

SPCA director says city dismissed cases because of criticism

By Duane Bourne
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VIRGINIA BEACH

The head of the local SPCA contends that several criminal cases brought by a former animal control officer were dropped this week in retaliation for critical statements the officer had made to the City Council about the city's animal control bureau.

Sharon Adams, executive director of the Virginia Beach Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, said the decisions to drop the cases tarnished the reputation of Rose Strickland, who worked for the city for about 13 years before resigning May 31. They also raised unfair questions about Strickland's

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the issue

Former animal control officer Rose Strickland, a 13-year city employee before her May resignation, had been critical of the Virginia Beach Police Department's management of the animal control bureau.

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credibility, Adams said, and threatened prosecution of her remaining cases.

Colin Stolle, chief deputy commonwealth's attorney, said the dismissals had nothing to do with Strickland's credibility.

He said the Police Department reviewed two of the cases in which warrants were is-

sued and people were taken into custody.

A supervising animal control officer determined that the evidence on hand was not sufficient to continue prosecution. At the request of police, Stolle said, he examined the cases and made a similar assessment.

"This had nothing to do with Rose Strickland," Stolle said. "Our office would never get

involved in a personnel matter."

Two of the hearings on Tuesday's docket at General District Court involved an allegation of animal cruelty. Another involved a woman facing charges of having a dangerous dog and being a public nuisance. All were dismissed.

"It was absolutely humiliating," Strickland said. "I have never seen what I saw in court. I know my job and was successful at my job. It is ridiculous that they would question any of my work."

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the history

In May, the Virginia Beach SPCA released a report about the Police Department's management of the animal control bureau, saying the shelter should be more animal-friendly and that officers lacked training and issued too few summonses.

At a City Council meeting, Rose Strickland was one of two animal control officers who told council members that she had been disheartened by what she described as apathy for the animals in the shelter and that her concerns were ignored.

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