



CITY OF CHARLESTON WEST VIRGINIA COUNCIL MEMBER – 10TH WARD



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Public Safety Committee, Chair
Finance Committee
Parking Committee

TO: Public Safety Committee
FROM: Shawn Taylor, Chair
RE: Committee Meeting

There will be a Committee meeting of Public Safety on August 3, 2026 at 5:30 PM
City Hall, 501 Virginia St. E.
AV Room #308

AGENDA

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

1. 3-16-2026

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

1. To hear from public speakers on public safety related topics. Register with a representative from the Clerk's Office no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the meeting at the stated meeting location. Time limits may be set by the Committee.

BILLS

1. Bill No. 8077– A BILL to amend the Municipal Code relating to procedures applicable to caring for and/or impounding animals subject to poisoning or animal cruelty, and the penalties and fines.
2. Bill No. 8078 Committee Substitute – A BILL to amend the Municipal Code relating to the prohibition against aggressive dogs at large, to add a charge for subsequent offenses, and the penalties and fines, and to set procedures to automatically trigger the Dangerous Dogs provisions.
3. Bill No. 8081– A BILL to amend the Municipal Code and enact a new section relating to creation of the Trespass Enforcement Authorization Program.

TO HEAR FROM PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED DEPARTMENTS

1. Charleston Police Department
2. Charleston Fire Department

ADJOURN

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***Meetings may be recorded and broadcast via internet <https://charlestonwv.civicclerk>**

MINUTES

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

5:30 P. M., MARCH 16, 2026

AV ROOM, CITY HALL

Shawn Taylor, Chair, called the meeting of the Charleston City Council Committee on Public Safety to order at 5:30 p.m., March 16, 2026.

Present:

Shawn Taylor, Chair
Chuck Overstreet, Vice Chair
Caitlin Cook
Mary Beth Hoover
Beth Kerns
Bruce King

Absent:

Kathy Rubio

Other Councilmembers Present:

Emmett Pepper
Joe Solomon
Harper Gardner
Chelsea Steelhammer
Joseph Jenkins
Shannon Snodgrass

1. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES –

Councilmember Kerns moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on 11-17-2025. Councilmember Hoover seconded the motion. There was no objection, and the minutes were approved.

2. To hear from public speakers on public safety related topics

None

3. TO HEAR FROM PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED DEPARTMENTS -

- Charleston Police Department

Police Chief Dempsey stated that there are currently 153 officers. Their recruiting numbers are starting to steadily rise. There are currently 52 new applicants, and they are planning to hire 6 officers by the end of the month. The Community Policing Division has been very active. The solve rates for the Criminal Investigation Division and the Strategic Response Unit have been very high. They anticipate adding 15 new patrol cars to the fleet. Bids for pre-demolition services for the new station should be coming out soon.

Councilmember Kerns stated that a recent report showed that overtime was \$3.3 million over the past year. Chief Dempsey replied that there is a recently created policy to run frequent reports to check on the status of the overtime. The bulk of the overtime goes to special events.

From the audience, Councilmember Snodgrass suggested that there should be a double or triple check system in place to correct coding errors. Chief Dempsey said that they are currently looking into that to prevent those types of errors.

From the audience, Councilmember Solomon mentioned that the Recovery Team worked well with the CARE Office. Chief Dempsey agreed. Deputy Chief Webb added that the Recovery Team also frees up patrol officers to take more public safety calls. Fire Chief Matthews added that the program is very cost effective.

- Charleston Fire Department

Fire Chief Matthews stated that they are working on a building registry program. They have started their own billing through EMS where they had previously used the County to do it. They had 13,586 EMS calls last year with 5 ambulances. They should be getting the new fire engine next week, weather permitting. They have received their new boat, named the John William Cabell, who was the first firefighter in the City to lose his life during duty. Stations #2 and #4 should be fully renovated soon. They will then start on Stations #5. The Chief added that they will soon be adding 12 new firefighters. They are budgeted for 169 and are currently at 157.

Councilmember Cook confirmed with the Chief that compared to last year, the ambulances calls went up by approximately 486.

From the audience, Councilmember Solomon asked about Councilmember ride-alongs. The Chief replied that they have had several participate, which can be set up at any time. Councilmember Kerns added that it is also a good recruiting tool for younger people.

Councilmember Cook motioned to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Kerns seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

Bill No. 8077

Introduced in Council:

May 18, 2026

Introduced by:

**Chelsea Steelhammer, Shawn Taylor
and Bruce King**

Adopted by Council:

Referred to:

**Ordinance & Rules and
Public Safety**

Bill No. 8077 - A BILL to amend and reenact Section 10-5 of the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston, as amended, relating to procedures applicable to caring for and/or impounding animals subject to poisoning or animal cruelty, and the penalties and fines therefore.

Now, therefore, be it ordained by the Council of the City of Charleston:

That Article I of Chapter 10, specifically, Section 10-5 of the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston, as amended, is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

Sec. 10-5. - Procedures, penalties, ~~and fines~~, and provisions for forfeiture for violations of sections 10-2, 10-3 and 10-4.

(a) Any police officer or humane officer may take into custody any animal, upon either private or public property, which clearly shows evidence of cruelty to animals as set forth in sections 10-2, 10-3 or 10-4. Such officer may:

(1) Inspect, care for, or treat such animal or place such animal in the care of the humane association or licensed veterinarian for treatment, boarding or other care; or

(2) Designate such animal for humane destruction if an officer of the humane association or licensed veterinarian determines that the animal appears to be diseased or disabled beyond recovery for any useful purpose.

(b) The owner or keeper of an animal that is destroyed pursuant to subsection (a) herein shall not be entitled to recover damages for the destruction of such animal unless the owner or keeper proves by clear and convincing evidence that such destruction was unreasonable and unwarranted.

(c) In addition to the fines and/or imprisonment imposed by this section, any defendant convicted of a violation of sections 10-2, 10-3 or 10-4 shall pay to the municipal court, consistent with section 10-163, a penalty of all reasonable expenses incurred for the care, provision, treatment, and boarding of any animal taken into custody pursuant to subsection (a) herein. Upon payment of such penalty, the municipal court shall remit

such payment to the humane association or other animal care provider.

(d) If a person is charged with a violation of section 10-2, 10-3, or 10-4, and that person (the defendant) is the owner or keeper of the animal at issue, then the following shall apply:

(1) If the animal at issue has been taken into custody pursuant to this section, the receipt of a citation or complaint and summons specifying the charges shall be deemed to be notice of the seizure of the animal, and if the defendant shall willfully and without just cause fail to appear or otherwise respond in the municipal court as and when it may be required of him or her by proper notice to do so, Defendant shall have seven days from the date of the failure to appear to turn himself or herself in to the court for further proceedings; however, if defendant fails to do so within that period, the defendant shall be deemed to have forfeited all interest in the animal and it shall be deemed abandoned, and all interest in such animal shall immediately, by operation of law, vest to the humane association or other appropriate animal care provider for adoption or other disposition, Provided That, nothing herein shall prohibit or otherwise interfere with any other laws, rules, or procedures available to the municipal court to address the defendant's failure to appear; or

(2) If a personthe defendant has not otherwise already forfeited all interest in the animal at issue by operation of law as set forth in subsection (1) herein for failure to appear, and the defendant is adjudicated guilty of a violation of sections 10-2, 10-3, or 10-4, the municipal court judge may in his or her discretion order that such personthe defendant shall be deemed to have forfeited all interest in the animal at issue in the violation and may vest all interest to the humane association or other appropriate animal care provider for adoption or other disposition, and, if the animal at issue has not already been taken into custody pursuant to this section, the municipal court judge shall order the defendant to immediately turn over such animal to any police officer or humane officer of the City who shall place the animal with the humane association or other animal care provider as directed by the judge in his or her order.; or

(3) If the person-defendant has not otherwise already forfeited all interest in the animal at issue by operation of law as set forth in subsection (1) herein for failure to appear, and the defendant is adjudicated not guilty of a violation of sections 10-2, 10-3, or 10-4, or the charge(s) are otherwise be-dismissed, and the animal at issue has been taken into custody pursuant to this section, then the defendant shall have ten-five days from the date of the entry of the finding of not guilty or of dismissal to appear and claim said animal. The defendant shall be responsible for all reasonable expenses incurred for the care, provision, treatment, and boarding from the date of the entry of the disposition of the case until redemption of the animal; provided that if the animal is not claimed within ten-five days from the date of entry of the finding of not guilty or of dismissal, then the owner shall be deemed to have forfeited all interest in the-dog animal, the doganimal shall be deemed abandoned, and all interest in the animal shall vest to the humane association or other animal care provider for adoption or other disposition.

(4) If the charges were pending in the municipal court prior to the date of the enactment

81 of this amended section, defendant has failed to appear for any required proceeding,
82 and the animal at issue has been taken into custody pursuant to this section, then the
83 court is hereby directed to send the defendant a new notice of hearing by regular mail to
84 the defendant's address on file with the court setting the case for a hearing before the
85 Court, and, if the defendant shall willfully and without just cause fail to appear or
86 otherwise respond in the municipal court as and when it is required of him or her by the
87 notice hearing to do so, Defendant shall have seven days from the date of the failure to
88 appear to turn himself or herself in to the court for further proceedings; however, if
89 defendant fails to do so within that period, the defendant shall be deemed to have
90 forfeited all interest in the animal and it shall be deemed abandoned, and all interest in
91 such animal shall immediately, by operation of law, vest to the humane association or
92 other appropriate animal care provider for adoption or other disposition

93
94 (e) If a person other than the owner or keeper of an animal is charged with a violation of
95 section 10-2, 10-3, or 10-4, or if, due to inability to immediately identify the culpable
96 party responsible for the cruelty, no charges are brought, and the animal at issue is
97 taken into custody by a police officer or humane officer pursuant to subsection (a) of this
98 section, then:

99
100 (1) if the identity of the owner or keeper of the animal is known, it shall be the duty of the
101 police officer or humane office to provide written notice of the seizure to the owner or
102 keeper of the animal, that the animal has been seized, and of the following
103 requirements which are a condition for the owner or keeper to retrieve the animal:

104
105 (A) He or she is liable for and must pay all reasonable expenses incurred for the care,
106 provision, treatment, and boarding of the animal during any period it remains in the
107 possession of the humane officer consistent with section 163 of this Chapter;

108
109 (B) He or she must appear and claim the animal and pay the reasonable expenses
110 incurred within five days from the date the notice is received, or, upon expiration of the
111 five-day time period, the owner or keeper shall be deemed to have forfeited all interest
112 in the animal and it shall be deemed abandoned and all interest in such animal shall
113 immediately, by operation of law, vest to the humane association or other animal care
114 provider for adoption or other disposition; or

115
116 (2) if the identity of the owner or keeper of the animal is not known, the owner of the
117 animal so impounded pursuant to the provisions of this article must appear and claim
118 the said animal within five days from the date the animal is impounded. The owner shall
119 be responsible for all reasonable expenses incurred for the care, provision, treatment,
120 and boarding from the date of the impoundment until redemption of the animal; provided
121 that if the animal is not claimed within five days from the date of impoundment, then the
122 owner, if any, shall be deemed to have forfeited all interest in the animal, the animal
123 shall be deemed abandoned, and all interest in the animal shall immediately, by
124 operation of law, vest to the humane association or other animal care provider for
125 adoption or other disposition.

(ef) Subject to the exceptions contained in subsections (1) and (2) herein, a person convicted of a violation of sections 10-2, 10-3 or 10-4 shall be punished by a fine of not ~~less-more~~ than ~~\$500.00~~\$1,000.00 for each separate violation arising under sections 10-2, 10-3 or 10-4. For violations of subsection 10-3(a)(1), and in addition to the fines set forth herein, the municipal court judge may, in his discretion, order that the defendant be sentenced to a jail term of not more than 30 days for each separate violation arising under subsection 10-3(a)(1).

(1) Except for violation of subsections 10-3(a)(1)a.—c., in the case of a first offense of sections 10-3 or 10-4, if the defendant enters a plea of guilty or no contest and voluntarily forfeits his right to own any animal within the city limits for one year, the municipal court judge may, in his discretion, reduce or suspend the fine: provided that if the defendant violates the terms of the plea regarding forfeiture, then the full amount of the fine shall be reinstated upon proper findings and conclusions of the court.

(2) Except for violation of subsections 10-3(a)(1)a.—c., the municipal court judge shall have the authority, on one occasion only per defendant, to withhold for a reasonable time not to exceed 180 days the entry of a judgment of conviction for violations under sections 10-3 or 10-4 so that the defendant may attend an animal training program established or certified by the humane association. If the defendant attends said course, the municipal court judge, if satisfied with the defendant's participation in and proof of payment for the course, shall, without entering a judgment of conviction, dismiss the proceeding against the defendant. It shall be a condition of this alternative disposition that the defendant pay the regular court costs required for misdemeanor offenses by this code where a person is convicted of such a misdemeanor offense. Any such court costs collected by the municipal court shall be allocated and transmitted by the municipal court as required by law.

Bill No. 8078

Introduced in Council:

May 18, 2026

Adopted by Council:

Introduced by:

Chelsea Steelhammer, Shawn Taylor
Bruce King Jr.

Referred to:

Ordinance & Rules and
Public Safety

Bill No. 8078 - A BILL to amend and reenact Section 10-162 of the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston, as amended, relating to the prohibition against aggressive dogs at large, to add a charge for subsequent offenses, and the penalties and fines therefore, and to set procedures to automatically trigger the Dangerous Dogs provisions set forth in Sections 10-114, 115, 116, 117, and 118.

Now, therefore, be it ordained by the Council of the City of Charleston:

That Article I of Chapter 10, specifically, Section 10-162 of the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston, as amended, is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

Sec. 10-162. - Aggressive dogs prohibited to run at large; fines.

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person to own or keep an aggressive dog which is at any time running at large in the city. Knowledge or acquiescence by the owner or keeper is not an element of the offense. An aggressive dog at large means any dog running at large as defined in section 10-161 that, without provocation, exhibits aggressive or combative behavior toward a person or another domestic animal or feral cat, and said person or domestic animal or feral cat is either physically attacked or bitten, or the person or domestic animal's owner or keeper reasonably believes an attack or bite is imminent.

(b) Any person found guilty of an aggressive dog at large shall be punished by a fine as follows: not more than ~~\$50.00~~150.00 for the first offense within a 24-month period; and not less than \$50.00 nor more than \$1,000.00 for any second or subsequent offense within a 24-month period of a conviction for a prior offense. The municipal court judge shall have authority to suspend or reduce the fine if the defendant agrees to forfeit ownership of the dog. In such cases all interest ~~of in~~ the animal shall vest to the human association for appropriate disposition. All fines arising from convictions for violations of this section shall be in addition to any applicable court costs or impoundment fees.

(c) If a person is adjudicated guilty of a second or subsequent offense pursuant to this section, and the second or subsequent offense involves the same dog involved in any prior offense pursuant to this section, then the Municipal Court Judge shall, sua sponte,

35 make a determination pursuant to the standards set forth in sections 10-114 and 10-115
36 of this Article whether the dog in question in the instant case should be declared a
37 dangerous dog. In making the determination, the judge may rely upon all credible
38 information available to the court from its record of any prior offenses and the evidence
39 before the court in the instant case. In addition, the judge may, in his or her discretion,
40 receive additional evidence relevant to the determination, and, if the judge deems it
41 necessary, schedule a future hearing or other proceedings as may be required to make
42 the determination.

43
44 (d) If at any time while charges are pending adjudication under this section against the
45 owner or keeper of a dog there is probable cause that the dog is guilty of an additional
46 charge of running at large as defined in section 10-161, then the dog shall be seized
47 and impounded at the humane association by a humane officer or police officer and
48 held until the underlying charge and any additional charges for the dog being at large
49 under section 10-161 or this section are fully adjudicated or otherwise dismissed. Upon
50 the full adjudication of any such charges, or if the charges are otherwise dismissed,
51 then, except as provided in this Article for a dog being held pending a determination of
52 Dangerous Dog pursuant to sections 10-115, the owner shall have five days from the
53 date of adjudication or dismissal to appear and claim said dog in accordance with the
54 conditions set forth in section 10-163. The owner shall be responsible for all reasonable
55 expenses incurred for the care, provision, treatment, and boarding from the date of
56 impoundment until redemption of the dog; provided that if the animal is not claimed
57 within five days from the date of full adjudication or of dismissal, then the owner shall be
58 deemed to have forfeited all interest in the dog, the dog shall be deemed abandoned,
59 and all interest in the animal shall vest to the humane association or other animal care
60 provider for adoption or other disposition.

Bill No. 8078 Committee Substitute

Introduced in Council:

May 18, 2026

Adopted by Council:

Introduced by:

**Chelsea Steelhammer, Shawn Taylor,
Bruce King, Jr.**

Referred to:

**Ordinance & Rules and
Public Safety**

Bill No. 8078 Committee Substitute - A BILL to amend and reenact Section 10-162 of the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston, as amended, relating to the prohibition against aggressive dogs at large, to add a charge for subsequent offenses, and the penalties and fines therefore, and to set procedures to automatically trigger the Dangerous Dogs provisions set forth in Sections 10-114, 115, 116, 117, and 118.

Now, therefore, be it ordained by the Council of the City of Charleston:

That Article I of Chapter 10, specifically, Section 10-162 of the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston, as amended, is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

Sec. 10-162. - Aggressive dogs prohibited to run at large; fines.

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person to own or keep an aggressive dog which is at any time running at large in the city. Knowledge or acquiescence by the owner or keeper is not an element of the offense. An aggressive dog at large means any dog running at large as defined in section 10-161 that, without provocation, exhibits aggressive or combative behavior toward a person or another domestic animal or feral cat, and said person or domestic animal or feral cat is either physically attacked or bitten, or the person or domestic animal's owner or keeper reasonably believes an attack or bite is imminent.

(b) Any person found guilty of an aggressive dog at large shall be punished by a fine as follows: not more than ~~\$50.00~~150.00 for the first offense within a 24-month period; and not less than \$50.00 nor more than \$1,000.00 for any second or subsequent offense within a 24-month period of a conviction for a prior offense. The municipal court judge shall have authority to suspend or reduce the fine if the defendant agrees to forfeit ownership of the dog. In such cases all interest ~~of in~~ the animal shall vest to the human association for appropriate disposition. All fines arising from convictions for violations of this section shall be in addition to any applicable court costs or impoundment fees.

(c) If a person is adjudicated guilty of a second or subsequent offense pursuant to this section, and the second or subsequent offense involves the same dog involved in any prior offense pursuant to this section, then the Municipal Court Judge shall, sua sponte, make a determination pursuant to the standards set forth in sections 10-114 and 10-115

of this Article whether the dog in question in the instant case should be declared a dangerous dog. In making the determination, the judge may rely upon all credible information available to the court from its record of any prior offenses and the evidence before the court in the instant case. In addition, the judge may, in his or her discretion, receive additional evidence relevant to the determination, and, if the judge deems it necessary, schedule a future hearing or other proceedings as may be required to make the determination.

(d) If at any time while charges are pending adjudication under this section against the owner or keeper of a dog there is probable cause that the dog is guilty of an additional charge of running at large as defined in section 10-161, then the following shall apply:

(1) the dog shall be seized and impounded at the humane association by a humane officer or police officer and held until the underlying charge and any additional charges for the dog being at large under section 10-161 or this section are fully adjudicated or otherwise dismissed, Provided That upon proper notice of the seizure of the animal, if the defendant shall willfully and without just cause fail to appear or otherwise respond in the municipal court as and when it may be required of him or her by proper notice to do so, Defendant shall have seven days from the date of the failure to appear to turn himself or herself in to the court for further proceedings; however, if defendant fails to do so within that period, the defendant shall be deemed to have forfeited all interest in the animal and it shall be deemed abandoned, and all interest in such animal shall immediately, by operation of law, vest to the humane association or other appropriate animal care provider for adoption or other disposition, and further Provided That, nothing herein shall prohibit or otherwise interfere with any other laws, rules, or procedures available to the municipal court to address the defendant's failure to appear; and

(2) if the defendant has not otherwise already forfeited all interest in the dog at issue by operation of law as set forth in subsection (1) herein for failure to appear, upon the full adjudication of any such charges, or if the charges are otherwise dismissed, then, except as provided in this Article for a dog being held pending a determination of Dangerous Dog pursuant to sections 10-115, the owner shall have five days from the date of adjudication or dismissal to appear and claim said dog in accordance with the conditions set forth in section 10-163. The owner shall be responsible for all reasonable expenses incurred for the care, provision, treatment, and boarding from the date of impoundment until redemption of the dog; provided that if the animal is not claimed within five days from the date of full adjudication or of dismissal, then the owner shall be deemed to have forfeited all interest in the dog, the dog shall be deemed abandoned, and all interest in the animal shall vest to the humane association or other animal care provider for adoption or other disposition.

Bill No. 8081

Introduced in Council:

June 1, 2026

Introduced by:

Chad Robinson

Adopted by Council:

Referred to:

**Public Safety and
Ordinance and Rules**

Bill No. 8081 - A BILL to amend the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston and enact a new section, Section 78-63, relating to creation of the Trespass Enforcement Authorization Program.

Now, therefore, be it ordained by the Council of the City of Charleston: That Division 2 of Article II of Chapter 78 of the Municipal Code of the City of Charleston, as amended, is hereby amended and reenacted by adding thereto Section 78-63 to read as follows:

Sec. 78-63. - Trespass Enforcement Authorization Program.

(a) A property owner, building owner, property manager or person having legal control of real property (the "participant") or their legal representative can authorize the Charleston Police Department to enforce, in absolute police discretion, the trespass ordinance set forth in Section 78-62 of this Code on their property. To have the possibility of enforcement pursuant to this division, the person must:

(1) Provide notice to the Charleston Police Department, on the form to be provided by the City and which shall include a sworn and notarized affidavit from the participant attesting thereto, of the participant's desire to participate in the Trespass Enforcement Authorization Program by filing such notice and affidavit with the Records Division of the Charleston Police Department;

(2) Declare the notice and affidavit to be a business record kept in the normal course of business, and agree to appear in court to testify; and

(3) Post the property with conspicuous signage of sufficient notice declaring the property to be under the Trespass Enforcement Authorization Program. The term "conspicuous signage" means a sign that is at least one square foot in size with lettering that is at least two inches in height and contains the following language or words of similar notice:

NO TRESPASS AT ANY TIME [or at specific designated times as stated]

35 PRIVATE PROPERTY

36
37 THE CHARLESTON POLICE DEPARTMENT IS AUTHORIZED TO ENTER THE
38 PREMISES AND ARREST ANY VIOLATORS

39
40 TRESPASS ENFORCEMENT AUTHORIZATION PROGRAM

41
42 The term "sufficient notice" means the conspicuous sign or signs are posted on the
43 subject property where they reasonably may be seen.

44
45 (b) When property has been posted by the participant with conspicuous signage of
46 sufficient notice declaring the property to be under the trespass enforcement
47 authorization program, it shall be prima facie evidence that consent to enter or remain
48 upon the premises of another is absent, denied, or withdrawn.

49
50 (c) It shall be unlawful to deface, damage or remove any sign placed in accordance
51 with this section.

52
53 (d) Any authorization granted by the participant pursuant to the Trespass Enforcement
54 Authorization Program may be withdrawn at any time by the participant by providing
55 actual notice to the Charleston Police Department in writing. In addition, the
56 authorization granted by the participant shall become immediately null and void upon
57 written notice of any transfer of ownership or control of the subject real property, and the
58 participant has a duty to notify the Department of any such transfer.