

NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals
Monthly Meeting Minutes
December 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 10:02am by Co-Chair Jeri Zezula.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau
- Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
- 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
- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Tom Seymour – Secretary, General Public
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

Commissioners Absent

- Jeb Bradley – NH State Senator
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State & NH Musher's Association
- Marga Culp – General Public
- Dr. Steve Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
- Thomas DeRosa – General Public
- Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinarian Technician's Association
- Chief Dean Rondeau – NH Police Chief's Association
- Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

Public Present

- Trevor McAden, Governor's Office Liaison
- Jana McMillan, Animal Control Officer / Hudson, NH Police Department
- Chris Sununu, New Hampshire State Governor

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Heather Faria motioned to approve the November 2022 meeting minutes. Jozi Best seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Jeri Zezula to post meeting minutes on the Commission website.

Old Business

Meeting Location

- Jennifer Eber questioned the Commission about meeting location preferences. The availability of parking was the primary concern. After a brief discussion, the Commission indicated the Department of Safety Conference Room as their first choice, the Executive Council Chambers as their second choice, and the Volunteer NH as their third choice.

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- The January meeting was already scheduled with conference space reserved at the NH Department of Safety.

ACO Information

- Jana McMillan provided a listing of Animal Control Officers (ACOs) by NH Counties. The list was distributed by Jeri Zezula to the Commission members.
- Jozi Best pointed out that the list may be incomplete as the listings for Sullivan County was missing towns. It was thought that difference may be due to ACOs contracting services versus being employed or appointed for those towns.
- Sheila Johannsen said she also had a list, though it was dated. She offered to collect the most recent information the New Hampshire Municipal Association and compare it with the list provided by Jana.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Sheila Johannsen will compare the two ACO lists.

ACO Related Legislation

- Barbara Comtois led the discussion relating to her effort to submit proposed legislation regarding the standardization of animal cruelty reporting, investigation, and prosecution. She is thinking that the County Sheriff Departments would be the best solution as they have wider jurisdiction and can issue warrants and effect arrests, as may be needed. She outlined a few requirements including adequate training via the Police Standards and Training Council, position to maintain an animal cruelty focus, and report all instances through NIBRS.
- Jeri Zezula suggested that the County position be titled "County Animal Cruelty Investigator", which all present agreed with. Jeri also questioned whether or not the "cost of care" fund would be available for use with County initiated cases.
- Sheila Johannsen asked if this would be helpful as there are already numerous complications between current ACOs and law enforcement. Heather Faria pointed to our last survey where it was made clear that local law enforcement wanted and needed more resources.
- Jana McMillan expressed concerns over the effect of such legislation over existing ACOs. She felt strongly that legislation is not the answer. Jana explained that her department handles upwards of 800 calls though most were hot car related. She did not think County Sheriffs would be the best solution for dogs in hot cars, etc.
- Jeri Zezula suggested that the ACO association could provide professional certifications themselves similar to what Veterinary Technicians have done. Jane Barlow-Roy said the process was quite involved but was well worth the effort. Jane said the Vet Techs created a number of requirements and qualifications needed to obtain the certification. Jana McMillan told everyone that she has been in contact with people at NH Police Standards and Training Council for advice and suggestions regarding ACO certifications.

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- Heather Faria reminded the Commission that the initial objective was to improve the reporting, investigations, and prosecutions of animal cruelty cases, not to regulate or control ACO functions.
- Jennifer Eber also reminded the Commission that we cannot take formal positions on any legislation without the expressed permission from the Governor.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Barbara Comtois will proceed to draft language for proposed legislation. Note that there is a deadline of December 28th at 10:00am for submission.
 - Commission to refrain from taking formal position on any legislation proposed as a result of this, or any other, Commission discussions. Permission must be granted by the Governor.

Vacant Positions

- While the Humane Cruelty Investigator position remains open, the UNH Cooperative Extension seat has been filled. The Governor has appointed Mary Davis who will attend the January meeting.

Survey of Organizations Questions

- Jeri Zezula had emailed everyone a copy of Heather Faria's suggested survey questions. Jozi Best thought alpacas and llamas should be included on the animal list. Jeri asked Heather if the survey was meant to have a specific group focus or was it intended for general distribution. Heather said it was not written with a specific group in mind.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Commission members to forward any further suggestions to Jeri Zezula.

Prosecutors Workshop

- Jennifer Eber updated the Commission advising the workshop is open to Commission members. The workshop will be held remotely on January 13th and 20th from 1:00 - 3:00 pm.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Jennifer Eber to send the link for the workshop.

New Business

Governor's Report

- Heather Faria advised she is performing the data analysis on the case statistics and will make use of the same Commission members from her previous subcommittee for this part of the report. She hopes to have data for the Commission to review in January, February at the latest.
- Jennifer Eber said Trevor McAden has yet to respond with what the Governor is looking for in this biennial report.
- Heather thought it would be enlightening to compare our data against other New England states, time permitting. She also mentioned that the current data does not

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clearly illustrate case history. Tom Seymour offered to see if he could further manipulate the data to provide the charges, actions, final court disposition for each case.

- **Next Steps:**
 - Trevor to advise the Commission of the Governor's objectives for the report.
 - Tom Seymour to see if the data provided and be manipulated to provide tracking of cases from inception to conclusion.

Legislative Preview

- George Cook was absent for this meeting, so no report was presented.

Discussion Of Monitoring Legislation for This Year

- This discussion is on "hold" pending legislative preview.

Reports On Any Cruelty Cases

- Due to time constraints, this was not discussed.

Comments from Members/Guests

- Governor Sununu stopped by and spoke briefly with the Commission. At that time, the Commission was discussing what can be done to improve the reporting, investigating, and prosecuting of cruelty cases. The Governor found the concept of a centralized function operating from the County Sheriff's offices "interesting".
- Jozi Best asked about subcommittee assignments for this session. Jeri Zezula said we would not be using that format this time as it was found to be inefficient. Jeri said Commission members would be asked to help out as tasks presented themselves.
- Jana McMillan inquired about the intended audience for the survey and offered to distribute to municipal law enforcement administrative assistants.

Adjournment

- With no further business to conduct within the time remaining, Heather Faria motioned to adjourn. Kurt Ehrenburg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Co-Chair Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:52am.

Next Meeting

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

Respectfully submitted,

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