

MARK D. KINDT
ATTORNEY AT LAW
16004 Detroit Ave., Suite 4
Lakewood, Ohio 44107

A Local Lawyer Looks at City Hall

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Breed Specific Ordinance: Is the City of Lakewood the new target for public interest litigation?

The city was recently sued on behalf of “Charlie.” Charlie is a canine resident of our community who was accused by the city of being a pit-bull and, as such, has run deeply afoul of the city’s breed specific legislation. It seems clear to Local Lawyer that the city will need to do some major legal hair-splitting in the courts to overcome other court decisions that have overturned breed specific ordinances in other Ohio communities. The city reports that it will defend its ordinance. File this under “City Bites Dog.”

And, *get this*, a decision was made recently on the Lakewood Community *facebook* page by a city employee, that topics related to Charlie and his lawsuit were no longer appropriate topics for discussion by participants on that *fb* page. Sounds like a gag order, or should we say “muzzle” order. Local Lawyer is astounded by the temerity this. City tells residents they can’t talk about pets online. Are they crazy?

While Local Lawyer is much too busy to *sue* anyone, we know that there are clinics at various law schools around the country and, of course, innumerable talented First Amendment lawyers who would love to do a test case on the regulation of social media speech by a municipality. Seems like the breed specific ordinance might breed more litigation for the city.

Public Dollars to Private Company: The City of Lakewood plans to give major financial incentives for hospital site redevelopment.

From recent reports in the local media, Local Lawyer has learned that the city is planning to donate the defunct hospital site to its recommended developer for free or \$1. Seems this land is carried on the city’s books for \$3.7 million and is likely worth considerably more. To top-off this incentive, the city planning department reported that it expects to spend between \$7 million and \$10 million for site demolition and site preparation. Local Lawyer, using his trusty calculator, estimates that between \$11 million and \$15 million will move from the Lakewood treasury! Here’s an idea. Why not lease the property to the developer to replace one of the revenue streams that the City lost for its citizens?

Kudos from Local Lawyer: A tip of the hat to the public-interest lawyers that have taken on the fight for accountability and openness in Lakewood. A big thank you to Steve Dever, Chris DeVito, Matt Markling, Mike Skindell, Donna Kolis, Marc Dann and, last but not least, the *indefatigable* Brian Essi.