

# The Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals

## Meeting Minutes – December 14, 2020

### Call to Order: Roll Call

- Regular meeting of the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals was called to order at 1:11 pm via Zoom by Acting Co-Chairs, Jeri Zezula and Jennifer Eber.

**NOTE:** Senator Birdsell said the 2021 legislature will increase the number of meetings that are held during the week. Specifically, the Senate will meet Monday-Thursday and the House will meet five days a week. For now, the Commission will continue to meet on Mondays at 1:00 pm.

**NOTE:** During our next meeting on Monday, January 11 at 1:00 pm via Zoom, we will be voting on 2021 legislation. Members must attend the meeting (no proxies) to vote.

### Members Present

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau
- Senator Regina Birdsell (R-Hampstead) – NH Senator
- George Cook – Dog Owners of the Granite State/NH Musers
- Dr. Stephen Crawford – State Veterinarian
- Tom DeRosa – General Public
- Jennifer Eber – General Public
- Heather Faria – NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Gary Lambert – NH Sportsmen
- Sheriff Mike Moyer – NH Sheriff's Association
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinary Technician Association
- Julia Seeley – Secretary, National Humane Organization
- Tom Seymour – General Public
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – General Public

### Members Absent

- Jane Barlow Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Marga Coulp – General Public
- Sheila Johannsen – Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Patricia Morris – Equine Associations
- Representative John O'Connor (R-Derry) – NH Representative
- Chief Dean Rondeau – NH Police Chief's Association
- Steven Sprowl – Humane Cruelty Investigator

### Public Present

- None

### Review and Approval of October Minutes

- Senator Birdsell moved to approve the minutes from the November 16 meeting. Sheriff Moyer seconded. All approved.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to upload minutes to the Commission website.

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### 2021 LSR's Review

- Commission reviewed the chart of 2021 Legislative Service Requests and selected which bills to track/vote on for next year. There were no drafts of bills available online.
- **Next Steps:** Julia to send an updated 2021 LSR chart with only the bills selected by the Commission per today's meeting. Julia will send an updated chart with links to the draft language so members can review the bills prior to voting at our next meeting. Tom DeRosa will create a bill tracking chart similar to what was created last year.

### Commission Vacancies

- Jen and Jeri are the new Commission Co-Chairs. Thank you for taking on this leadership role!
- There are no updates on filling the UNH Co-Op seat, but the Governor's Office has reached out asking for a new representative.
- Sheriff Moyer announced he is retiring at the end of the year and Sheriff Bill Wright, also from Belknap, will be filling his seat. Congratulations and thank you for your contributions to the Commission!
- Senator Birdsell said she is not sure if she is coming back next year but will know by January 6. She is not sure if the Deputy Speaker will appoint a new Commission member, if Rep Richard Hinch already appointed someone, or if they will wait until a new Speaker is voted in on January 6.
- **Next Steps:** Senator Birdsell to update Jeri and Jen if she has any news prior to our next meeting,

### DOJ Reporting of Animal Cruelty Cases

- Jen said Jonathan is working with the DOJ on improving the system for obtaining cruelty case data.
- **Next Steps:** Jen will provide an update at our next meeting.

### Input on 14-day period for status hearing under RSA 644:8

- Jen asked members if they had updates to share regarding whether or not status hearings are being scheduled. Heather said she will get details to Jen. Dr. Crawford said he doesn't have an update.
- **Next Steps:** Members to contact Jen if status hearings are not being scheduled so she can follow up with the Judicial Rules Committee if need be.

### Commission Manual Update

- Jeri said she heard back from our OAG liaison, who went through the draft one time and made corrections. The liaison is going back to make additional changes and answer questions.
- **Next Steps:** Jeri to provide an update at our next meeting.

### New Cruelty Cases

- On December 2, the NH Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's decision relative to the State of NH v. Christina Fay: <https://www.courts.state.nh.us/supreme/opinions/2020/2020067Fay.pdf>
- Sheriff Moyer brought up a recent case in which a man was charged with felony animal cruelty and domestic assault: <https://whdh.com/news/nh-man-accused-of-killing-girlfriends-cat/>
  - Sheriff Moyer said the couple had a fight, then he smothered the cat to death. He admitted what he did to police and showed them the cat. He believes it's a felony animal cruelty charge since he is getting arraigned in Superior Court but will look into it.
- Members had a discussion about how charges for animal cruelty cases are too lenient far too often, assuming charges are brought at all. In New Hampshire, potential factors include how the animal cruelty statute is written, not enough evidence available to prosecutors, and an overall sense that other

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crimes/cases need to be a priority. Sheriff Moyer believes that our country's focus on criminal justice reform, which includes bail reform and fewer prisons, will make this situation even worse.

- We agreed that we want to continue this discussion and develop recommendations to address the significant discrepancies between the number of cases and charges for animal cruelty.
- **Next Steps:** Members to send Jeri and Jen information about animal cruelty cases that can be discussed at the next meeting. Sheriff Moyer to provide an update on the cat killing case.

### Subcommittees

- Due to attendance, we did not have subcommittee breakout sessions. Moving forward, we will have subcommittee breakout sessions and time to share subcommittee discussions during these meetings.
- Jen and Jeri noted they are able to attend subcommittee meetings as needed, and members may participate in subcommittees in addition to their own to provide expertise.
- Jen confirmed that the data/laws subcommittee will be responsible for gathering data and writing the report. Jeri said it's okay for the subcommittee to start collecting data and hold off on writing the report until we receive feedback from the Governor's Office.
- **Next Steps:** Jozi, Julia, Wendy, Dr. Crawford, and Senator Birdsell are to reach out to their subcommittee team and schedule a time to meet before the January 11 meeting. Each subcommittee is tasked with selecting a chair and providing an outline of their goals. Members can also reach out to Jen and Jeri if they want to be assigned to a different committee.

### Executive Order

- Jen suggested we revisit the Executive Order with regards to adding co-chairs, covering wildlife issues, making it more user friendly, and adding specifics for the biannual report.
- **Next Steps:** Members to prepare feedback on changes to the Executive Order for our next meeting.

Senator Birdsell moved to adjourn the meeting. George seconded. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 2:36 pm.

The next meeting is on Monday, January 11 at 1:00 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted by Julia Seeley, Secretary