

- [TimesReview](#)
- [Suffolk Times](#)
- [Riverhead News-Review](#)
- [Shelter Island Reporter](#)
- [North Shore Sun](#)

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [RSS](#)
[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#)



- [home](#)
- [news](#)
- [sports](#)
- [opinion](#)
- [education](#)
- [real estate](#)
- [business](#)
- [community](#)
- [lifestyle](#)

Search for:

Editorial: Dog's death deserves scrutiny

By [Times Review](#) | January 12, 2011 in [Editorials](#), [Opinion](#)

SHARE

0

It would be impossible to tell now whether Bruno, a pit bull mix that was euthanized late last month at the Riverhead Animal Shelter, was dangerous and couldn't be rehabilitated. But this much is certain: The circumstances surrounding the decision to kill the dog are highly questionable. Someone should pay for any blunders or mistruths that contributed to the dog's death.

Here are some highlights of the case that raise numerous questions as to why the dog was killed:

- Just a day after animal control officer Lou Coronese wrote an inter-office letter to the police department that Bruno was showing signs of improvement and that the dog should work with volunteers, Mr. Coronese changed his mind and recommended that the dog be destroyed — and got a vet to back his findings. No explanation was ever publicly provided for Mr. Coronese's sudden change of heart. No one has explained to the public — or the shelter volunteers who cared for the dog — what, exactly, the animal did between Nov. 15, when Mr. Coronese wrote the letter, and Nov. 16, when he said the dog should be put down, to change his mind. The shelter volunteers, who help exercise and otherwise care for the shelter dogs, were both furious and confused by the decision.
- Over a month later, and the night before euthanasia was scheduled, Riverhead Councilman Jim Wooten, who serves as Town Board liaison to the shelter, requested at an animal advisory committee meeting in Town Hall that Police Chief David Hegermiller hold off on having Bruno killed until the councilman could fully investigate the matter. By 8:30 a.m. the next morning, Dec. 21, Bruno was dead, Mr. Wooten said. No explanation was given to the public, the volunteers or the councilman why Chief Hegermiller didn't have his subordinate, Mr. Coronese, hold off on killing the dog.
- Later that night at a Town Board meeting, Riverhead Supervisor Sean Walter told animal activists who questioned Bruno's death that the dog "had bitten a child." But that wasn't true. Mr. Wooten learned from the county Department of Health and Human Services that Bruno had not bitten a child, but his 22-year-old owner, who was breaking up a fight between two dogs — two quite different stories.

Mr. Walter told the News-Review later that his information had been provided to him by Mr. Coronese, whom he has repeatedly defended. In the meantime, shelter volunteer Pat Lynch, who helped bring to light the truth that the dog had not attacked a child, has been banned from the shelter. (Mr. Walter told the News-Review he had nothing to do with the order to ban Ms. Lynch, which was communicated to her through a letter from Chief Hegermiller.)

Instead of responding to questions by insisting he's not going to comment any further, as he did at last Tuesday's Town Board meeting, the supervisor should be apologizing to all who cared for Bruno, while admitting it appeared that the dog was killed for no good reason. Then he should join Mr. Wooten in trying to find out why.

We suspect that we'd know it by now if the explanation were a reasonable one.