

NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals
Monthly Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2022

Call To Order

- Having achieved a quorum, the regular monthly meeting of the Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals was called to order at 10:07am by Co-Chair Dr. Jeri Zezula

Roll Call

Commissioners Present

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Representative Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
- George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State & NH Musher's Association
- Thomas DeRosa – General Public (L)
- Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States
- Heather Faria – NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinarian Technician's Association (L)
- Chief Dean Rondeau – NH Police Chief's Association (L)
- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Tom Seymour – Secretary, General Public
- Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association (L)
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

Commissioners Absent

- Senator Jeb Bradley – NH State Senator
- Marga Coulp – General Public
- Dr. Steve Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
- Jennifer Eber – Co-Chair, General Public
- Shelia Johannsen – Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
- Steven Sprowl – SPCA Humane Cruelty Investigator

Commissioner Seats Open

- UNH Cooperative Extension
- New Hampshire Sportsmen

Public Present

- None

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Sheriff Wright motioned to accept the June 2022 meeting minutes. George Cook seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Next Steps:** Dr. Zezula to post meeting minutes on the Commission website.

Old Business

Follow-Up Divorce Bill: HB 1103 – Passed

- Dr. Zezula reported that HB 1103 passed and has been signed into law. It shall effective January 1, 2023.

Commission Open Positions

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- Dr. Zezula advised that the Governor's Office Liaison, Dee Juris, is working to fill the representation for the UNH Cooperative Extension and New Hampshire Sportsmen. UNH Cooperative Extension has been contacted to recommend its representative and the Commission will pass that recommendation on to the Governor's office.

Training by NH Department of Justice

- At the Commission's last meeting, the Commission agreed that prosecutors, attorneys, police, and ACOs would benefit from training. Kurt Ehrenburg and Chief Rondeau said they could begin to pull together training materials. Steve Sprowl felt prosecutors needed this training as most do not understand laws and cases are slipping through the system. Jennifer Eber and Trish Morris indicated they would begin building a presentation for the Commission's review.
- Dr. Zezula informed the Commission that County Attorney Prosecutor Training is tentatively scheduled for 2023 and is planned to be 2 hours sessions with remote participation as an option.
- Dr. Zezula reiterated the survey's results where it was made clear by law enforcement that prosecutors were difficult to get onboard prosecuting animal abuse & neglect cases, most notably misdemeanor cases. Representative Comtois relayed an experience relating to possible horse neglect and questioned if the training should be conducted on a county-wide basis as most police departments do not understand the nuances. Dr. Zezula also pointed to recently passed legislation providing fiscal relief for municipalities faced with potential massive bills associated with the prosecution of such cases. It was suggested that including an initiative to increase awareness of the "cost of care" fund be part of the training.
- Sherriff Wright and Chief Rondeau both agreed with Representative Comtois in that the training would best be provided on a county basis, perhaps instigating the creation of county ACO positions. Heather Faria pointed out that the survey illustrated that many police department do not deal with neglect and abuse cases and would need to have an expert as a go-to. Chief Rondeau suggested the best place for such an expert would be in each of the county Sherriff's office. Dr. Zezula also suggested the yet-to-filed new position in the Attorney General's office could include such activity. Chief Rondeau repeated what he told the Commission last meeting that he had combined the ACO position in his department with a part-time officer's position.
- Jozi Best told everyone that the Farm Bureau is also a great resource where many, not all, towns have an Agriculture Commission that can be brought in to assist with abuse and neglect cases. However, it is important to be sure current available resources are used. Jozi further advised that related organizations need to find better ways to work together.

New Business

Meeting Dates & Places

- This Commission continues to struggle finding a home. With looking for meeting space, shared spaces are offered. However, shared space tends to be quite restrictive with dates and times.

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- Jennifer Eber asked vis Dr. Zezula if the Commission would be open to shifting the date & time for October's meeting where she was previously scheduled for an important family event. The Commission expressed support for this proposition. October's meeting date, time, and location will be determined, and the Commission will be emailed the information.

Legislative Preview

- Representative Comtois advised that legislation from current house members may be filed by September 16th. Kurt Ehrenburg added that second filings can be offered from November 9th to the 22nd. Representative Comtois also advised that the Senate has differing rules and dates.
- Dr. Zezula with consultation with Jennifer Eber suggested that Commission may want to alter its method of legislation review going forward. She suggested the Commission discuss proposed legislation, and amendments thereto, but hold off voting for individual support/oppose until the legislation has passed through crossover. Representative Comtois mentioned that Commission members may testify at legislative hearings and can mention their membership on this Commission BUT must be sure to expressly declare the testimony given is their own alone. Kurt Ehrenburg advised that the provision of supporting testimony is key to passage of good legislation. Jozi Best also noted that critical legislation would necessitate permission from the Governor's Office in order to testify as the Commission. Dr. Zezula offered that Dee Juris, the new liaison in the Governor's Office, could offer advice and guidance. Dr. Barlow-Roy suggested that the Commission narrow its focus to 2 or 3 key pieces of legislation and set all others aside to monitor.

Commission Initiatives

- Dr. Zezula referred to the Executive Order and advise everyone that this is the year the Commission needs to develop and submit a report regarding animal neglect and abuse in the state over the last 2 years.
- Representative Comtois asked about the report deadline. Dr. Zezula said that there were no deadlines defined, though the Commission has strived to compete the report and submit no later than its last schedule meeting.

Animal Control Officer Obligations / Requirements

- A significant discussion revolved around the statutory obligations for ACOs in New Hampshire, including current training requirements and opportunities, and their roles in preventing and investigating animal cruelty cases. A major emphasis was placed on the establishing a legislative study committee. Representative Comtois offered to develop legislation to introduce to establish such a study committee. Kurt Ehrenburg explained that statutory study committees have more control and influence over the process. Other study committees lack such control. Chief Rondeau suggested contacting the New Hampshire Municipal Association to see if they can offer guidance for researching ACO requirements.

Next Steps:

- Dr. Zezula to research ACO activities defined by NH RSA.

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- Sheila Johansson to research available ACO training, local, regional, national
- Representative Comtois to develop language for proposed study committee
- Dr. Zezula to email an assignment where each Commission member interviews their hometown regarding current ACO positions
 - **Next Steps:** Commission Members to check their email for the assignment and instructions

Attorney, Prosecutor, & Law Enforcement Training

- Please refer to section "Training by NH Department of Justice, Page 2

- Heather Faria and Dr. Barlow reminded everyone that Jozi Best last year had suggested emailing / developing survey for the Commission members to poll their organizations. Members would then use the survey with their constituents. Dr. Zezula offered to develop such a survey.
 - **Next Steps:** Commission members to check their email regarding the submission of questions for the above-mentioned survey.

Commission Correspondence (Dr. Zezula)

- Moab (dog): Contact made inquiring about available resources in a "property" dispute over a dog. Ownership was with "partners" with no legal bonds. Either purchase documents or licensing documents contain the legal owner identification. Jennifer and Dr. Zezula referred to Christina Felker for information on modifying current laws.

- Rumney Farm: Contact made referencing animal owners that might be in over their heads with goats, chickens, and dogs. Jozi Best said she was aware of this case and advised it was being handled.

- Freedom Horses: This was a second report of animal abuse / neglect. They were advised of the resources available to handle such a report.

- Humane Education: Contact made asking if the Commission could create legislation mandating each school student was required to take classes regarding the humane treatment of animals. They were advised to contact their local school board.

- Clark's Trading Post: Contact made complaining about the bears being exploited and the business should be abolished.

- Sick Puppy Breeder: Contact made referencing a seller on Craig's List that is selling ill puppies. They were advised where to find appropriate resources.

Reports on any Cruelty Cases (All)

- While not cruelty, Dr. Barlow-Roy mentioned an event where roommates had obtained a dog and one of the roommates left leaving the dog behind. The roommate that left was the legal dog owner, so the roommate with custody was stuck with a dog they did not want, nor could they legally surrender. She advised that a Manchester ACO was brought in to assist.

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Invite Governor's Liaison to Next Meeting

- As mentioned earlier, Dee Juris is the liaison in the Governor's Office. Dr. Zezula suggested we invite Dee Juris to the October meeting. Others agreed thinking Dee might be able to offer clarification on the Commission's "Do's and Don'ts" like deadlines. Representative Comtois suggested the Commission offer to meet in the Executive Council's Conference Room to make it easier for Ms. Juris' to attend.
- Heather Faria suggested the Commission review the standing Executive Order and develop questions regarding the Commission's boundaries.
- **Next Steps:** Commission members to review Executive Order and develop questions for October's meeting.

Comments from Members/Guests

- Dr. Barlow-Roy intended to discuss euthanizing of aggressive dogs but did not have her materials with her at this time. She asked this item to be placed onto October's meeting agenda.

Adjournment

- With no further business to conduct, Chief Rondeau motioned to adjourn. Heather Faria seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Co-Chair Dr. Zezula adjourned the meeting at 12:03pm.

Next Meeting

- Date/Time: **To Be Determined**
- Location: **To Be Determined**

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Seymour, Secretary
Dr. Jeri Zezula, Co-Chair