

Mayor Thaddeus J. Kedzierski & Village of Grosse Pointe Shores Council Members
795 Lake Shore Road
Grosse Pointe Shores, MI 48236

September 18, 2023

Dear Mayor Kedzierski and Village of Grosse Pointe Shores Council Members:

For the past nine years, I have served as the President and Chief Executive Officer for Michigan Humane. Our vision is to create a community that is healthier and safer for both pets and people. We are not singularly focused on animals but rather an animal's impact on the human condition. Safety, for everyone, is an equal part of our mission to animal welfare.

I have more than 20 years of experience working in animal welfare/control. Prior to my time at Michigan Humane, I worked extensively on the animal control side, holding leadership roles in New Mexico, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Michigan. In those roles, while animals played a critical part in the mission, the primary focus was public safety.

I say that to lay out my experience and put my comments into the context of real-life application. As an animal control officer, supervisor, and director, I have found breed-specific legislation to be ineffective and misguided – and often debated after a singular incident. Breed-specific legislation is punishing an unknown and unlikely future incident rather than prioritizing the enforcement of existing laws.

The incident that precipitated the debate in Grosse Pointe Shores was certainly frightening and caused injury to the victims. We place no blame or fault on the victims and understand their frustrations, anger, and feelings. However, every aspect of this incident can, and should, be addressed using existing ordinances and state law.

MCL 287.262 prohibits a dog owner from allowing his or her dog “to stray unless held properly in leash.” MCL 287.321-287.232, in existing law, governs what constitutes dangerous dog behavior and how to proceed declaring a dog dangerous. These laws have been legislation for decades and are enforced based on behavior – as is the case with all other criminal offenses whether the offender be a dog or a person.

We have often heard that “it is not the breed, it is how they are raised.” There is, in large part, truth to that. However, if we are honest, that is misleading. There are genetic tendencies in dogs. That said, aggressive behavior, inherently, is not one of them. All dogs can be safe members of a community and, in fact, add value by creating more connected neighborhoods.

Behavior by an owner and their pet that puts the community at risk should be addressed. Dangerous behavior by a dog or a person should not be tolerated. That said, as is the case with all other criminal

*The mission of Michigan Humane is to improve and save lives through
compassionate care, community engagement and advocacy for animals.*



866-MHUMANE | michiganhumane.org
30300 Telegraph Road, Suite 220
Bingham Farms, MI 48025

issues, it should be addressed as a behavior or an action that has occurred, not a hypothetical situation. Grosse Pointe Shores is a vibrant, progressive community. People make life choices for their pets and create an opinion of a community based on how they treat those pets. Keep the city of Grosse Pointe Shores the inclusive, pet-friendly city that it is and utilize existing resources and legislation to keep the community safe while protecting the role that pets have in our lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Pepper", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Matt Pepper
President & CEO Michigan Humane

*The mission of Michigan Humane is to improve and save lives through
compassionate care, community engagement and advocacy for animals.*



866-MHUMANE | michiganhumane.org
30300 Telegraph Road, Suite 220
Bingham Farms, MI 48025

*The mission of Michigan Humane is to improve and save lives through
compassionate care, community engagement and advocacy for animals.*