

# Neighbors say dog kennel stinks, city officials agree

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A Farmington Hills kennel operator is in the dog house with his neighbors following a complaint about barking dogs that got him a ticket for violating the city's noise ordinance.

But some neighbors say they wish the city had a bad smell ordinance, too — because of the foul odors they say they have caused them to live like hermits in their own homes.

"We're tired of the smell and we're tired of the barking," said Kelly Sue Davis, who lives on

Randall, behind the kennel. She described the prevailing odor as a "lovely ammonia smell."

She described a Memorial Day cookout that wound up being held indoors because of foul odors. Davis said dog urine is simply rinsed away, which causes her concerns about its impact on the environment.

Hills City Attorney John Donohue said the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality has inspected the kennel.

"We have not been able to verify any kind of violations in that regard," he said.

Neighbor William Gearhart

**'I don't think my neighbors are going to be appeased...until I get out.'**

Tom McCoy  
Waldestust Kennels

said he has an insect and rat problem, which he blames on stray pieces of dog food from the kennel.

City officials are also baring their teeth over the kennel. City Manager Steve Brock called

Oakland County's decision to re-issue the kennel's license "unconscionable."

"We're going to redouble our efforts to close them down," Brock said. "The only time they didn't have any dogs is when they were closed down."

Waldestust Kennels has been open since 1951, before any of the neighboring homes were built around it. Because it was there first, it is considered "grandfathered" although it does not comply with current zoning. Its owner is Erna McCoy, whose son, Tom McCoy, operates the kennel.

He said he has taken several steps toward making the business a better neighbor. In October 2000 he was ordered by the 47th District Court to clear out the dogs until he completed several improvements. He reopened March 17 after getting an OK from Oakland County Animal Control.

Sgt. Jerry McNair of Oakland County Animal Control confirmed that Waldestust Kennels was given permission to reopen after making some improvements.

McCoy described his relationship with his neighbors as a

"fued." His re-opening was greeted with a ticket for his barking dogs. His court date is July 6.

"I did everything that animal control wanted me to do," McCoy said. "I don't believe my neighbors are going to be appeased — I don't think they're going to be appeased until I get out."

Among the major improvements he made was installing

cement, which replaced wood flooring that residents claimed absorbed odors.

"I had to tear up all the wood — at great cost to me," McCoy said, adding that he thought wood was easier on the dogs' feet and hips than cement.

Not only did he lose out on boarding fees while he was closed, but he had to pay to license and board more than 20 of his own dogs, which he breeds and trains. Fortunately, he said, he was able to find temporary homes for all.

"I was afraid I'd have to put them to sleep," McCoy said.

Dog feces are dosed with concentrated deodorizer, placed into plastic garbage bags and twisted and placed into a trash receptacle for pick up.

Unfortunately, the foul smells are a fact of life at dog kennels. Heavy rains tend to make the smells worse, as was the case Memorial Day weekend. The apt of cleaning up also makes the odors worse, McCoy said.

"That's a problem with dogs and dog crap," McCoy said. "It does smell. I clean it up as well as I can."

The barking is also a fact of life at a dog kennel, he said.

"It's the nature of the beast — I raise and train (German Shepherds) for the police department — they don't just bark indiscriminately."

McCoy, who graduated from Farmington High in 1969 and has lived in the Hills most of his life, described German Shepherds as his life's work. He has won more than 30 championships in his lifetime.

In addition, he said, kennels are an important business in any community.

"I think we provide a very valuable service," he said. "We have a 20-foot run and 4-foot-by-4-foot stalls. I can handle a large dog or a small dog."

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