

NH Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals

Meeting Minutes

September 20, 2021

Call to Order

- The regular meeting of the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals was called to order at 1:00 pm by Co-Chairs, Dr. Jeri Zezula and Jennifer Eber.

Roll Call:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Marga Coulp – General Public
- Dr. Stephen Crawford – State Veterinarian
- Jennifer Eber – Co-Chair, General Public
- Sheila Johannsen – Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Gary Lambert – NH Sportsmen
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinary Technician Association
- Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Tom Seymour – General Public
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau
- Jeb Bradley – (R-Wolfeboro) NH State Senator
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Barbara Comtois – (R-Center Barnstead) NH State Representative
- George Cook – Dog Owners of the Granite State & NH Musers
- Tom DeRosa – General Public
- Kurt Ehrenberg – National Humane Organization
- Elaina Enzien – UNH Co-Op Extension
- Heather Faria – NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Patricia Morris – Equine Associations
- Dean Rondeau – NH Police Chief's Association
- Steven Sprowl – Humane Cruelty Investigator
- William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

PUBLIC PRESENT:

- BJ Wahl – Twin State Animal Liberation
- Bob Switzer – Self
- Kristina Snyder – Self

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- July 19th meeting minutes approved by unanimous vote.
- Dr. Crawford made motion to accept the minutes, Tom Seymour seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Next Steps:** Dr. Zezula to upload minutes to the Commission website.

Old Business

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE:

- Jennifer Eber informed the Committee that discussions with Geoff Ward regarding data collection yielded three key points; (1) Department of Justice will continue to work with us to see if we can collect more animal cruelty data;(2) Opportunities in December or February to present at bi-monthly meetings of County Attorneys , and (3) explore creating a position at DOJ for an

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attorney that addresses only animal cruelty cases. The third point is modeled on the civil rights cases where an attorney was hired to pursue such cases and collect data on hate crimes. The number of civil rights cases brought by DOJ increased from 0 to 4 in the 2 years that the attorney was hired and the attorney has facilitated memos on law enforcement designating such cases as hate crimes and making the proper reporting of such crimes. Currently all cases for animal cruelty are handled at the local level or county attorney level. Dr. Crawford added that years ago, there was a concept pursued of having state police officer in each of the 5 barracks be designated as the animal cruelty law enforcement officer but that it never happened. It was discussed that Delaware actually as a state department dedicated to animal cruelty cases. There was a general discussion that centralized resources on prosecution may help facilitate and increase the number of animal cruelty cases that are reported and prosecuted.

Dr. Zezula referenced the idea of using a task force, but she noted this does not readily fit within current municipal structure making a designated attorney more ideal. This could improve data collection & tracking and assist County Attorneys, when needed. County Attorneys often have few resources with an overwhelming amount of work to process.

GOVERNOR'S FEEDBACK:

- Jennifer Eber advised that feedback on the report submission from the Governor's Office has been delayed due to the Governor's recent hospitalization, but that she will continue to pursue and hopefully have prior to the next meeting

POISONING:

- Dr. Zezula and Jennifer Eber are working with NH State Representative Sullivan to revise existing law regarding the addition of poisoning. A handout was emailed to Committee members detailing the suggested revision. (*Reference attached Exhibit A – "Poisoning 3".*)

New Business

MEETING FORMAT:

- Jennifer Eber led a group discussion regarding the current meeting format and location. Dr. Crawford noted that, despite the cessation of fully remote meetings, options are available via NH RSA. Specifically, members may remotely participate in meetings provided (1) a quorum is physically present at the meeting place and (2) all participants, including guests, can hear and speak with those present and remote, and (3) all voting must be conducted by roll call. State Department of Safety may be able to provide equipment in order to hold hybrid meetings. As for the current format and location, Committee members expressed appreciation for the available free parking spaces and ease of access.
- **Next Steps:** Jennifer Eber to verify remote meeting regulations through the Governor's Office and verify Department of Safety has the equipment to permit remote meetings.

COMMITTEE INITIATIVES:

- Jennifer Eber opened a discussion on Committee Initiatives. She has hopes to identify legislation and a legislator to assist the Commission in the pursuit of the top 2 initiatives. She indicated initiatives #3, #9, and possibly #8 rose to the top after last month's discussions. (*Reference attached Exhibit B – Discussions on Initiatives to Pursue.*) Dr. Zezula suggested creating committees to research the topics where we are not charged with generating a full-blown report this year. George Cook, Kurt Ehrenberg, and Dr. Zezula are already looking into the topic of starvation. It would be helpful to follow a similar approach that was used for the

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poisoning amendments (see above). Gary Lambert asked if there is a list of like-minded legislators. Dr. Barlow-Roy suggested working through the legislators assigned to this commission. Jennifer Eber and Dr. Zezula mentioned that initiative #8 is morphing into the inclusion of a designated attorney at Department of Justice for animal abuse & neglect.

- **Next Steps:** Homework for the Commission... give some thought to which initiatives we should work through or what initiatives should be added.

CRUELTY CASES:

- July 8th Franklin Police Department ACO brought a dog to the Franklin Animal Shelter that had a long-matted coat preventing the dog from eating and inhibiting its ability to walk. On July 16th the ACO brought in another dog from the same owner that, upon review by the Shelter's veterinarian of record, had a broken spine that had healed on its own that prevented the dog from being able to walk normally. The Police Department Prosecutor has advised that charges are pending. The defendant requested legal representation August 2nd and has yet to have someone assigned. A status hearing has yet to occur. Both dogs remain in the custody of the Franklin Animal Shelter.
- **Next Steps:** Tom Seymour to obtain docket number for Jennifer Eber.

PROSECUTORS WORKSHOP:

- HSUS conducted running a webinar related to the link and domestic violence a while back. Kurt Ehrenberg will host a follow-up with Animal Crimes and Fundamentals as the subject matter. The webinar is intended for ACOs, Police Officers, Humane Investigators, County Attorneys, etc. scheduled for Wednesday, Sep 22, 2021, from 1pm to 3pm. Four speakers will present including an Attorney from MA, Dr. Zezula, and two Stratford County attorneys.
- **Next Step:** Anyone interested in attending the webinar should contact Dr. Zezula for the webinar link.

COST OF CARE REQUESTS - UPDATE:

- Dr. Zezula asked Dr. Crawford about the status of the newly created Cost of Care Program. Dr. Crawford reports he was told it would require a NH RSA 91-A (Right-to-Know) request for details. One application was received for the July application period. Dr. Crawford felt the first submission was not as smooth as it could have been, but expects it will improve over time with more applications. Dr. Zezula thought more knowledge of the program's effectiveness would help the commission see how well the procedure is working. Jennifer Eber asked if we could advertise that the program exists and its intent; more so than is already seen on our website. Dr. Crawford thought we could. There are four review periods – July 1-10, October 1-10, January 1-10, and April 1-10. Dr. Crawford said he hopes the review of applications would be complete within one month's time. Jennifer Eber thought we should make request the 91-A in November to include July thru YTD.

SUBCOMMITTEE RESTRUCTURING:

- Jennifer Eber inquired about establishing sub-committees for this 2021-2022 session. Dr. Barlow-Roy will remain on Legislative Committee. Timing is such that our next meeting should involve discussion on legislation that was tabled. Dr. Barlow-Roy stated she will not be Chair of the sub-committee, but will still update the Commission as info becomes available via email.
- Dependent upon Governor's feedback, sub-committees will be established and defined. At this time, it is expected that the previous sub-committees responsible for Data Collection, Law

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Enforcement/Website Review, and Legislative Actions would be retained. The remaining two sub-committees would be open pending the Governor's feedback.

Member/Guest Comments/Questions

- Kristina Snyder appeared before the Committee previously regarding pig scrambles held at county fairs. She expressed her frustrated that the events still take place. She feels strongly the event constitutes animal cruelty and abuse. She said she went through proper channels to register complaints, but felt increasingly frustrated due to lack of actions. Piglets were dropped, kept in bags in the heat, slits are cut in the bags and the piglet's snout is pulled through, and were being chased. Fair operators told her that there was a veterinarian on-site. Ms. Snyder was not asking for Commission to take any actions, but wanted us to be aware of the situation. Jennifer Eber pointed out the limitation of the Commission, specific to oversight of domesticated animals. Jennifer reminded Ms. Snyder that even if Commission were to be involved, we cannot take action without approval from the Governor's office.
 - Gary Lambert pointed out to them, again, they should approach their local state representatives to submit a bill. The bill will at least receive a hearing, though it may not pass. That said, the info will still get out and gain better publicity than coming to this Committee. Marga Coulp and Sheila Johannsen both spoke in support of Gary's suggestion.
 - BJ Wahl raised speaking with local 4-H groups regarding the pig scrambles. The 4-H group he spoke with said they are no longer involved in pig scrambles. Most fairs have private associations that operate the fairs. Mr. Wahl said officials at one fair attempted to block his videotaping of the event. Sheila Johannsen suggested the blocking might be due to minors being recorded.
- Dr. Crawford clarified his department's role in such cases, especially noting their lack of authority.
- Kristina Snyder asked what happens with a new Governor is elected. Does the Commission continue? Jennifer Eber & Dr. Zezula said the Commission would continue provided the new Governor issues another Executive Order.

Adjournment

- Gary Lambert moved to adjourn the meeting. Sheila Johannsen seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.
- With no further business to conduct, Dr. Zezula adjourned the meeting at 2:35 pm.

Next Meeting

Monday, 18 October 2021 at 1:00pm in the second-floor conference room of the New Hampshire Department of Safety (33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH).

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Seymour
Secretary