

Walking the Dog or Just Walking, Jogging, or Running in Lighthouse Point by Kim Douglas Sherman, Esquire

Did you know that we have laws that govern the way we travel “afoot”?

Get out of the street! Florida Law, Chapter 316.130 governs pedestrians. “Pedestrian” is defined as any person who travels “afoot”—so joggers and runners pay attention, too. Subsection (3) requires that you stay on the sidewalk if there is a sidewalk. If there is no sidewalk, subsection (4) dictates that you must travel on the left shoulder of the roadway in the direction that you are going so that you are facing the approaching traffic. That makes sense, because it gives you a chance to jump out of the way of a distracted or out of control driver. Good luck with that! Maybe they should add a law requiring pedestrians to wear bright and reflective clothing.

Some of our citizens think that a pedestrian always has the right of way. Right? No, wrong. If you are crossing the street, other than in a crosswalk, you must yield to vehicles. Look for those crosswalks and use them, because that is required by our state law.

In Lighthouse Point, your dog must follow the same traffic rules, as you must do. Why? In Lighthouse Point our code of ordinances, Section 10-32(a), requires that no dog may be at large. That means that your dog must be on a leash, or chain of sufficient strength to control the animal when it is not on your own property, and (I know this is no surprise to you) the owner must be attached to the other end of the restraint.

Hold tight to that leash. Florida law, Section 767.01, is very clear that whoever owns or should be in control of a dog, is legally responsible for the damage done to persons or other animals caused by the dog in a public place. It does not matter if the dog had no previous signs of aggressiveness.

Here are some other Lighthouse Point Ordinances to note. Section 10-34, requires all dogs and cats, older than 2 months, to have a Broward County license. Section 10-40 prohibits walking your dogs or cats in any public park, unless there is a special event that permits them.

Finally, while we are speaking of walking your dogs, I am duty bound (no pun intended) to touch on the subject of cleanup. Lighthouse Point Ordinance Section 10-33 makes it illegal to allow your pet to defecate on any public or private property, except for your own property, unless you “make an immediate effort to remove the feces.” So, if that is the law, why do we need to watch out where we place our feet?

Be careful and be safe.