

S.168

An act relating to making miscellaneous amendments to laws governing municipalities

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

* * * Municipal Animal Control * * *

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. § 351 is amended to read:

§ 351. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(4) “Humane officer” or “officer” means any law enforcement officer as defined in 23 V.S.A. § 4(11); auxiliary ~~state police~~ State Police officers; deputy game wardens; humane society officer, employee, or agent, ~~elected~~ ~~animal control officer~~; animal control officer appointed by the legislative body of a municipality; local board of health officer or agent; or any officer authorized to serve criminal process.

* * *

Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 3549 is amended to read:

§ 3549. DOMESTIC PETS OR WOLF-HYBRIDS, REGULATION BY
TOWNS

The legislative body of a city or town by ordinance may regulate the licensing, keeping, leashing, muzzling, restraint, impoundment, and destruction of domestic pets or wolf-hybrids and their running at large except that a

legislative body of a city or town shall not prohibit or regulate the barking or running at large of a working farm dog when it is on the property being farmed by the person who registered the working farm dog, pursuant to subsection 3581(a) of this title, in the following circumstances:

(1) ~~If~~ if the working farm dog is barking in order to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops; or

(2) ~~If~~ if the working farm dog is running at large in order to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops.

Sec. 3. [Deleted.]

Sec. 4. 20 V.S.A. § 3621 is amended to read:

§ 3621. ISSUANCE OF WARRANT TO IMPOUND; COMPLAINT

(a)(1) The legislative body of a municipality may at any time issue a warrant to one or more police officers ~~or~~ and constables, pound keepers, ~~or elected~~ or appointed animal control officers, directing them to proceed forthwith to impound all dogs or wolf-hybrids within the town or city not licensed according to the provisions of this subchapter, except as exempted by section 3587 of this title, and to enter a complaint against the owners or keepers thereof.

(2) A dog or wolf-hybrid impounded by a municipality under this section may be transferred to an animal shelter or rescue organization for the purpose of finding an adoptive home for the dog or wolf-hybrid. If the dog or

wolf-hybrid cannot be placed in an adoptive home or transferred to a humane society or rescue organization within ten days, or a greater number of days established by the municipality, the dog or wolf-hybrid may be destroyed in a humane way. The municipality shall not be liable for expenses associated with keeping the dog or wolf-hybrid at the animal shelter or rescue organization beyond the established number of days.

* * *

* * * Current and Delinquent Tax Collectors * * *

Sec. 5. 17 V.S.A. § 2646 is amended to read:

§ 2646. TOWN OFFICERS; QUALIFICATION; ELECTION

At the annual meeting, a town shall choose from among its legally qualified voters the following town officers, who shall serve until the next annual meeting and until successors are chosen, unless otherwise provided by law:

* * *

(8) ~~A collector of current taxes, if the town so orders;~~ [Repealed.]

(9) A collector of delinquent taxes, if the town so orders, for a term of one year unless a town votes that a collector of delinquent taxes shall be elected for a term of three years. When a town votes for a three-year term for the collector of delinquent taxes, that three-year term shall remain in effect until the town rescinds it by the majority vote of the legal voters present and voting at an annual meeting, duly warned for that purpose;

* * *

Sec. 6. 17 V.S.A. § 2651d is added to read:

§ 2651d. COLLECTOR OF DELINQUENT TAXES; APPOINTMENT;

REMOVAL

(a) A municipality may vote at an annual or special meeting to authorize the legislative body to appoint a collector of delinquent taxes, who may be the municipal treasurer. A collector of delinquent taxes so appointed may be removed by the legislative body for just cause after notice and hearing.

(b) When a municipality votes to authorize the legislative body to appoint a collector of delinquent taxes, the legislative body's authority to make such appointment shall remain in effect until the municipality rescinds that authority by the majority vote of the legal voters present and voting at an annual or special meeting, duly warned for that purpose.

* * * Incompatible Offices; Cemetery Commissioners and
Treasurers * * *

Sec. 7. 17 V.S.A. § 2647 is amended to read:

§ 2647. INCOMPATIBLE OFFICES

(a)(1) An auditor shall not be town clerk, town treasurer, selectboard member, first constable, collector of current or delinquent taxes, trustee of public funds, town manager, road commissioner, water commissioner, sewage system commissioner, sewage disposal commissioner, cemetery commissioner,

or town district school director; nor shall a spouse of or any person assisting any of these officers in the discharge of official duties be eligible to hold office as auditor.

(2) A selectboard member or school director shall not be first constable, collector of taxes, town treasurer, auditor, or town agent. A selectboard member shall not be lister or assessor.

(3) A cemetery commissioner shall not be town treasurer.

~~(3)~~(4) A town manager shall not hold any elective office in the town or town school district.

~~(4)~~(5) Election officers at local elections shall be disqualified as provided in section 2456 of this title.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, if a school district prepares and reports its budget independently from the budget of the town and the school district is audited by an independent public accountant, a person shall be eligible to hold office as auditor even if that person's spouse holds office as a school director.

* * * Planning and Advisory Commissions * * *

Sec. 8. 24 V.S.A. § 4433 is amended to read:

§ 4433. ADVISORY COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

Municipalities may at any time create one or more advisory commissions, which for the purposes of this chapter include committees, or a combination of

advisory commissions to assist the legislative body or the planning commission in preparing, adopting, and implementing the municipal plan. Advisory commissions authorized under this section and under chapter 118 of this title may advise appropriate municipal panels, applicants, and interested parties in accordance with the procedures established under section 4464 of this title.

(1) Creation of an advisory commission. Advisory commissions not authorized in chapter 118 of this title shall be created as follows:

(A) An advisory commission may be created at any time when a municipality votes to create one, or through adoption of bylaws, or ~~if the charter of a municipality permits it~~, when the legislative body of the municipality votes to create one.

(B) An advisory commission shall have ~~not less~~ no fewer than three members. All members should be residents of the municipality, except that historic preservation, or design advisory, ~~or conservation~~ commissions may be composed of professional and lay members, a majority of whom shall reside within the municipality creating the commission.

* * *

(2) Procedures for advisory commissions. Advisory commissions not authorized in chapter 118 of this title shall establish the following procedures:

(A) At its organizational meeting, an advisory commission shall adopt by majority vote of those present and voting such rules as it deems necessary and appropriate for the performance of its functions. It shall annually elect a ~~chairperson, a treasurer,~~ chair and a clerk.

(B) Times and places of meetings of an advisory commission shall be publicly posted in the municipality, and its meetings shall be open to the public in accordance with the terms of the open meeting law, ~~subchapter 2 of chapter 5 of Title 1~~ set forth in 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

* * *

(3) Duties and powers of historic preservation commissions. In addition to the requirements set forth in subdivision (2) of this section, all historic preservation commissions shall comply with all the following:

* * *

(C) Have responsibilities set forth in ~~the commission's rules of procedure~~ a written document approved by a majority vote of the local legislative body at a regular or special meeting that may include:

(i) Preparation of reports and recommendations on standards for the planning commission in creating a local historic district bylaw under this chapter.

(ii) Advising and assisting the legislative body, planning commission, and other entities on matters related to historic preservation.

(iii) Advising the appropriate municipal panel and administrative officer in development review and enforcement pursuant to subdivision ~~4414(2)(C)~~ 4414(1)(F) and section 4464 of this title.

(iv) If provided in the bylaw, advising and assisting the legislative body, appropriate municipal panel, and administrative officer in creating and administering a design review district or downtown or village center district pursuant to subdivision 4414(1)(A) or ~~(B)~~(E) of this title.

(v) If provided in a bylaw developed in cooperation with the division for historic preservation, those procedural and advisory powers required of a Certified Local Government under the National Historic Preservation Act.

(4) Powers and duties of design review commissions. In addition to the requirements set forth in subdivision (2) of this section, all design review commissions shall:

(A) To the extent possible, have among their members professionals in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, historic preservation, and related disciplines.

(B) Have responsibilities identified by the legislative body that may include:

(i) Preparation of reports and standards for the planning commission in creating a design review district bylaw under this chapter.

(ii) Advising and assisting the legislative body, planning commission, and other entities on design-related matters in the creation of plans and bylaws and planning for public improvements.

(iii) Advising appropriate municipal panels and the administrative officer in development review and enforcement pursuant to subdivisions 4414(1)(E) and (F) and section 4464 of this title.

(5) Powers and duties of housing commissions. In addition to the requirements set forth in subdivision (2) of this section, housing commissions may have responsibilities identified by the local legislative body that include:

(A) ~~Make~~ Making an inventory of the current stock of housing units in the municipality and identify any gaps in the housing stock according to household incomes or special needs of the community. The inventory may include documentation of the affordable housing cost index for an average citizen of the municipality, the average cost of rental units and vacancy rates, and the annual average sales price of homes.

(B) ~~Review~~ Reviewing the zoning ordinances, subdivision bylaws, building codes, and the development review process of the municipality, make recommendations to facilitate the development of affordable housing in the municipality, and promote bylaws that increase densities for the purpose of providing affordable housing.

(C) ~~Assist~~ Assisting the local appropriate municipal panels pursuant to section 4464 of this title and the district environmental commission by providing advisory testimony on the housing needs of the municipality, where pertinent to applications made to those bodies, for permits for development.

(D) ~~Cooperate~~ Cooperating with the local legislative body, planning commission, zoning board of adjustment, road committee, or other municipal or private organizations on matters affecting housing resources of the municipality. This may include working with the municipality on a wastewater and water allocation policy that reserves a percentage of the capacity for future affordable housing.

(E) ~~Collaborate~~ Collaborating with not-for-profit housing organizations, government agencies, developers, and builders in pursuing options to meet the housing needs of the local residents.

Sec. 9. 24 V.S.A. § 4460 is amended to read:

§ 4460. APPROPRIATE MUNICIPAL PANELS

* * *

(c) In the case of an urban municipality or of a rural town where the planning commission does not serve as the board of adjustment or the development review board, members of the board of adjustment or the development review board shall be appointed by the legislative body, the number and terms of office of which shall be determined by the legislative

body subject to the provisions of subsection (a) of this section. The municipal legislative body may appoint alternates to a planning commission, a board of adjustment, or a development review board for a term to be determined by the legislative body. Alternates may be assigned by the legislative body to serve on the planning commission, the board of adjustment, or the development review board in situations when one or more members of the board are disqualified or are otherwise unable to serve. Vacancies shall be filled by the legislative body for the unexpired terms and upon the expiration of such terms. Each member of a board of adjustment or a development review board may be removed for cause by the legislative body upon written charges and after public hearing. If a development review board is created, provisions of this subsection regarding removal of members of the board of adjustment shall not apply.

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Sec. 10. [Deleted.]

* * * General Municipal Regulatory Authority * * *

Sec. 11. 24 V.S.A. § 2291 is amended to read:

§ 2291. ENUMERATION OF POWERS

For the purpose of promoting the public health, safety, welfare, and convenience, a town, city, or incorporated village shall have the following powers:

* * *

(10) To regulate the keeping of dogs, and to provide for their licensing,
leashing, muzzling, restraint, impoundment, and destruction.

* * *

(16) To name and rename streets and to number and renumber lots
pursuant to section 4463 of this title, and to require the owner of a house or
other building to which a number has been assigned to affix the number,
including the assigned 911 address, to the structure, sign, or number post so
that it is clearly visible from the road.

* * *

(26) When a disaster or emergency has been declared by the Governor, a
municipal building inspector, health officer, fire marshal, or zoning
administrator may declare condemned to be destroyed a property that has been
damaged in the disaster or emergency and is dangerous to life, health, or safety
due to the disaster-related damage. The local legislative body may require that
an official receive training on disaster-related condemnation before he or she
may condemn property under this subdivision. The owner of property
condemned under this subdivision may appeal the condemnation according to
the condemnation appeals procedure of chapter 83 of this title, provided that
any appeal to the Superior Court shall be to the Civil Division.

Sec. 11a. DISASTER CONDEMNATION TRAINING

On or before July 1, 2015, the Department of Health, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Public Safety, shall develop condemnation guidance for inclusion in disaster training and education for local officials. The guidance shall include:

(1) methods of inspection of buildings and structures damaged by natural disaster; and

(2) standards for condemnation of buildings and structures damaged by natural disaster.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2014.