

Judge severs ownership after dogs found 'left and forgotten' at New Caney home

By Catherine Dominguez, Staff writer Updated 4:28 pm CST, Thursday, January 10, 2019



Photo: Jason Fochtman, Houston Chronicle / Staff Photographer

Montgomery County Animal Shelter Director Aaron Johnson goes over documents beside Assistant County Attorney Ronald Chin before an hearing in the courtroom of Montgomery County Justice of Peace Precinct 4 Jason Dunn, Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019, in New Caney. Dunn awarded custody of 57 living dogs seized from a New Caney home on Jan. 5 to the Montgomery County Animal Shelter.

Montgomery County Justice of Peace Precinct 4 Jason Dunn is seen during an animal custody hearing, Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019, in New Caney. Dunn awarded custody of 57 living dogs seized from a New Caney home on Jan. 5 to the Montgomery County Animal Shelter.



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Montgomery County Animal Control Officer Kat Gibson testified Thursday to the horrific conditions of feces and urine more than 50 dogs were found, both living and dead, at a New Caney home.

Gibson, along with Assistant County Attorney Ronald Chin, Montgomery County Animal Shelter Director Aaron Johnson and MCAC Officer Joe Guidry, appeared before Precinct 4 Justice of the Peace Jason Dunn Thursday morning to sever ownership of the dogs and allow the shelter to rehabilitate them and adopt them into new homes.

“The living conditions were horrendous,” she said. “Several came back heartworm positive so that shows they weren’t getting regular vet care. Multiple animals on the property, living and deceased, were very thin which show they were not provided food or water. “Generally, just left and forgotten.”

Dunn granted the motion including a monetary judgment of \$11,495.73 for the county’s cost in caring for the animals since seizing them Saturday including the cost of necropsies for several of the dogs.

According to Gibson’s testimony, she responded to a call to the home on Espinosa Lane around noon where she first made contact with the dog owner’s daughter. The daughter informed Gibson that her mother died Dec. 31 and her mother’s common-law husband left the home taking with him a few of the dogs he wanted.

Gibson said once she made entry to the property she could see four dogs running loose with other in makeshift kennels with no food or water. She noted there was some food and water left for the dogs outside the kennels but did not know who had left the food there.

“I opened the gate and there were four dogs running around the property but I could see other dogs in kennels on the property,” Gibson said. “I walked up to the first kennel and there were four living dogs and two deceased dogs together in that kennel.”

Chin asked Gibson if she knew how long the dogs had been dead Gibson said she could not give a definitive time but said the animals were in rigor mortis. She added she could hear dogs inside the mobile home as well.

Gibson said after looking at the other animals she called Johnson to report the situation and request the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office get involved in order to get a search warrant for the property. Once the warrant was issued, Gibson said other animal control officials arrived and made entry to the home.

“As soon as we open the door ... our ammonia reader read 29 I believe,” she said. Guidry said acceptable level for ammonia is zero.

Gibson also testified there was feces all over the floor of the home and in the living area another dead dog was found, she said she was not aware of any food or water available for the dogs.

The dogs were eventually captured and all taken back to the Montgomery County Animal Shelter. Gibson said an additional four more dogs, three puppies and an adult dog, died at the shelter.

Chin said the case is being investigated by MCSO but no charges have been filed in the case.