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Charges dropped against Durham cop who removed kitten from drug user's home

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A Durham police officer who was charged after removing a kitten from a suspected drug user's home last year saw her charges dropped today after months of defending her decision.

Durham Regional Police Const. Beth Richardson was all smiles Tuesday as she cuddled Tia, a tabby cat she spotted "cowering under a table" in the home of a woman she was called to check on in January of 2016.

Richardson believed the kitten was not being properly cared for by the homeowner who, at the time, "had been using drugs for several days," a hearing notice read.

PHOTOS



Const. Beth Richardson holds Tia, who was just a kitten when she took her from a suspect drug user's home in January of 2016.



Const. Beth Richardson greets Tia with her new owner after the charges against her were dropped.

Fearing the kitten was suffering from malnutrition, the long-time officer [landed herself in hot water](#) when she ultimately decided to take the pet from the home without the owner's permission and bring it to a veterinarian.

Soon after, the kitten's then-owners called Durham Regional Police demanding the cat be returned. The owners initially expressed interest in pressing charges against Richardson but withdrew the request after the small animal was returned to them the same night.

Despite this, Richardson was scrutinized by the force for not notifying her supervisors nor documenting the incident.

During the proceedings, animal law group Animal Justice intervened and collaborated with the prosecution on an agreed statement of facts that no longer upheld the "removal of an animal in distress" as discreditable conduct.

[The charges were ultimately reduced](#) but still left Richardson in breach of several codes of conduct.

All that came to an end Tuesday, when DRPS decided to withdraw the charges against Richardson citing that she was "genuinely concerned about the welfare of an animal in distress."

"Const. Richardson recognizes that she should have notified her supervisor of her decision to remove the kitten and documented this decision," a joint statement provided by Richardson's lawyer Joseph Markson reads.

"Const. Richardson has offered and agreed to promote animal welfare in the community. Both the service and Const. Richardsdon are pleased that this positive outcome could be reached."

Markson said he and Richardson are also pleased with the results.

"We're very happy to see this matter come to an end," he told CTV News Toronto.

"The Durham Regional Police Service withdrew the charge against Beth and a resolution was forged which I think promotes the interests of animal welfare in Durham Region and elsewhere so we're very, very pleased."

Markson said the proceedings have been "an ordeal" for Richardson but all parties are pleased they could finish "on a good note."

And the happy ending wouldn't be complete without a visit from Tia.

The cat has since been adopted by new owners who showed up to surprise Richardson after she received the good news about the charges.

"We couldn't be more grateful to the owner of Tia for bringing her today for everyone to see," Markson said. "She's been in great health. The cat came back to visit Beth, which is just great news."

"Aw, she's purring," Richardson said as she held Tia close to her Tuesday.

"She doesn't purr very often either," Tia's new owner said. "It's too bad you're allergic to cats because she sure loves you."

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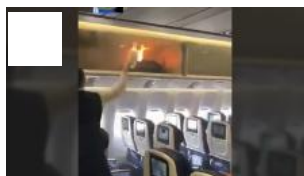


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