

**CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE
ANIMAL CONTROL DEPARTMENT DANGEROUS DOG HEARING
MARCH 13, 2026**

1. CALL TO ORDER

A City of Port St. Lucie Animal Control Department Dangerous Dog Hearing was opened by Special Magistrate Keith Davis on March 13, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at Port St. Lucie City Hall Council Chambers, 121 Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, Florida.

Present for City:

Daniella Margetic, Deputy City Attorney
Catherine Marson, Animal Control Officer
Gayle Brooks, Victim

Present for Appellant:

Joshua Deckard, Attorney for the Appellant
Deborah Langford, Appellant

2. HEARING

The Special Magistrate announced that this was an Appeal of an Initial Finding of a dangerous dog hearing, Case Number 202526238, City of Port St. Lucie versus Deborah Langford, who owns the canines, Blue and Stella. The Attorney for the City, Deputy City Attorney Daniella Margetic, introduced herself, and Joshua Deckard, Attorney for the Appellant, introduced himself. He explained the ground rules and procedure for the hearing.

The Deputy City Clerk provided the Oath of Testimony to all those present testifying.

Deputy City Attorney Margetic provided the City's opening statement.

Attorney Deckard provided the Appellant's opening statement.

Attorney Margetic called the victim, Gayle Brooks, to testify, and, during direct examination, described her golden doodle dog, Romeo, and spoke about the date of the incident. Attorney Margetic provided City Exhibit 1A, an aerial photograph, and questioned Ms. Brooks. Attorney Deckard had no objection,

and Special Magistrate entered it into the record. (**Clerk's Note:** Exhibit 1A was shown at this time.)

Attorney Margetic provided City Exhibit 1B, a photograph of the subject area. Attorney Deckard had no objection, and the Special Magistrate entered it into the record. Attorney Margetic questioned Ms. Brooks about the incident and discussed Exhibit 1B. Ms. Brooks exhibited Romeo's leash, harness, and collar. (**Clerk's Note:** Exhibit 1B was shown at this time.)

Attorney Margetic presented City Exhibits 2A and 2B, photographs of Blue and Stella. Attorney Deckard indicated no objection, and the Special Magistrate entered 2A and 2B into the record. Attorney Margetic questioned Ms. Brooks regarding the exhibits provided and the sequence of events on the day of the incident. (**Clerk's Note:** Exhibits 2A and 2B were shown at this time.)

Attorney Margetic presented City Exhibit 5, an X-Ray image. Attorney Deckard objected to the admittance of Exhibit 5 and stated he believed there was no one present to be able to read the X-ray as provided in Exhibit 5. Attorney Margetic questioned Ms. Brooks about Exhibit 5. The Special Magistrate reserved ruling. (**Clerk's Note:** Exhibit 5 was shown at this time.)

Attorney Margetic presented City Exhibits 3A through 3D, photographs of wrist injury, and 4A through 4G, photographs of scratches. Attorney Deckard did not object to these exhibits. The Special Magistrate entered City Exhibits 3A through 3D and 4A through 4G into the record. (**Clerk's Note:** Exhibits 3A through 3D and 4A through 4G were shown at this time.)

Attorney Margetic presented City Exhibit 6, the report of X-Ray findings. Attorney Deckard objected to the exhibit. Attorney Margetic questioned Ms. Brooks about the exhibit. (**Clerk's Note:** Exhibit 6 was shown at this time.)

The Special Magistrate asked follow-up questions relating to City Exhibit 6. He reserved ruling on the entry of Exhibits 5 and 6.

Attorney Margetic asked Ms. Brooks about the scratches as presented in Exhibit 4A through 4G. Ms. Brooks spoke about the vaccines and medication needed to recover from all the injuries from the incident. Attorney Margetic concluded questioning for Ms. Brooks.

Attorney Deckard questioned Ms. Brooks about the series of events from the day of the incident, October 25, 2025. During questioning, Attorney Deckard

asked Ms. Brooks to display the leash at this time and continued to question Ms. Brooks relating to Romeo and the date of the incident.

Attorney Margetic asked redirect questions to Ms. Brooks.

Attorney Deckard asked Ms. Brooks if Romeo was larger than Blue and Stella, to which Ms. Brooks stated she did not know.

Attorney Margetic called the City's witness, Catherine Marson, Animal Control Officer, to testify, and provided direct examination of Officer Marson in relation to the date of the incident. Attorney Margetic republished Exhibit 1A, an aerial photograph of the subject location, and questioned Officer Marson. Attorney Margetic republished Exhibits 2A and 2B, photographs of Blue and Stella, and questioned Officer Marson. Attorney Margetic provided Officer Marson with a copy of the incident report on October 25, 2025. **(Clerk's Note:** The incident report was shown to Officer Marson at this time.)

Attorney Deckard provided cross-examination of Officer Marson.

Attorney Margetic concluded the presentation of the City's case.

Attorney Deckard called the Appellant, Deborah Langford, to testify and provided direct examination of Ms. Langford.

Attorney Margetic provided cross-examination of Ms. Langford.

Attorney Deckard asked a redirect question to Ms. Langford.

The Special Magistrate addressed City Exhibit 5, X-Ray Photograph, and Exhibit 6, the report of X-Ray findings. He entered Exhibits 5 and 6 into the record against the Appellant's Attorney's objection.

Attorney Margetic presented the City's closing argument.

Attorney Deckard presented the Appellant's closing argument.

A recess was called at 11:55 a.m., and the hearing reconvened at 12:10 p.m.

The Special Magistrate indicated that his findings were based on the testimony and evidence heard at today's hearing. He noted that on October 25, 2025, Ms. Brooks was walking her dog, Romeo, a 70-pound Golden Doodle, who is missing one eye, and Ms. Langford was likewise walking her two dogs, Blue, a 50-pound Catahoula Leopard, and Stella, a 70-pound Golden Retriever. He stated that the incident occurred near the walkway/tree/park area adjacent to the Southeast Morningside Boulevard in Port St. Lucie, as depicted on Exhibits

1A and 2B. The Special Magistrate explained the details were more so “she said, she said”. He indicated that the testimony in certain aspects differed depending on each independent recollection from each person. The Special Magistrate stated that after reviewing all of Ms. Brooks’, Ms. Langford’s, and Officer Marson’s testimony and having observed all three witnesses’ demeanors while testifying directly and on cross-examination, he found the evidence to support the following: Romeo, Ms. Brooks’ dog was equally involved in barking at the very beginning of the interaction just as Blue and Stella were. He explained that Ms. Langford’s testimony on this matter, coupled with the testimony about Romeo barking when Officer Marson visited Ms. Brooks’ home, and other testimony about Romeo’s general behavior in different situations, left him to make that finding. The Special Magistrate found that all three dogs were equally engaged at the beginning of the incident. He stated that based on the evidence, neither Blue nor Stella aggressively bit, attacked, or aggressively endangered Ms. Brooks. He stated that his findings were based on Ms. Brooks’ testimony, recounting that when Blue and Stella approached the area, she said that they were not interested in her but rather they were interested in Romeo. He explained there was no dispute that Ms. Brooks was not bitten and found that Ms. Brooks did fall because of the confrontation, causing injury to her wrist and fracturing it, which meets the statutory definition of severe injury under the Dangerous Dog statute. He added that his problem was finding that the injury was caused by the aggressive behavior of Ms. Langford’s dogs. The Special Magistrate indicated that, in his view, the testimony did not establish that the aggressive behavior occurred. He stated that he agreed with Attorney Deckard’s comment that this was an incident of dogs acting like dogs and stated he believed the evidence showed that. The Special Magistrate explained that the Dangerous Dog Statute had two other elements: more than one severely injured or killed a domestic animal, and that the dog, when unprovoked, chased or approached a person on the street, sidewalks, or public grounds in a menacing fashion or apparent attitude of attack. He stated that he found Ms. Brooks was not the subject of this event based on the evidence as presented, his observations, and the testimony provided. The Special Magistrate added that this was a case where two ladies were walking their dogs, and the dogs heard each other and everyone started barking, and everyone got away from everybody, depending on the testimony heard. He found that the severe injury was not the result of an aggressive act by Ms. Langford’s dogs and stated he would overturn the initial Dangerous Dog classification. He explained that the evidence does not

support or justify that Blue and/or Stella are to be declared Dangerous Dogs under the statute. The Special Magistrate added that it was an unfortunate incident that had an unfortunate ending. He indicated that he did not find that it reached the level of that declaration under the statute or the City Code. The Special Magistrate overturned the initial Dangerous Dog classification. He ordered that the City prepare the appropriate order. The Special Magistrate stated that the Administrative Costs would not be assessed to Ms. Langford for today's hearing.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

There were no comments from the public.

4. ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, the hearing adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

Daisy Ruiz, Deputy City Clerk