

The Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals

Meeting Minutes – October 19, 2020

Call to Order: Roll Call

- Regular meeting of the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals was called to order at 1:03 pm via Zoom by Acting Co-Chairs, Jeri Zezula and Jennifer Eber.

Members Present

- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- George Cook – NH Musher's Association & Dog Owners of the Granite State
- Tom DeRosa – General Public
- Jennifer Eber – General Public
- Heather Faria, NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Sheila Johannsen, Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Gary Lambert – NH Sportsmen
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinary Technician Association
- Representative John O'Connor (R-Derry) – NH House of Representatives
- Jane Barlow Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Julia Seeley – Secretary, National Humane Organization
- Tom Seymour – General Public
- Jeri Zezula – General Public

Members Absent

- Kristi Atherton – NH Farm Bureau Federation
- Senator Regina Birdsell (R-Hampstead) – NH State Senate
- Marga Culp – General Public
- Steven Crawford, State Veterinarian
- Patricia Morris, Equine Associations
- Sheriff Mike Moyer – NH Sheriff's Association
- Chief Dean Rondeau, NH Police Chiefs Association
- Steven Sprowl – Humane Cruelty Investigator

Public Present

- None

Communication with the Governor's Office/Trish

- Jennifer said Trish is stepping down as Chair, and she and Jeri will be acting as Co-Chairs until a new Chair is appointed. The hope is that Trish will continue attending meetings as a voting member representing Equine Associations.
- Trish has been having trouble connecting with the Governor's Office. Our primary contact, D.J. Bettencourt, may no longer be correct. Tom DeRosa suggested reaching out to Jonathan Melanson.
- **Next Steps:** Jennifer to include Tom on an email to Trish.

Review and Approval of February Minutes

- Jennifer noted two typos: the animal cruelty statute is 644:8 and Fay's last name is spelling incorrectly.
- George moved to approve the minutes from the February 24 meeting. Tom seconded. All approved.
- **Next Steps:** Julia to fix errors and formatting, then send to Jeri to upload to the Commission website.

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Recap/Follow Up from Last Meeting

2020 Recap to Date

- Jeri and Jennifer summarized the Commission's work since the last meeting in February 2020.
 - During the session, a significant amount of time was spent on legislation, which included voting and sending positions and testimony to committees.
 - Members continued to work on the Manual.
 - There were some interesting follow ups on cruelty cases. Still waiting for Supreme Court ruling for Fay.
 - Jennifer and Heather's 2016-2017 Report was sent to the Governor's Office. No feedback has been provided. Jennifer noted that brainstorming is needed before the next report is made to ensure there is traction and action since it requires a lot of time to produce.
 - Trish did not do a final Chair report this year. It is traditionally done before the summer break and then it starts up again in the Fall.

Commission Manual Update

- Jeri provided an update on the status of the Manual revisions. One outstanding item is getting clarification on whether a veterinarian is required to seize livestock (see page 11 at the bottom of the page in the latest version of manual).
 - Heather said she believed it was generally understood that livestock seizures required veterinary involvement. Dr. Crawford presumed a veterinarian was always required and needed to be physically present, though he sometimes sends a vet tech out instead.
 - Jen asked why this requirement is needed for livestock vs. other domestic animals. Jeri said that it's due to police officers not having the knowledge of when veterinary attention is needed and cannot make a good judgement. There are also many more species.
 - Commission agreed that the Manual needs to reflect current law, not interpretation of the law.
 - It was suggested that livestock seizure cases should be looked into for the 2018-2019 Report.
 - Heather suggested that this section be flagged for the AG's Office to review. Jeri suggested we consider a law change if we find that what is happening in practice does not match current law.
- Jeri asked if there were any updates on the 14-day status hearing requirement. Heather said there are cases in progress but cannot speak to where they are in the court process. It sounds like the courts are moving slowly, and she doesn't believe there are large numbers of animals being held.
- Dr. Crawford noted that "humane society" and "humane officer" is not defined in current law. Humane investigators in the state are not sworn in officers. Sheriffs used to be able to appoint humane officers in their county. Heather noted the Manual needs to quote current law.
- Jeri said she received the citation for the quote on mental incompetence found on page 61 at the bottom of the page in the latest version of the manual. She asked the Commission if the quote was necessary, and some members said they didn't see the purpose of it.
- Jeri noted the Manual has been updated to include a glossary.
- Jennifer suggested we try to get the Manual put on the AG's website and reach out to the press.
- **Next Steps:** Commission members to send final feedback on the Manual to Jeri by November 1. Then Jeri will put the revisions in the final document and flag the areas that need confirmation by the AG's Office. Jeri and Jennifer will then reach out to Gordon MacDonald and Jane Young to secure an assigned contact and determine a process for review of the Manual.

New Cruelty Cases/Current News

- No updates, including the Fay case.

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- Julia asked if the Commission website can be updated to include current animal cruelty statutes since both documents are a few years old:
 - Under Reports, meeting minutes, etc.:
 - NH Animal Cruelty Statutes: <https://www.nh.gov/humane/documents/statutes.pdf>
 - 2018 NH Animal Related Laws Compiled by NHSPCA: <https://www.nh.gov/humane/documents/2018-animal-rsas.pdf>
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to look into updating both documents.

2020 Legislation

- House Bill 501 passed as part of omnibus bill HB 1245. The cost of care fund appropriation started in July 2020 and there is a \$2M cap. The DAMF will be developing administration rules. The bill also establishes a commission to study the registration of animal feed that is sold online – there is concern that not all the food is being registered. Rep. O'Connor will be on the Commission.
- See the final law here (page 44, starting on line 27): http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billText.aspx?sy=2020&id=1652&txtFormat=pdf&v=current

New Business

Review Protocol for Commission Testimony/Legislation

- Jeri reviewed the current Legislative Protocol.
- Jeri said she wants the Commission to be more proactive and public with its positions on legislation. She suggested we try to organize meetings quickly to effectively respond to the legislative process. Rep. O'Connor said it's better to have a person from the Commission attend hearings and provide testimony.
- Heather asked when we should get involved – the volume of bills makes it challenging. Jennifer suggested we only focus on a select number of bills that we take a position on and provide testimony.
- Jennifer suggested we put our positions of bills on the Commission website and issue press releases.
- **Next Steps:** Commission members to review the Legislative Protocol by the next meeting and provide feedback if anything needs to change due to COVID.

Commission Roster Changes

- Jeri sent an updated roster for internal purposes – our email addresses are not on the public list. She will issue a new version to fix some typos and put in Excel.
- Trish is trying to reach the Governor's Office to communicate vacancies:
 - Trish stepped down as Chair
 - Kristi resigned from the NH Farm Bureau
 - UNH Coop is still vacant
 - Rep. O'Connor has retired (Speaker of the House will appoint new member)
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to send an updated roster and will work with Jennifer and Trish to determine how the vacancies will be addressed.

Tracking Spreadsheet/Voting Grid

- Commission agreed that the 2020 legislative grid was a good format. Tom DeRosa agreed to keep the grid updated during the 2021 session.

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New Animal Cruelty LSRs

- Julia noted there are currently no animal-related 2021 LSRs on the NH General Court website. The next filing period begins after the election.
- **Next Steps:** Julia to monitor LSRs and provide a spreadsheet for the Commission.

Report to Governor for 2018/2019

- Jennifer and Heather said they would like feedback from the Governor's Office on the first report before proceeding with the next one. Putting it together takes a significant amount of time, and they need to know what goals and objectives need to be met. The purpose of this document needs to be established.
- Heather asked how this report is different than what is being gathered by the FBI, especially since New Hampshire is a NIBRS state. Several members noted that our report provides more information since we can track cases that begin with animal control and if/how they are resolved. On the other hand, not all police report animal cruelty data and most animal control officers don't enter their data in any system.
- Overall, we need better reporting of animal cruelty cases across the board, which was a recommendation from the last Report.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri and Jennifer to work with Trish to get feedback from the Governor's Office.

NH Crime Statistics Website

- Jeri shared a link to show the relationship between animal cruelty and other crimes in New Hampshire: <https://crimestats.dos.nh.gov/> She noted there were more crimes in 2018 vs. 2019, more towns are reporting, and there is an issue nationally that more data is needed.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to look further into two cases – 1x organized crime/animal fighting and 1x bestiality – to see if they were prosecuted.

Items from Members

- Julia invited members to participate in a free HSUS webinar on compassion fatigue and resilience. Two session options have been scheduled:
 - Monday, November 9 from 1:00-3:00 pm EST
https://humanesociety.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ftKcueSRS8iqN1jpRKYmHA
 - Thursday, November 12 from 6:00-8:00 pm EST
https://humanesociety.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3eJMWuISTy6nyFIAvmjUg
- Rep. O'Connor noted that we need to contact Heather Goley to get the Commission meetings put in the legislative calendar with the Zoom meeting invite. Having the Zoom invite be public shouldn't be an issue since the meeting host can regulate who can speak. Tom DeRosa noted that there is a way to issue public and private links so only approved members of the public can speak during the meeting.
- **Next Steps:** Jennifer and Tom to coordinate on setting up Zoom links for future meetings, and Jeri and Jennifer to reach out to Heather Goley about adding Commission meetings to the legislative calendar.

Fall Schedule/Zoom

- Commission agreed that the final 2020 meetings will be held via Zoom on Monday, November 16 and Monday, December 14 at 1:00 pm.

Rep. O'Connor moved to adjourn the meeting. Sheila seconded. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Julia Seeley, Secretary