City Attorney Sarah O'Reilly -Evans has provided a great service to our Mayor and Board of Aldermen by presenting them with a report on ordinances regarding dangerous dogs from other cities that is easy to understand.

The increasing popularity of pit bulls among people who are either unwilling or incapable of taking adequate measures to protect others from their dogs is a ticking time bomb in our city.

It's becoming a familiar news report. Someone, often a child, gets maimed or killed by a pit bull and the people left picking up the pieces are forced to wonder how such a senseless tragedy could have ever been allowed to happen in the first place.

There's always the predictable statement from the owner describing what a little angel the dog had always been up until that point and the legions of pit bull fans arguing that we shouldn't judge the entire breed on the actions of one dog (or the countless documented incidents related to the breed for that matter).

Fortunately it hasn't happened yet in Yazoo County, but the odds are against us. It's not uncommon these days to see a kid practically being dragged around by a large pit bull by the leash he's holding. Here at The Herald we had problems for a while with a pit bull that sometimes got loose, usually still dragging the rope which had been tied around its neck. One day I heard some awful growling outside my office and realized it was the dog growling at my wife as she entered the front of the building.

That dog is no longer a problem for us, but it scares me to think of what could have happened.

Our city leaders have been debating this issue for some time, but have failed to take any action. Ward 4 Alderman Aubry Brent Jr. seems to have the best understanding of the potential threat and has kept the issue alive.

This week O'Reilly-Evans submitted summaries of the ordinances from Biloxi, Jackson, Pearl, Pascagoula and Pearl. Jackson's ordinance will hopefully be revisited as it has recently been the site of a child killed by a pit bull that was inadequately secured and escaped from a neighbor's property.

The ordinances present a wide variety of approaches ranging from an outright ban of pit bulls and other breeds regarded as dangerous in Clinton to Jackson's which uses observed behavior to determine if a dog is potentially dangerous.

After reviewing the summaries of all of these ordinances, I believe Yazoo officials should consider modeling our new ordinance after Pearl's. It addresses many issues that I have raised in this space before such as setting guidelines for safe housing and requiring owners to have

liability insurance.
Pearl's ordinance doesn't prohibit people from owning pit bulls, but it does force them to be responsible owners.
Owners must have a 100 square foot pen enclosure with a concrete floor covering the entire area, chain link fence a minimum of 6 feet in height, a roof covering the enclosure to prevent escape and the enclosure must be located in a fenced backyard.
Owners must also have a liability policy of $200,000 and a letter from insurance provider indicating that it has knowledge of the dog's presence at the address and that the insurance is in effect and covers injuries to persons or property caused by the dog.
All those regulations may sound excessive to some, but in my opinion it's a small price to pay to protect the rest of us from irresponsible dog owners.