

NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals
Volunteer NH Conference Space- Dolloff Building
October 27, 2022 Minutes

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 10:02am by Co-Chairs Jeri Zezula and Jennifer Eber

Roll Call

Commissioners Present

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau (L)
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State & NH Musher's Association
- Marga Coulp – General Public (L)
- Thomas DeRosa – General Public (L)
- Jennifer Eber – Co-Chair, General Public
- Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States
- Heather Faria – NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Sheila Johannsen – Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Tyson Morrill – NH Sportsmen
- Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Tom Seymour – Secretary, General Public
- Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

Commissioners Absent

- Senator Jeb Bradley – NH State Senator
- Representative Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
- Steve Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
- Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinarian Technician's Association
- Dean Rondeau – NH Police Chief's Association
- William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

Commissioner Seats Open

- UNH Cooperative Extension representative coming in December
- Cruelty Investigator employed by a licensed humane society

Public Present

- Trevor McAden – Governor's Office (Policy Staff)

Introductions

Tyson Morrill was welcomed onto the Committee. Tyson comes to the Commission with considerable formal and practical experience in animal welfare and will be welcomed addition.

The Commission was also introduced to the newest Governor's Office representative, Trevor McAden. Trevor is a policy advisor and Department of Agriculture comes under his purview. He will be liaison and the Commission looks forward to working with him.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Heather Faria motioned to accept the September 8, 2022 meeting minutes. Kurt Ehrenburg seconded the motion. 8 voted in favor, 0 against, 3 abstained (Jennifer Eber & Tyson Morrill & Sheila Johannsen). The motion passed.
- **Next Steps:** Dr. Zezula to post meeting minutes on the Commission website.

Old Business

Commission Open Positions

- 2 open seats remain. The UNH Cooperative Extension seat is expected to be filled by December 14th. The Cruelty Investigator is still being considered and the NH Federation will discuss and offer any suggestions.

Training by NH Department of Justice

- Jennifer Eber advised she is working with the NH DOJ and a group of presenters (Trish Morris, Anthony Estee and Jeri Zezula) to do a two part presentation to NH lawyer prosecutors. The presentations will be in January and February 2023 and most likely be via zoom.
- **Next Steps:** Members to reach out to Jennifer Eber if they wish to be involved in this training initiative.

Update On Legislative Study for ACOs

- Representative Comtois was absent for this meeting, so her report was not given. Based on review by George Cook and Kurt Ehrenberg, it does not appear there have been any new filings. However, not much is expected to happen until after the state's mid-term elections in November.

ACO Related Statutes

- Jeri Zezula researched and emailed a detailed report of NH RSAs that referenced ACOs directly and indirectly.
- After considerable discussion, the consensus that the current RSAs fail to define ACO and tend to offer conflicting direction.
 - ACO is Not Defined.
 - Lacking Standardization.
 - No References to Training or Certification(s).
 - RSA Terminology is Inconsistent.
 - ACOs Might Elected, Appointed, or Hired.
- As noted above, Kurt Ehrenburg reminded all that Representative Comtois was looking into language to submit an LSR establishing a study committee on this very subject. Tom DeRosa suggested the Commission consider generating its own definitions or establish its own study committee. Jennifer Eber said that, as with everything else, the Committee would need to seek permission from the Governor to pursue this subject to any depth. Trevor McAden will ask the Governor about the Commission getting involved in ACO issues.
- Jeri Zezula thought it would be helpful to restructure the appropriate RSAs to use the term "ACO" consistently throughout.
- Jane Barlow-Roy expressed concern over the importance of municipal acceptance of any new ACO requirements. Jennifer Eber thought we should invite someone from the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) to our next meeting. Perhaps they have a sense of where municipalities might stand. Tom DeRosa offered to contact NHMA.
- **Next Steps:** Tom DeRosa to contact NHMA to see if a representative would come speak with the Committee at its November meeting.

Commission Member Town Survey Re: ACO's

- Dr. Zezula revisited the previous survey by summarizing several data points regarding ACO activity, or the lack thereof.
 - Most Communities Don't Have an ACO.
 - Most Communities Have Their Town Clerk Handle Licensing.
 - Most Communities Have Their Police Departments Do Everything Else.
 - Most ACO's are Police Department Supervised.
 - Most Communities with ACOs Did Not Mandate Training, But Encouraged It.
 - Models Exist for Job Description Standardization (Laconia PD).
 - ACOs Interviewed Look for Definitions
- Jozi Best felt clearer definition would help with perceptions. Sheila Johannsen thought it would be difficult to establish definitions where every town has different approaches to the ACO position. Jeri Zezula advised that some municipalities do require training, though not all.
- Jeri Zezula asked the Committee to think about new survey questions to help further define our goals.

Survey of Representative Organizations

There was discussion of doing surveys to some key organizations on animal cruelty issues, similar to the one done last year to law enforcement. The objective would be to create a survey that Commission members could use with the groups they represent, including those representing the general public. The survey should include core questions that would be common to all respondents and other questions that would be targeted and specific to each organization.

- **Next Steps:** Committee members to think of possible questions for the survey.

New Business

Meeting Dates and Places

- Jennifer Eber told everyone that nailing down a steady location has been difficult. The conference room at NH Department of Safety is prioritized for the Department's use, so we may be bumped from established reservations. The Dolloff Building is a good option, but not always available. .
- Trevor McAden, of the Governor's Office, offered to see if we could make use of the Executive Council's chambers where it is largely unused.
- Heather Faria said Pope Memorial SPCA may have a conference space for the Committee to use in 2023.
- **Next Steps:** Committee to reference meeting location and times for each month found at the end of the meeting minutes.

Legislative Preview

- George Cook and Kurt Ehrenberg repeated that is nothing to review until after the upcoming elections (Nov 8).

Discussion Of Monitoring Legislation for This Year

- The Commission agreed that due to the lack of pending legislation details, it is best to wait and see what turns up.

Initiatives Of Commission This Year After Review of EO

- The Commission agreed that the primary initiatives for the upcoming legislative year should include:
 - Prosecutor Training
 - Addressing ACO Issues

- Organizational Surveys to Establish Animal Related Needs/Attitudes
- Creation & Publication of The Biannual Report
 - Trevor McAden will seek input from the Governor on what would be useful in the report.

Reports On Any Cruelty Cases

- Monadnock Humane Society took in 27 Labrador Retrievers. The owner was in court this very day and surrendered all of the dogs. Questions arose about the availability of “cost for care” funding where a municipality had not initiated the complaint or the seizure.
- Sheila Johannsen told the Commission that the long-time back yard breeder had sold her property and left New Hampshire for Maine.

Comments from Members/Guests

- Jeri Zezula was interested in any information related to the purposeful hurting of wild animals. George Cook was concerned about the classification of working dogs like livestock guard dogs.
- Jozi Best inquired about veterinarians’ reluctance to put down animals when warranted. Jane Barlow-Roy said that euthanasia is not a simple subject or task. Jane Barlow-Roy mentioned that there are many veterinarians that refuse to perform euthanasia no matter the reason or cause. Tom Seymour mentioned that the shelter that he is associated with had such a veterinarian. The shelter had to maintain a number of veterinarians in order to have access to these services. He did say that the shelter confers with a behaviorist, multiple veterinarians, and the shelter manager before making a decision. All agreed that such a decision is critical as there are a number of possible liabilities. Tom also mentioned the possible negative public relations impact. He related a story where a shelter in the Lakes Region chose to euthanize a dog and it was publicized in a local newspaper. The publicity caused the shelter to lose many donors and event sponsors.
- A discussion took place over a situation where strays found on the New Hampshire border were brought to a shelter in Vermont. Which state governs how the strays are dispositioned?.

Adjournment

- With no further business to conduct, Sheila Johannesen motioned to adjourn. George Cook seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Co-Chair Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:58pm.

Next Meeting

- Date/Time: **Thursday, November 10, 2022 / 10:00am-12:00am**
- Location: **NH Department of Safety, 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH
2nd Floor Conference Room**

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Seymour, Secretary
 Jeri Zezula, Co-Chair
 Jennifer Eber, Co-Chair