

The Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals

Meeting Minutes – November 18, 2019

Call to Order: Roll Call

- Regular meeting of the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals was called to order at 1:00 pm in Room 203 of the Legislative Office Building (LOB) by Acting Chair, Dr. Jeri Zezula.

Members Present

- Julia Seeley – National Humane Organization & Secretary
- Heather Faria, NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Representative John O'Connor (R-Derry) – NH House of Representatives
- Dr. Steven Crawford, State Veterinarian
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinary Technician Association
- Kristi Atherton – NH Farm Bureau Federation
- Jane Barlow Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Tom Seymour – General Public
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – General Public
- Jennifer Eber – General Public

Members Absent

- Senator Regina Birdsell (R-Hampstead) – NH State Senate
- Patricia Morris, Chairperson & Equine Association
- Chief Dean Rondeau, NH Association of Chiefs of Police
- Sheriff Mike Moyer – NH Sheriff's Association
- George Cook – NH Musher's Association & Dog Owners of the Granite State
- Sheila Johannsen, ACO Association of NH
- Steven Sprowl – Humane Cruelty Investigator
- Gary Lambert – NH Sportsmen
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Marga Coulp – General Public
- Tom DeRosa – General Public

Public Present

- None

Review and Approval of October Minutes

- Dr. Crawford moved to approve the minutes from the October 21 meeting. Representative O'Connor seconded. All approved.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to upload October 2019 minutes to Commission website.

Update Commission Contact Information

- Trish is in the process of updating the Commission's membership contact information.
- **Next Steps:** See Commission roster enclosed. Members to notify Trish and Jeri if updates are needed.

New Cruelty Cases/Current News

- The US House and Senate passed the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act (H.R. 724, S. 479). See update on the Commission website here:
<https://www.nh.gov/humane/documents/20191106-animal-cruelty-federal-felony.pdf>

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- Dr. Crawford noted that he is working with police on a case that involves multiple species of animals, including cows, goats, and pigs.
- **Next Steps:** Members to send cruelty cases to Trish and Jeri for discussion at future meetings.

2020 LSR's and Those Retained in 2019

- As of November 22, there are 607 House bills and 193 Senate bills filed for 2020. You can search for all 2020 LSR's here: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/lsr_search/default.aspx
- The House Environment and Agriculture Committee voted to pass three 2019 retained bills. The next step is for the full House to vote on the bills once they convene for the 2020 session on January 8. All bills were placed on the consent calendar.
 - HB 371 - Adding cats to the definition of commercial kennel. (14-4)
 - Amended bill:
http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billtext.aspx?sy=2019&txtFormat=amend&id=2019-2744H
 - Bill revised to amend the pet vendor definition that passed in HB 4 by increasing the threshold of dogs and cats that requires licensing by the Department of Agriculture. Specifically, the number of dogs was increased from 25 to 35 and cats from 25 to 50.
 - HB 376 - Establishing a commission to study best practices for companion animal groomers. (17-1)
 - Amended bill:
http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billtext.aspx?sy=2019&txtFormat=amend&id=2019-2787H
 - Bill revised to change the study commission to a study committee.
 - HB 501 - Establishing a cost of care fund to assist municipalities caring for animals during animal cruelty cases. (18-0)
 - Amended bill:
http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billtext.aspx?sy=2019&txtFormat=amend&id=2019-2856H
 - Bill revised to use fees from registration of commercial animal food sellers to fund the new cost of care program that passed in HB 4 and establishes a cap of \$2,000,000 for funds that come from this source.
 - Representative O'Connor is continuing to work to determine if donations to the cost of care fund will be tax deductible. Jeri sent an email to the IRS as well.
- Language for 2020 bills and committee assignments will be made available online in December. At this time, the Commission will identify which bills to track and will vote to establish a Commission position.
- **Next Steps:** Commission to vote on the amended versions of HB 371, HB 376, and HB 501 at the next meeting on December 16. Julia to distribute 2020 bill language when available.

Suggested Judicial Rules

- Jennifer circulated via email revised judicial rule language to implement HB 459 that passed this year. Jennifer noted that George Cook had requested that co-ownership language be added. After further discussion, George and Jennifer agreed to not include the language to keep the rules simpler and increase the chances that they will be executed, and because the language is in the statute.
- Dr. Crawford moved to approve the revised proposed judicial rules. Tom seconded. All approved.
- **Next Steps:** Jennifer to reach out to Trish to deliver the language to the Judicial Rules Committee.

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Survey of Towns Re: Animal Control/Law Enforcement and the Reporting of Cruelty and Other Animal Related Calls

- As a follow up to last month's meeting and Jeri's email, the Commission discussed a potential initiative to collect data on how towns respond to and track animal-related calls. Jeri noted that while it's likely we would not receive a response from every town, building an email list to reach all the towns could provide an avenue through which the Commission can disseminate information, such as our manual and changes to the law. Sheila has a list of all the animal control officers that are members of the ACO Association of NH, and we could also reach out to government officials and police departments. We will also need to note which dispatch covers multiple towns. Julia noted that one of the questions that could be asked is what software, if any, is used to track animal-related calls and cases.
- Jennifer said that she and Heather had inquired about outreach to police chiefs via the NH Association of Chiefs of Police to collect data when they worked on the most recent Report to the Governor Animal-Cruelty Related Criminal Activity in NH. According to Chief Rondeau and the President of the Association, it would not be productive to go town to town since the response would be minimal. Heather added that because law enforcement follows chain of command, the request for data requires a top-down approach. Ultimately, to develop the most comprehensive Governor Reports, all reporting by law enforcement and animal control must be mandatory and consistent, but the Commission does not have the authority to implement the necessary reporting structure.
- Heather and Jennifer recommended that Trish schedule a meeting with the Governor's Office to review the Report and their recommendations before we proceed with additional research. The Commission should also prioritize updating the manual. Representative O'Connor noted that if Trish is not able to have this meeting, she can assign someone else to take her place.
- **Next Steps:** Jennifer to reach out to Trish about scheduling a meeting with the Governor's Office to review the Animal Cruelty Report and discuss implementation of our recommendations.

Commission Manual Updates: Proposal for Moving Forward

- As a follow up to last month's meeting, Jeri explained that the updates that are needed for the manual are more than just grammar. In order to meet the goal deadline of end of December, Jeri proposed an ad hoc committee of 5-6 people who are comfortable with word editing software to do the manual revisions. Once complete, the full Commission would have the opportunity to approve the changes.
- Jeri said that the ad hoc committee consists of: Tom Seymour, George Cook, Jennifer Eber, and Jeri. Jeri is also looking for a law enforcement representative and, if possible, a representative from the Attorney General's Office. Even if we can't get a rep from the AG's office to be a part of the committee, we will send them the revised manual for their approval.
- Representative O'Connor made a motion to approve the establishment of an ad hoc committee to revise the manual. Tom seconded. All in favor.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to reach out to Trish about contacting the AG's office and coordinate manual revisions with the ad hoc committee.

Subcommittee Updates

- Jeri recommends we take a fresh look at the Commission's subcommittees. We currently have the following subcommittees: Training/Fundraising, Cruelty Cases, and Legislation.
- We discussed having the Fundraising Subcommittee focus on donations to the new Cost of Care Fund, once rules have been drafted, and the Cruelty Cases Subcommittee to be re-named to reflect its focus on the biannual report, which is part of the Commission charter. For Legislation, Julia plans to work with Trish to establish a bill tracking system for 2020 while all members will continue to vote for each bill. Representative O'Connor noted that the Department of Environmental Services tracks legislation online.

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- Jeri proposed we create a PR/Communication Subcommittee to publicize Commission news, such as manual updates, the cost of care fund, the biannual report, and the passage of legislation.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to reach out to Trish about updates to the subcommittees.

New Business - Commission Website

- Jeri requested feedback from the Commission regarding the Commission's website: <https://www.nh.gov/humane/index.htm>
- Jeri is currently managing the site, but to make changes she must submit requests to two women who oversee NH.gov. Since the process is a bit cumbersome, Jeri limits her edits to uploading the minutes reports and adding articles to the "In the News" section. She is waiting to hear back from Trish on the updated list of members.
- Jeri said she hasn't updated the website to include the Governor's Report because she needs the final PDF with Trish's executive summary. The Commission voted to approve the report in March and Trish gave the final copy to the Governor's Office. Once the website is updated, Jeri can send a link to the Commission to promote it.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to contact Trish about the Governor's Report and will CC Heather and Jennifer (note, this is a change in direction to what was noted previously about Jennifer reaching out to Trish about the report). Jeri will initiate the conversation, so they are all on the same chain.
- Jeri also manages a separate Resources website that is linked to the Commission Manual that she pays to host on a Go Daddy server: www.neacha.org/resources A link to this resources page can be found here (see page 3): <https://www.nh.gov/humane/documents/animal-cruelty-manual.pdf>
- These resources used to be housed on the UNH server for NEACHA but are now held by Jeri on another server. They include information on investigating animal cruelty, legislative updates, and various educational materials Jeri has found through her work teaching police academy classes. Jeri recommends not including the resources on the main Commission website because they are too technical for most audiences. Jeri said we could change the URL name – she only kept it as is, and continued updating the site, because it's in the manual.
- **Next Steps:** Commission to revisit website conservation when Trish returns to confirm if this is the direction we want to continue since we have an opportunity to change course with the manual update.

The next regular meeting of the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals will be on Monday, December 16 at 1:00 pm in the Legislative Office Building (LOB) – Room 206.

Meeting adjourned at 2:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Julia Seeley, Secretary