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To Whom It May Concern

Office of the City Administrator, City of Oelwein
20 2nd Avenue SW
Oelwein, Iowa 50662

To Whom It May Concern;

I am writing to formally request a review of our family dog's designation and respectfully petition for his reclassification as a non-violent dog under the City of Oelwein's animal control ordinance.

Background: Tiger, a mixed-breed rescue dog approximately 1 ½ years old, was involved in an incident on Saturday, June 21, 2025, which may lead to his classification as a "vicious animal." Upon arriving at our residence after picking up my son John and our dog Tiger from a visit with his father, John proceeded to open the car door to let Tiger out. However, Tiger spotted a child riding a bicycle on our property and instinctively ran toward them, playfully. I understand this may have scared the child, who kicked out at Tiger. This resulted in the unfortunate incident in question. This behavior is deeply out of character for Tiger, who has no prior history of aggression. Had the child not been on our property, or had not kicked out at the dog, this would not have been an issue.

Rationale: Tiger has been a member of our household for a year on a half and, during that time, has had no prior incidents or citations within the City of Oelwein. He has consistently demonstrated friendly behavior toward both people and other animals. His only occasional reaction has been limited to normal, non-aggressive barking through our backyard fence in response to passing activity—a behavior well within the bounds of typical canine communication and territorial awareness. At no point prior to the recent event has Tiger exhibited behavior that would cause concern for aggression or public safety.

Tiger is a deeply affectionate and well-integrated member of our family. Since his adoption following the loss of our senior dog, he has accompanied my son John—a rising sixth grader—on walks and visits with neighbors and other dogs, always behaving peacefully and sociably. Numerous community members can affirm his gentle temperament and stable disposition.

We are committed to responsible ownership and have taken immediate action, including:

- Tiger will remain confined to our back yard (enclosed with a six foot privacy fence)
- No trespassing sign has been in place on the front of our house for years
- Outfitting Tiger with a blaze orange collar
- Posting signage alerting others to beware of dogs
- Agreeing to leash him whenever in public (which will only be between the house and car when he goes with John to stay with his father on designated weekends or to veterinary visits)
- Homeowner's insurance listing all our pets has been in place since we welcomed our pets into our home

Supporting Considerations: Scientific research and expert organizations support the notion that dogs may react instinctively to environmental stimuli without exhibiting chronic aggression. According to the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, dogs often display reactive behavior when startled or frustrated, particularly around fast-moving stimuli such as bicycles (UC Davis, n.d.). This aligns with findings from The Pet Lab Co. (n.d.), which note that bicycles may trigger fear or chase instincts in even well-socialized dogs.

Furthermore, the ASPCA (n.d.) underscores the need for individualized assessments in such cases. Their position advocates for a behavior-focused evaluation, not one based on breed or isolated incidents, and encourages behavioral support and confinement protocols before considering extreme remedies.

Closing Request: In light of Tiger's otherwise peaceful history and our family's full cooperation with most city requirements, I respectfully request the reconsideration of his classification and the opportunity for him to remain safely and responsibly within our care. I am available to provide further documentation or speak in person at your request.

Thank you for your time and continued commitment to fairness and public safety.

Sincerely,

Lacy Gunningham

References

ASPCA. (n.d.). *Position statement on dangerous dog laws*. <https://www.asPCA.org/about-us/asPCA-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-dangerous-dog-laws>

Feel Good HHS. (n.d.). *Why do dogs hate bikes? We comprehend the aversion of dogs towards bicycles*. <https://feelgoodhhs.com/why-do-dogs-hate-bikes-understanding-canine-aversion-to-bicycles>

The Pet Lab Co. (n.d.). *Dog suddenly aggressive: Common causes and solutions*. <https://thepetlabco.com/learn/dog/behavior/dog-suddenly-aggressive>

UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. (n.d.). *The truth about aggression and dominance in dogs*. <https://healthtopics.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/health-topics/canine/truth-about-aggression-and-dominance-dogs>