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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION

(410) 576-7296
Writer's Direct Dial No.

January 25, 2021

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Finance Committee

FROM: Hanna Abrams, Assistant Attorney General

RE: Senate Bill 13 – Business Regulation – Retail Pet Stores
CORRECTION

I write to correct some statements Ms. Jeanea Thomson made during her testimony before the Senate Finance Committee on January 21, 2021. During a colloquy with Senator Kramer the following exchange occurred:

Senator Kramer: “Has your license to operate your business in your Rockville store been withdrawn by the City of Rockville?”

Ms. Thomson replied: “As far as I’m aware that is currently under investigation.”

Senator Kramer: “Has the license been withdrawn? . . .”

Ms. Thomson: “No. As far as I know they are currently investigating that.”

As far as the Office of the Attorney General is aware, the City of Rockville notified Ms. Thomson in a letter dated September 18, 2020 that the Rockville Just Puppies store license was void.¹

In addition, Ms. Thomson testified that she is working with the Office of the Attorney General to “make sure [they] are following the law.” In fact, Just Puppies has refused to produce certain documents subpoenaed by the Consumer Protection Division and it is currently the subject of an action brought by the Division before the Circuit Court for Montgomery County to enforce its subpoena.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hanna Abrams', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Hanna Abrams

cc: Meaghan Borgerson, Kagan Stern Marinello & Beard, LLC

¹ See Letter from Victor Brito to Jeanea Thomson, September 18, 2020 (attached).



111 Maryland Avenue | Rockville, Maryland 20850-2364 | 240-314-5000
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September 18, 2020

Ms. Jeanea Thompson
Just Puppies of Maryland, Inc., d/b/a Just Puppies Rockville
2004 Veirs Mill Road
Rockville, MD 20851

***RE: Pet Shop License for Just Puppies of Maryland, Inc., a/b/a Just Puppies Rockville
– VOID***

Dear Ms. Thompson,

This letter serves as formal notification that the pet shop license issued on June 30, 2020 by the City of Rockville (“City”), pursuant to Rockville City Code, Chapter 12, Article X, to Just Puppies of Maryland, Inc., d/b/a Just Puppies Rockville (“Just Puppies”) located at 2004 Veirs Mill Road, Rockville, Maryland, 20851, is VOID by operation of State law. The pet shop license was issued in error and is VOID.

Maryland law specifically prohibits retail pet stores from selling, transferring or disposing of cats or dogs. Md. Code Ann., Business Regulation § 19-703 (2020). Section 12-11 of the Rockville City Code states:

All licenses or certificates issued under this chapter shall be presumed to contain the provision that the applicant, the applicant’s agents and employees shall carry out the proposed activity in compliance with all the requirements of this chapter and any other laws or regulations applicable thereto, whether specified or not. Any license or certificate which purports to sanction a violation of this chapter or any applicable law or regulation shall be void.

Moreover, the City cannot permit a practice within its jurisdiction that is prohibited by State law. *See County Council for Montgomery County v. Montgomery Ass’n*, 274 Md. 52 (1975).

Pursuant to Rockville City Code Section 12-11, the pet shop license issued by the City of Rockville to Just Puppies of Maryland, Inc., d/b/a Just Puppies Rockville located at 2004 Veirs Mill Road, Rockville, Maryland, 20851 is VOID. If Just Puppies is engaged in selling, transferring or disposing of dogs, Just Puppies must immediately cease and desist that activity.

Any sale, transfer or disposal of dogs by Just Puppies Rockville is a violation of Chapter 12, Article X of the Rockville City Code and will be subject to appropriate enforcement measures and applicable penalties.

Because the pet shop license was issued in error and is VOID, the City will refund Just Puppies the license fee of \$80.00.

This letter applies only to the pet shop license issued by the City, pursuant to Rockville City Code, Chapter 12, Article X, to Just Puppies on June 30, 2020. Any other licenses for selling goods, equipment and/or services currently held by Just Puppies are not affected by this letter.

For any questions regarding licenses for selling goods, equipment and/or services, please contact the issuing authorities.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Victor V. Brito
Chief of Police
Rockville City Police Department