

January 27, 2026

**OFFICE OF THE HEARING EXAMINER
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON**
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REPORT AND DECISION

SUBJECT: Regional Animal Services of King County file no. **V25017874-A25005447**

VALERIA REQUENA
Animal Services Enforcement Appeal

Activity no.: A25005447

Appellant: **Valeria Requena**

[REDACTED]
Kent, WA 98032

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

King County: Regional Animal Services of King County
represented by **Chelsea Eykel**
Regional Animal Services of King County
21615 64th Avenue S
Kent, WA 98032
Telephone: (206) 263-5968
Email: raskcappeals@kingcounty.gov

Overview

1. After hearing the witnesses' testimony and observing their demeanor, studying the exhibits admitted into evidence, and considering the parties' arguments and the relevant law, we affirm the potentially dangerous designation but significantly limit the associated requirements and reduce the monetary penalty.

Procedural Background

2. On November 21, 2025, Alexandra Cokl filed an online complaint with Regional Animal Services of King County (Animal Services) for an incident on that day. Ex. D3. On November 22, 2025, Animal Services issued Notice of Violation V25017874-A25005447 to Valeria Requena for her dog, Kira, being designated as potentially dangerous. Ex. D6. Valeria Requena filed a timely appeal on November 23, 2025. Ex. D8.
3. We went to hearing on January 15, 2026. Participating in the hearing were: Sgt. Chelsea Eykel representing Animal Services, complainant Aly Cokl, and appellant Valeria Requena. A Spanish interpreter was provided for Ms. Requena.

Appeal Issues

Per the Notice of Hearing, the issues identified for consideration on appeal are as follows:

4. The issue on appeal is whether the November 22, 2025, Notice of Violation for Kira's "Potentially Dangerous Act/Conduct 1st" designation (KCC 11.04.230.F) and the associated \$500 penalty are supported by a preponderance of the evidence and appropriate under the facts of this case.

Factual Findings

Weighing all the evidence, the hearing examiner finds the following facts by a preponderance of the evidence:

5. The incident at issue occurred at an off-leash dog park on November 21, 2025. On that day complainant Aly Cokl was playing in the park with her dog Millie. While there, Ms. Requena and her dog, Kira, were coming down a hill in the park toward Ms. Cokl and Millie.
6. The parties agree that the interaction between the two dogs was very brief. Kira approached Millie and "started pressing her open mouth on Millie and then Millie started running in a circular motion and Kira was following her closely." Cokl Testimony. There was no barking or growling from either dog. Despite Ms. Cokl calling for Millie to come, Millie ran away towards a grassy area and Kira chased after her.
7. Ms. Cokl and Ms. Requena heard Millie cry out loudly in pain. Kira immediately moved away from Millie when Millie cried. Cokl Testimony. Ms. Cokl indicated that she saw Kira bite Millie but also testified that she was about 100 feet from the grassy area when she heard Millie cry out. *Id.*
8. Both owners then went and retrieved their dogs. Ms. Cokl found a laceration on Millie's abdomen. *Id.* Ms. Requena said she did not see what happened and questioned whether it had been a scratch. Requena Testimony. Ms. Cokl told her it was a bite wound. Cokl Testimony.

9. Ms. Requena offered Ms. Cokl her phone number and Ms. Cokl took Millie to the emergency vet. Cokl Testimony. The vet report indicated a 6cm laceration on Millie's side which required stitches and medication including an antibiotic. Ex. D5-003.
10. The owners exchanged texts regarding the vet bills, which amounted to over \$900. Ex. D5. Ms. Requena offered to pay \$100 which she indicated was all she had at the time.
11. The parties do not agree on how to characterize the dogs' interaction. Ms. Requena believes the dogs were playing and the injury was an accident while they were engaged in play. Requena Testimony. Ms. Requena's characterization is based on the dogs not barking or showing signs of aggression toward each other, and she believed Kira was not charging Millie, but that they were playing chase. Ms. Requena was about two meters from the dogs and did not see Kira bite Millie. She indicated that she had never had previous issues with Kira's behavior at the dog park.
12. Ms. Cokl believes Millie was running away from Kira and Kira was "attempting to do a dominance type of thing" which resulted in a bite wound. Cokl Testimony. Ms. Cokl's characterization is based on her observation that the dogs did not greet each other by smelling, Kira immediately engaged Millie with contact, and Kira was running at Millie with her mouth open and closing. When Sgt. Eykel asked if Kira "opening and closing" her mouth was a biting or snapping motion, Ms. Cokl did not affirm the use of those terms and instead that she recalled Kira "putting her mouth against Millie and moving her mouth." Cokl Testimony.
13. Animal Services characterizes Kira's behavior as aggressive and reflecting "prey drive." Eykel Testimony. Sgt. Eykel said Kira was "snapping" and "biting" at Millie, but Ms. Cokl steered away from those terms when asked directly. *Id.* Sgt. Eykel surmised that this was a case of a dog "not reading another dog's body language." *Id.* She also concluded that the 6cm cut was "not something that would have been caused by play." *Id.*
14. As Sgt. Eykel has stated explicitly in the past, Animal Services tries not to get too involved in dog park cases as there is a certain amount of risk when taking dogs to a dog park. When asked why this dog park case rose to the level of something Animal Services chose to pursue, Sgt. Eykel indicated it was because of the "severity of the injury" and that there was "no aggression from Millie who was attempting to get away." Eykel Testimony.
15. Ms. Requena indicated that she understands the gravity of the situation and her appeal is not based on denial of the incident, but that she believes this was an accident and she wants the opportunity to help Kira.
16. Notably, both owners were very calm and respectful in what was clearly an uncomfortable and emotional hearing.

Conclusions of Law

17. The hearing examiner has jurisdiction pursuant to KCC 20.22.040.
18. Under a “preponderance of the evidence” standard, Animal Services bears the burden of proving that, more-likely-than-not, the facts as described by the department happened and establish a violation of the code. We do not grant substantial weight or otherwise accord deference to agency determinations. Exam. R. XV.F.3.
19. The appealed violation is the “Potentially Dangerous” designation of Kira under KCC 11.04.230.F. A "potentially dangerous animal" means any animal that when unprovoked, bites or inflicts injury on a human or domesticated animal. There is no claim by the appellant that Kira was provoked in any way.
20. A preponderance of the evidence supports the conclusion that Kira caused Millie’s injury. Whether the injury was a bite, or a scratch, or intentional or not, it seems clear that the laceration was caused by Kira. So we are stuck with affirming the department’s potentially dangerous designation.
21. However, based on the location of the incident, the lack of evidence establishing aggressive intent from Kira, and the severity of the injury, I do not find that the facts support imposing the restrictions associated with the designation. Modification of the restrictions and requirements for a potentially dangerous designation is only appropriate under limited circumstances but is warranted under the unique facts here.
22. This case is particularly troubling because of the location of the incident: an off-leash dog park where both owners brought their dogs to play – potentially aggressively – with other dogs. Dogs are going to play harder and interact differently at an off-leash dog park and, with that freedom, comes additional risk.
23. Animal Services testified to their general policy of avoiding involvement in most dog park complaints. There is sound logic in that policy, and I am sure it is difficult to know where to draw the line. Dog park interactions are very difficult to assess in terms of what is an accident during play versus what is an act of aggression that would warrant giving a 1-year-old dog essentially a life sentence to be muzzled every time they go outside.
24. Sgt. Eykel testified that issuance of the violation was justified in this case because of the severity of the injury to Millie and because Kira was the aggressor in the interaction. The evidence is spotty on both of those conclusions.
25. In prior off-leash dog park cases that have been appealed to the examiner, the facts involved both more significant injuries and overt aggression by one or more of the dogs involved. *Simon*: “picked the dog up in its mouth with such force as to break multiple ribs, cause wounds requiring a drain, and bruising to the lungs.”; *Russz*: “human was severely injured.”; *Kubistek*: video showed one dog was the “clear aggressor” in a fight causing injury and drainage tubes; *Gibson*: fighting dogs caused injury to a human; *Grounell & Calvert*: dog attack in entry area of park, injury to human trying to separate them.

26. I am not minimizing the fear that Ms. Cokl certainly felt in watching the events of that afternoon unfold and having to take Millie to receive medical treatment. But, objectively speaking, there is a significant difference between a 6 cm cut on a dog's side and an attack that causes broken ribs, drainage tubes, or an injury to a human.
27. There have also been a lot of assumptions made about Kira's "mens rea" or mind set, and whether she was playing or acting with an intent to harm. Maybe she was trying to dominate Millie and bit her intentionally. But I find it equally plausible that when Millie started running away from Ms. Cokl in a circular motion, Kira ran after her thinking they were having a great game of chase.
28. Sgt Eykel indicated that Ms. Cokl said Kira was "snapping" at Millie. But Ms. Cokl actually avoided using that term, instead rephrasing that Kira was putting her mouth against Millie and moving her mouth. Kira, being approximately 1 year old, give or take, when this happened, may have gotten over excited running next to Millie and unintentionally injured her. I do not think the evidence is persuasive that this was a "prey drive" situation as suggested by Sgt. Eykel.
29. What is clear, is that this is not the type of overt aggression we have seen in prior dog park cases. I find it very compelling that both owners indicated that Kira immediately moved away from Millie when she cried out. That indicates Kira was not out to attack or injure: it is more likely that she was out to play and took it too far. The evidence does not support a conclusion that Kira acted with aggression or intent to injure Millie as has certainly been the case with prior violations for behavior in off-leash dog parks.
30. As a result, while I am affirming the potentially dangerous designation, I will not require registration of Kira or the associated requirements, including muzzling, at this time. As Sgt. Eykel indicated, Kira was "not reading [Millie's] body language." Kira needs training to work on these skills and avoid situations like this from happening again. Ms. Requena indicated her willingness to take this step and I hope that she does, preferably before she takes Kira back to the dog park without a muzzle.
31. This decision still holds Ms. Requena and Kira accountable. Kira will have a "potentially dangerous" designation on her record. If there is another incident where Kira causes an injury, it will be a second offense which is a \$1000 penalty and will trigger all of the restrictions and requirements that come with the potentially dangerous designation.
32. I am also reducing the monetary penalty from \$500 to \$200 based on financial hardship and to facilitate Ms. Requena paying for Kira's training to make this second chance successful.

DECISION:

1. Animal Service's "Potentially Dangerous" designation is affirmed.
2. Ms. Requena is not required to register Kira or meet the potentially dangerous requirements under KCC 11.04.275.
3. Any subsequent "Potentially Dangerous" act by Kira will be considered a second offense and will trigger all of the penalties, requirements, and restrictions associated with that designation.
4. The monetary penalty is reduced from \$500 to \$200.
5. The appeal is otherwise DENIED.

ORDERED January 27, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal tail.

Devon Shannon
Hearing Examiner

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

King County Code 20.22.040 directs the Examiner to make the County's final decision for this type of case. This decision shall be final and conclusive unless appealed to superior court in accordance with Ch. 7.16 RCW. It is the responsibility of the party seeking to appeal the examiner's decision to determine and meet the legal requirements for filing an appeal.

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 15, 2026, HEARING IN THE APPEAL OF VALERIA
REQUENA, REGIONAL ANIMAL SERVICES OF KING COUNTY FILE NO.
V25017874-A25005447**

Devon Shannon was the Hearing Examiner in this matter. A verbatim recording of the hearing is available in the Hearing Examiner's Office.

The following exhibits were offered by Animal Services and entered into the record:

Exhibit no. D1	Regional Animal Services of King County staff report
Exhibit no. D2	RASKC investigation report no. A25-005447
Exhibit no. D3	Online Complaint form of November 21, 2025, incident by Alexandra Cokl, dated November 21, 2025
Exhibit no. D4	Photographs of Millie's injury
Exhibit no. D5	Vet Report
Exhibit no. D6	Notice of violation no. V25017874-A25005447, issued November 22, 2025
Exhibit no. D7	Potentially Dangerous Designation
Exhibit no. D8	Appeal, received November 23, 2025
Exhibit no. D9	Map of subject area

The following exhibits were offered by the appellant and entered into the record:

Exhibit no. A1	Letter, from Sandy Steiner
Exhibit no. A2	Statement, from Valeria Requena
Exhibit no. A3	Text
Exhibit no. A4	Park Usage
Exhibit no. A5	Rebuttal statement
Exhibit no. A6	Rebuttal Video
Exhibit no. A7	Rebuttal Video
Exhibit no. A8	Rebuttal Video

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

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VALERIA REQUENA
Animal Services Enforcement Appeal

I, Jessica Oscoy, certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that I transmitted the **REPORT AND DECISION** to those listed on the attached page as follows:

- EMAILED to all County staff listed as parties/interested persons and parties with e-mail addresses on record.
- placed with the United States Postal Service, through Quadient-Impress, with sufficient postage, as FIRST CLASS MAIL in an envelope addressed to the non-County employee parties/interested persons to addresses on record.

DATED January 27, 2026.



Jessica Oscoy
Administrator

Cokl, Aly
Hardcopy

Eykel, Chelsea
Regional Animal Services of King County

Requena, Valeria
Hardcopy