. Synthetic marijuana products are already illegal in O'Fallon, as they are statewide. But the old city law narrowly defines certain artificial marijuana products, leaving out more recent products that use different compounds. Drabelle said the new law would bring city ordinances in line with state law, which bans all synthetic marijuana products. Aligning city ordinances with state law also makes for an easier administrative process when prosecuting someone in O'Fallon, Drabelle said.

A proposed smoking ban will be the subject of a public hearing scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Dec. 22 in the council chambers. A citizens' initiative petition to ban smoking in workplaces is awaiting certification by the St. Charles County Election Authority.

If the signatures are certified, the O'Fallon council would have 30 days to enact the proposed ordinance as written in the petition. If they did not, it would go on the April ballot.

Drabelle said the public hearing would allow council members to give the ordinance a first reading, if they chose. They could then vote on it during the Jan. 13 council meeting.