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3 communities may share animal officer

BELMONT — Out of a general need, the towns of Belmont, Gilford, and the city of Laconia are working on a plan that would have the three communities share an animal control officer.

Belmont selectman passed a police budget item Monday night that would allocate \$15,000 toward such a plan, which was recently presented to the town by Gilford town officials, said Belmont Town Administrator K. Jeanne Beaudin.

Belmont has a “very, very part-time” animal control officer, Beaudin said. Gilford and Laconia police mostly handle animal complaint calls themselves, said Gilford Town Administrator Scott Dunn.

“Most often these issues are handled by the police,” Beaudin said. “This would be a shared service, out of mutual benefit to all three communities, and the selectman thought it was a good idea.”

Dunn said the idea makes sense for all three communities.

“Right now, the police are handling the majority of these calls in all three places; this would free the police up to do more police work,” Dunn said.

Gilford, Dunn said, has also penciled \$15,000 toward the officer in its budget. Laconia has asked for details on the proposal, and may have a different, or the same cost, he said.

“It’s all at the very administrative level now, we’re really not sure of the costs yet,” Dunn said.

The proposal would have to pass through budget committees in Belmont and Gilford, make it to the final town budget, and be approved by voters in March, Dunn said. Laconia’s city council would have to approve the proposal, through its city government system, he said.

“It could be until April before we get to where we could hire someone,” Dunn said.

Animal control officers enforce state and town ordinances as they pertain to domestic animals. They also assist the public with problems concerning wildlife, according to local police.

They are also called if dogs need to be leashed, or if an animal is found in a situation

endangering the lives of otehrs, among other situations.

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