

Dear Selectmen of West Tisbury,

I am writing this letter as a private citizen concerned about the health and wellbeing of any animal or person under the jurisdiction of the West Tisbury Animal Control Officer, Anthony "Tony" Cordray.

My name is Samuel Hurd, I was born in Oak Bluffs, and with the exception of my college years, have lived in West Tisbury my entire life of 32 years. I am a volunteer and designated foster home for the animal rescue Angels Helping Animals (AHA) based in Oak Bluffs. I do not speak for the rescue and they have not endorsed this letter.

I have been a dog owner all my life. I am the full time foster of a two year old Newfoundland with a type III heart murmur, named Baloo. Baloo's condition makes him difficult to place due to the likelihood that he could die or need excessive medical care for his condition. Baloo is one of the friendliest dogs you will ever meet. He is gentle and is an extremely loving companion. Baloo has no history of aggression towards people or animals and in fact spends most of his time on a farm with chickens, pigs, cows, turkeys, and horses. Most days he roams the farm playing with sticks and acting like he's helping with chores. Baloo has never left the property on his own.

Unfortunately Baloo had an encounter with Mr. Cordray of the West Tisbury Animal Control that almost cost him his life.

In my attempt to bring Baloo home I witnessed what I can only describe as complete and utter disregard for the law, intimidation, abuse of power, and disrespect unbecoming of any Official. Mr. Cordray demonstrated he is not fit to hold office, especially one that requires public interaction or the safeguarding of life.

I think it is important to note, I may have acted in a way that seems impolite but I was a concerned dog owner, who from the very start of my interaction was treated with extreme disrespect.

**Description of Events:**

At Approximately 5:00pm on April 16th, 2021 Baloo was lured off the property by another dog. The two of them unfortunately managed to find themselves next to a road.

It was at this time that Mr. Cordray was unfortunately called to seize both dogs and bring them to his facility.

After 45 minutes of looking around the area for Baloo, I called "Mr. Cordray (West Tisbury Animal control) where I left a message. My call was returned by a man demanding to know who I was and if I wanted my dog back I better be there in "15 minutes or less". I proceeded to go straight to his facility at the airport and made it there in well under 15 minutes

As instructed I walked around back, where Mr. Cordray was pacing on his phone. Mr. Cordray ignored my presence for 5-10 minutes. We were outside the building and in the rush to get there (under 15 minutes) I forgot to grab my mask. Mr. Cordray, finishing his call, asked if I had a mask, I had one in my truck so I returned to my truck and got it. He then waited for me to close my truck door and walk back towards him before saying "do you have a leash?". I then walked back to my truck and got a leash. I did not bring it initially because Baloo has been well trained off leash by the Edgartown based dog trainer Micheal Morris from Rise and Shine Dog Training.

After returning with a leash and walking back to the rear of the facility, with Mr. Cordray, I informed him the leash was not necessary to which he replied "that's not my experience". I was later told Mr. Cordray said he had to "chase these dogs" to catch them. Baloo has almost perfect recall to the word "come" and I have never seen him not walk up to a person and ask for a pat on his head as soon as they are within eyesight. This is why I replied to him by saying "then you must not have much experience."

To which he angrily and aggressively said "IM DOING YOU A FAVOR."

I think at this point it is important to note that according to [govsalaries.com](http://govsalaries.com) Mr. Cordray makes \$48,973.00. This is 150% higher than the national average and in a community that does and always has done 90% of his job for him. Mr. Cordray also has "Always Open" listed as his business hours on the town facebook page (picture 1).

So in fact Mr. Cordray wasn't doing me a favor, he was doing his job. For him to look at it like "it's a favor" shows a complete lack of respect for the people and Selectmen of West Tisbury, who are paying his inflated salary and have trusted him with the health and wellbeing of their animals.

#### **Description continued:**

Mr. Cordray then brought me into the cage area where I informed him that Baloo was a foster due to a heart condition that requires an excessive amount of veterinary care.

Mr. Cordray responded to this by saying I had to fill out his (Mr. Cordray's) paperwork before he would release Baloo.

It was at this point that I realized Mr. Cordray seemed to enjoy making me jump through hoops. He seemed to enjoy having this power over me and seemed to have little regard for Baloo's health and/or wellbeing.

He offered no explanation, no attempt to familiarize me with the process. Nothing. Just do what I say or you don't get your dog. As I looked at the paperwork I asked "what laws required me to fill out his paperwork?", an easy question for a qualified professional to answer.

Mr. Cordray then aggressively yelled "MY LAWS" as he squared his shoulders and moved towards me, attempting to intimidate me.

If Mr. Cordray had been a competent Animal Control Officer he may have responded with **MGL Ch.140 Sec 151A part(b)** states: "*Each animal control officer shall make, keep and maintain*

*systems of records or forms which fully and correctly disclose the following information concerning each animal in the officer's custody:-continued*" Please take note the law says "each animal control officer" not "each animal owner" or "each private citizen."

Mr. Cordrays handling of this situation was the sole factor in the escalation of this incident. I never said or implied I would not pay a fine or give him identification. I only asked "what laws require me to fill out this paper work?" The answer was and is "none". It is his job to fill out the paperwork. It is my job to pay the fines and prove I own the dog, as stated above in **MGL Ch.140 Sec151A part(b)**. Mr. Cordray was obviously unconcerned with the law and more concerned with forcing me to comply with "his" twisted laws.

This fact is further perpetuated by **West Tisbury by-law ATM 20 May 1975 –Book 3 p. 88, 89** "*The owner of any dog so impounded may reclaim such dog upon payment of the license fee, if unpaid, and all costs and charges incurred by the Town for apprehending, impounding and maintenance of said dog.*"

There is no mention of paper work in the above.

#### **Description continued:**

Realizing his obvious willingness to escalate to physical violence and his more obvious willingness to endanger Baloo's life and wellbeing, all to satisfy his need for power, I began to fill out the paperwork with AHA's information. Part way through filling out the paperwork Mr. Cordray was getting visibly more agitated, from what I assume was embarrassment due to his ignorance to the laws that govern his profession; He then said "you know what? why don't you make the rescue (AHA) pick up the dog."

Not only am I the foster home for the animal but I am a documented volunteer and had permission from AHA to obtain the dog. Meaning Mr. Cordray was now violating the law by refusing to do his job and accept the fines and release the dog. Therefore forfeiting his position as Animal Control Officer as stated in **MGL Ch.140 Sec 151**: "*An animal control officer who fails to comply with the terms of such officer's warrant shall immediately be removed from office by the mayor or board of selectmen.*"

Furthermore by keeping Baloo he was actively endangering Baloo's life in two ways:

- 1.) Baloo's medical condition significantly increases the likelihood of death when placed in a stressful or anxious situation i.e. forced to stay in a strange facility without his owner/caretaker overnight and alone. Mr. Cordray was told of this condition prior to his refusal to release Baloo.
- 2.) Every day Baloo is kept in custody is a day closer to the necessary time required for the animal to be destroyed. Therefore every unnecessary day of custody is a direct action of endangering the life of the animal.

The website for West Tisbury animal control states "The Animal Control Officer is responsible for public safety issues involving animal control and the well-being of all four-legged residents and visitors to West Tisbury". Therefore Mr. Cordray has even broke "his law" by his own direct action.

**Description Continued:**

Fearing retaliation in the form of physical violence directed at me or Baloo I left the facility. As soon as I was a safe distance away I informed AHA's lead board member. I then contacted the West Tisbury Police Department, who were uncertain of the statutes in regards to animals and unlawful impoundment. Their effort to mediat was greatly appreciated and unlike Mr. Cordray the officer was extremely professional and respectful.

Shortly after notification, fearing the situation may cause Baloo to have a cardiac event and die, AHA began attempting to reach Mr. Cordray. Mr Cordray who is quoted as responding to Selectmen Kent Healy when asked if he minded late night calls as "saying im used to it from the fire department" was unreachable.

The following morning beginning at approximately 6:30am AHA initiated attempts to contact Mr.Cordray again, But he remained unreachable. This went on through the morning until Approximately 9:00am when the assistant animal control officer was finally reached. Meanwhile Mr. Cordray had appeared at my place of work in his personal vehicle in what I can only imagine was a further attempt to intimidate and harass me personally. He remained on the property for approximately 30 minutes, standing outside his truck. Believing he was there to start a physical altercation I drove a safe distance away from Mr. Cordray (picture 2). I have contacted an attorney and will hopefully be able to file a restraining order to prevent this from happening again. This follow up event shows how little he cares about the law and how far he is willing to go to intimidate/retaliate.

In the week following this event AHA has learned that Mr. Cordray was so offended by my question that he felt a further need to retaliate against AHA. AHA had no interaction with Mr. Cordray due to his inability to answer his work phone. This retaliation came in the form of falsely reporting to the Department of Agriculture that he was concerned for the dog's health. Now if that were true, that would mean that he has again violated the duties of his position in releasing a dog to a home he is now on record saying he did not think was safe. I have a pending FOIA (Freedom Of Information Act) request with the department of agriculture in order to provide undeniable evidence of Mr. Cordrays false statements and retaliation.

This disgusting act of retaliation does nothing but slow down the process of needy dogs to be rescued/adopted and will indirectly cost the life of countless animals. Again demonstrating Mr. Cordray's complete indifference to the health and well being of animals.

**Summation:**

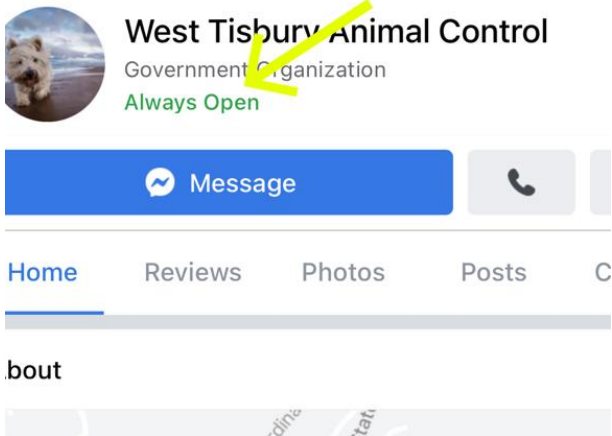
I have heard similar stories to mine and have been told a number of times to “just do what he says”. This has led me to the conclusion that his intimidation techniques have been working thus far. I would ask that a system be put in place to make the filing of complaints against the Animal Control Officer easier.

I would also ask that the Selectmen take into account the evidence and arguments i have presented as they consider whether or not this is the conduct and character of an appointed town official. It is my belief I have presented sufficient evidence for Mr. Cordrays removal as the West Tisbury Animal Control Officer.

Thank You Sam H

**Evidence:**

**Picture (1)**



**Picture (2)**

Taken: 4/17/2021 10:29am

