

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

## Minutes February 9, 2023

### 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 10:02 am by Co-Chair Dr. Jeri Zezula.

### Roll Call

#### Commissioners Present

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau (L)
- George Cook – Dog Owners of the Granite State & NH Musher's Association
- Marga Coulp – General Public (L)
- Mary Davis, UNH Cooperative Extension
- 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 (L)
- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Tom Seymour – Secretary, General Public
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

#### Commissioners Absent

- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
- Dr. Steve Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
- Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinarian Technician's Association
- Chief Dean Rondeau – NH Police Chief's Association
- David Watters – NH State Senator
- Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

#### Public Present

- Bjarna O'Brien – Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Peter Uliano – Animal Control Officers Association of NH

### Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Marga Coulp motioned to approve the January 2023 meeting minutes. Kurt Ehrenberg seconded the motion. The motion passed with 7 voting in favor, 0 votes against, and 6 abstentions (due to absence).
- Next Steps:
  - Dr. Jeri Zezula to post meeting minutes on the Commission website.

### Old Business

#### ACO Related Legislation

- Representative Comtois was not in attendance to discuss her bill. However, Kurt Ehrenberg relayed what he knew. A hearing for the bill took place yesterday and an Executive Session is scheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup> (Kurt later corrected the date to be February 15<sup>th</sup>). Several Commission members have taken phone calls and questions

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from Animal Control Officers (ACOs) who are very concerned about the possible impact on their positions. It was noted that the bill does not seek to replace existing ACOs, but rather offer ACO resources to those municipalities lacking ACO resources. It was made clear during discussion that this is not a Commission bill, but is merely being tracked and discussed at the Commission meetings.

- Next Steps:
  - The Commission will continue to monitor the bill's progress.

## Vacant Positions

- The Commission's seat for a humane cruelty investigator remains open. Heather Faria said that she should have input regarding a possible nomination for the Governor's consideration soon.

## Survey of Organizations Questions

- Conversation brought the Commission back to basics of what we want to understand or have data about in order to determine next steps. Jane Barlow-Roy indicated that it would be helpful to know the general sentiment of people in NH on animal cruelty. It was discussed the possible biases that may be exposed without a way to send to either a specific group (obtaining a large percentage of responses) or randomize the sampling if seeking general public input. Ultimately, the Commission elected to re-define survey questions so that they would be more meaningful and have the ability to determine responses from specific groups. It was further determined that the surveys should carry an identifier so as to permit the segregation of responses by group.
- Next Steps:
  - Further discussion is needed. Bring suggestions to the next meeting. Jeri Zezula will look into ways to filter responses into possible targeted groups.

## NH DOJ Workshop

Jennifer Eber reported that the training session went well. Plans are in the works to develop an asynchronous course specific to cruelty investigations. The Commission is looking into where it can post the training and educational materials- perhaps the DOJ website.

- Today's guests from the Animal Control Officers Association of New Hampshire told the Commission that when notice of this training session came out, some prosecutors assigned others the task of attending. They also advised that there was difficulty and confusion accessing the webinar if you were not a certified law officer. Jennifer stated that she was aware of this initial limitation but that the training session was ultimately opened to any position of prosecutors/police/ACOs.
- Next Steps: Jennifer Eber to advise of future training opportunities and any publications arising therefrom.

## **New Business**

### Cost of Care

- Jennifer Eber reported she has requested cost of care information from Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food. (NHDAMF) There was debate over the depth the Commission should delve into the Cost of Care Program, specifically as it relates to the Biennial report to the Governor. Review of the Governor's Executive Order found details of the Cost of Care Program were not included in the Commission's mission. It was

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pointed out by several in attendance that locating the forms for the Cost of Care Program was problematic.

- Next Steps: Jennifer Eber to continue communicating with NHDAMF regarding the Cost of Care Program and to seek the input from the Governor's office of the details of what it wants in the report, including whether the Governor's office wants to have information on the cost of care program.

## Governor's Report

- Jeri Zezula congratulated Heather Faria on her work on the report. The legislative section is still under development at this time.
- Next Steps:
  - Trevor McAden to advise the Commission of the Governor's objectives for the report.

## Legislative Preview

- George Cook and Kurt Ehrenberg provided updates regarding legislation the Commission planned to follow and / or monitor. Of note:
  - HB 260 was identified as ITL by a vote of 13 to 7.
  - SB 146 may be deleted from our list.
  - ADDED: HB 549 which is relative to threats of animal abuse in domestic violence cases.
  - ADDED: SB 164 which is relative to the provision of authority to an animal's owner in perpetuity.
  - ADDED: SB 97 which is relative to product testing using animals.

## Discussion Of Monitoring Legislation for This Year

- The Commission elected to continue to monitor the current list (distributed with this meeting's agenda).

## Commission Website Update

- Jeri Zezula advised that all data and information has been successfully transitioned to the Commission's website.

## Reports On Any Cruelty Cases

- Franklin, NH – Failure of an individual to abide by court orders from previous animal abuse conviction resulted in three dogs being removed from a home again due to continued neglect and abuse. Court appearance is scheduled for March 20, 2023. Tom Seymour plans to attend.

## **Comments from Members/Guests**

- Both Bjarna O'Brien and Peter Uliano, of Animal Control Officers Association of NH, are strong advocates for ACOs in New Hampshire and both spoke to differing topics affecting an ACO's ability to perform their jobs effectively.
- Peter Uliano feels that ACOs are not recognized as professionals. He said HB 485 (relative to assigning some ACO functions to the County Sheriffs) is ill-advised. He also felt that NH should follow other states and pass laws requiring veterinarians to report instances of suspected animal abuse or neglect. Jeri Zezula and Jennifer Eber told Peter that HB 485 is not something that this Commission has taken a position on, other than to monitor, as the Governor would need to provide permission to do so. He

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was advised by multiple Commission members how he could provide input on his concerns and how he could seek other groups that might share his opinion and could advocate for his positions.

- Bjarna O'Brien asked how information and forms for the Cost of Care Program could be accessed. She noted that ACO training is out there, but access is difficult. Bjarna also had issues with the language contained in the aforementioned HB 485. It was, again, mentioned that the Commission's connection to HB 485 was no more than the State Representative assigned to this Commission who also happened to be the primary sponsor of the bill. The Commission has taken no formal position in the matter.
- Kurt Ehrenberg offered to meet with Peter Uliano and Bjarna O'Brien immediately following this meeting to discuss in more detail their concerns.

### Adjournment

- With no further business to conduct within the time remaining, Sheila Johannsen motioned to adjourn. Jane Barlow-Roy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Co-Chair Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:58 am.

### Next Meeting

- Date/Time: **Thursday, March 9, 2023 / 10:00 am-12:00 pm**
- Location: **NH Department of Safety  
Second Floor Conference Room  
33 Hazen Drive  
Concord, NH**

Respectfully submitted,

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