



## PROCEDURE for CAININE CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

1. **Purpose.** Snoqualmie Ridge is best experienced outdoors. Stepping out for a stroll is less inviting when doing so means risking a too-close encounter with a dog or its droppings. The Covenants therefore hold dog owners accountable for controlling and managing their dogs. Specifically, the Covenants provide that a pet be confined, leashed, and otherwise managed so that it does not roam free, endanger health or safety, make objectionable noise, or constitute a nuisance or inconvenience to others. *The Snoqualmie Ridge Residential Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions, Exhibit "C" Initial Use Restrictions, Subsection (b)(iv).*

The Covenants recognize that a dog's self-control resides with its master. That is why the Initial Use Restrictions look to the dog's owner to exert the necessary control. In doing so, they reduce the risk of too-close canine encounters by holding an owner accountable for the conduct of their dog.

2. **Control and Manage.** Specifically, the Initial Use Restrictions hold an owner accountable to:

- Control your dog at all times so as to prevent harm to people, other pets, or property; and
- Manage your dog's behavior by intervening to prevent a reasonably objectionable occurrence from taking place.

3. **Layered Accountability.** Holding yourself accountable for controlling and managing your own dog(s) is essential, as the behavior others observe in your dog helps shape the standard by which the conduct of other dogs will be judged. Therefore, your relationship with your dog(s) forms the first layer of accountability.

Helping neighbors hold themselves accountable is the second layer of accountability. When you believe a neighbor's control or management of their dog falls short of the mark, extend the benefit of the doubt, assume the violation was inadvertent and unintentional, and simply raise the owner's awareness of what you observed, so that the owner and their dog can then self-correct. If raising awareness directly with your neighbor is too awkward, then consider enlisting the help of a neutral party to guide the conversation between you and your neighbor.

*Note: The Association can help identify local mediation services. Both parties must be willing to participate in the process.*

If you have exhausted these avenues and it has become clear that the owner's disregard of the duty to control and manage the animal is intentional and, therefore, that no self-correcting action will take place, imposing financial consequences upon these willful violations is the next layer of accountability. As the Association's right to impose financial consequences rests upon first proving that the violation in question in fact occurred, pursuing this next step necessarily requires the complainant to gather all facts, through witnesses and other evidence, needed to prove that the violation in question actually occurred. This includes proof of the specific violation by a witness(es) (two or more, if possible), proof that a specific dog committed the act, and proof that this dog belongs to this specific owner. (Reference Appendix A – Complaint Form) Proof as required by the Complaint Form must be gathered before approaching the Association.

**4. Safety.** The Covenants empower the Association to request removal of an animal that the Board has determined is a danger to health or safety and, if the owner declines that request, to take legal action to remove the pet. The Board reserves all rights afforded to it by the Covenants. Where the Board, in its sole discretion, determines that removal of an animal(s) is appropriate and reasonably necessary, it may avail itself of its removal rights under the Covenants.

**5. In Summary.** Behavior complaints are hard to corroborate and therefore hard to enforce. In recognition of that fact, as well as the fact that owners have a certain obligation to control their animals so other owner's rights are upheld, the following action steps are recommended.

#### **Action Steps to Take –**

1. Control your own animal in a way that meets the Governing Documents, Initial Use Restriction requirements.
2. Consider calling the police if an immediate safety issue is presented, or to report an off-leash dog.
  - a. Violation of City of Snoqualmie Municipal Code 6.04.020, 6.04.030
3. Approach your neighbor if they are not meeting the Governing Document, Initial Use Restriction requirements with their pet. Possible details that would aid your discussion might include:
  - i. Behavior concern and date(s) concern observed
  - ii. Length of time, or number of times, behavior observed
  - iii. Consequence of behavior to complainants “peaceful enjoyment of their home” (i.e. noise, safety, trespassing; way(s) in which dog’s behavior impacts others)
  - iv. Complainants contact information
  - v. Possible next steps to non-response
    1. Mediation, Formal Association Complaint, Fines
4. Contact mediation service for help in arranging a meeting between you, the dog’s owner, and a neutral mediator to reach agreement on how dog’s behavior is to be controlled or managed going forward.
  - a. Association can provide mediation resources.
  - b. While the Covenants direct owners to participate in mediation, mediation services require that both parties agree to participate.
5. File a formal complaint with the Association once steps 1-4 have been exhausted.
  - a. Reference Appendix A. “Complaint Form”
    - i. Complaint must include:
      1. Witness(es) (two or more, if possible) willing to support your claim
      2. Proof of behavior
      3. Proof of specific animal complaint is against
      4. Proof of specific animal ownership
    - b. Fine schedule:
      - i. \$150.00 fine will be imposed at the time the complaint is verified.
      - ii. Subsequent violations with additional confirmed complaints will result in a \$250.00 fine.