

Animal Cruelty Case Against Police Officer Ends



By Tim Wronka | Posted: Mon 6:19 PM, Jul 30, 2012 | Updated: Tue 2:51 AM, Jul 31, 2012

HARRISONBURG, Va -- The animal cruelty case involving an officer who beat a cat to death is now closed. On Monday morning, prosecutors dropped the case.

After months of trials and court dates, Harrisonburg Police Officer Jonathan Snoddy is now exonerated of all wrong doing. His attorneys are happy the original guilty verdict was overturned.

"It was a bit of a rush to judgment at the beginning of the case," said John Holloran, one of Snoddy's defense attorneys. "Once he [the special prosecutor] had an opportunity to analyze the facts, and the autopsy of the cat, he realized there was not a substantive case and that's why he dismissed it."

Wayne Meadows, a witness to the event, claimed he heard Snoddy hit the cat up to 20 times outside his home. Meadows had rescued the animal from the side of the road and called police back in November.

Monday, Ken Alger, a special prosecutor appointed from Page County, said the necropsy report on the cat shows it was more likely one blow from the baton. He said the other sounds that Meadows heard may have been Snoddy putting away his baton.

This still raises questions about where HPD's animal policy is.

"There was no one trained to make any decision about this particular cat. And the future health of this cat," said Executive Director of Alley Cat Allies, Britt Cocanour.

Harrisonburg Police Chief Stephen Monticelli recognized that and in a statement, he said policy revisions are on the way. Something that animal groups like PETA, say is a silver lining to this whole situation.

"We're grateful to the good Samaritan who picked up this poor cat on the side of the road," said Daphna Nachminovitch, a PETA spokesperson. "And to the police department, for taking this seriously and implementing policies to prevent such tragedies from recurring."

Now, Officer Snoddy can put this behind him as well.

"It's a tough situation being an officer charged with a criminal offense," said Bill Eldrige, Snoddy's other defense attorney. "And to have to fight this case through a trial until today when he finally had a prosecutor realize that this was not a criminal offense that was committed."

The prosecutor mentioned in court Monday the fact that Officer Snoddy has been volunteering at the Augusta County SPCA.

Harrisonburg Police are reviewing their policies and will make appropriate changes when needed.

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