

NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals
Monthly Meeting Minutes
May 11, 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 10:04 am by Co-Chair Dr. Jeri Zezula.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present (9)

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau (L)
- Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States (L)
- Heather Faria – NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Sheila Johannesen – Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Tona McCarthy – Animal Cruelty Investigator / Humane Agent NHSPCA
- Tyson Morrill – NH Sportsmen
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinarian Technician's Association
- Tom Seymour – Secretary, General Public
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

Commissioners Absent (13)

- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
- George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State & NH Musher's Association
- Marga Coupl – General Public
- Dr. Steve Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
- Mary Davis, UNH Cooperative Extension
- Thomas DeRosa – General Public
- Jennifer Eber – Co-Chair, General Public
- Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- David Watters – NH State Senator
- Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

Public Present

- None

New Commissioner

- Dr. Jeri Zezula welcomed new Commissioner Tona McCarthy to the group. Commission members introduced themselves and identified their role on the Commission.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Dr. Jeri Zezula asked if any amendments to the meeting minutes were needed. With no amendments offered, Heather Faria motioned to approve the April 2023 meeting minutes. Jozi Best seconded the motion. The motion passed with 6 Aye, 0 Nay, and 2 Abstentions (due to absence).
- **Next Steps:**
 - Dr. Jeri Zezula to post the amended meeting minutes on the Commission website.

Old Business

Governor's Required Report

- Dr. Jeri Zezula advised that the two (2) report segments will be compiled into a single report with the draft being ready for the June 2023 meeting. Anyone having thoughts or comments should email Jeri directly. Input will be taken until May 25, 2023.

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- Jozi Best asked if the Commission had its own definition for “humane treatment”. She is concerned about the number of veterinarians leaving their practices and the unintended impact on animal care, specifically large animals. Sheila Johannesen noted she is seeing the same reduction of available veterinarians. Jeri reminded everyone that the Commission’s Executive Order does not describe “humane treatment”. Heather Faria suggested that a discussion of veterinarian shortage be included in future Commission business. Everyone agreed.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Commission members to submit thoughts, suggestions, and comments on report to the Governor to Dr. Zezula no later than May 25, 2023.
 - Dr. Zezula to prepare a final draft report for review at the Commission’s June 2023 meeting.

Survey on Animal Cruelty

- Dr. Jeri Zezula informed everyone that the latest survey has had 533 responses to date. She also noted that we had missed adding “humane societies” to the survey’s list of associations. Jeri also said there was a good deal of “venting” in the responses with many including lengthy comments.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Commission members to continue spreading word of the survey for the rest of this month.

Cost-of-Care Update

- Jennifer and Jeri submitted the withdrawal of the 91-A request which was received and appreciated by Commissioner Jasper. He offered to assist but needed to know what we were looking for. Jeri informed him that we were looking for the following year-to-date information:
 - Number of applications submitted,
 - Number of applications granted,
 - Dollar value of the fund,
 - The animals included in the applications,
 - How is access made for the application,
 - How is funding derived, and
 - Whether public donations may be made to the fund.
- It is hoped that the information is received in time to be included in the upcoming Governor’s Report.

Chair’s Report to Governor

- Dr. Jeri Zezula ran through an outline of the draft report. A copy was emailed to Commission members beforehand.
- Heather Faria indicated that she felt differently about the described future issues from what the draft report stated. She specifically pointed to the ACO item. Heather feels the Commission has taken the ACO issue as far as it can. After two-three years no reasonable path forward has been found due the complexity of the subject. Heather also asked for the Commission’s attendance problems to be included and that the year be included in

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referenced legislation. She also asked that names of individuals in the draft report be omitted lest we inadvertently offend them.

- Shelia Johannesen asked that the bill titles be added to referenced legislation.
- At a point later in this meeting Kurt Ehrenberg commented on this subject. Kurt felt that the Commission's work with ACO legislation should continue where there are still areas where the ACO system can be improved with standardization.

Prosecutor Training

- Dr. Jeri Zezula advised that the training materials were given to she and Jennifer for use to use as needed. She said the audio files were of poor quality, but the presentation slide deck could be put to good use. The big question was where could the slide deck be stored (DOJ website, Police Standards & Training website, Commission's website?).

New Business

Legislative Update

- The update given revolved around a single bill, described below.
 - HB 231 (Relative to Declawing of Cats) moved through the House without recommendation.
 - Kurt Ehrenberg reported that the bill still rests in Committee, and he thinks chances are good it will be subject to vote next Tuesday. He also said indications point to voting to fall along party lines.
- There was lengthy discussion about the position, if any, of the Commission could take on the pending bills. Some felt input from the Governor's office is needed to further define the Commission's objectives and purpose. Others felt that we should be able to take a position and make recommendation to Governor. Ultimately, the Commission agreed to take positions on those bills once passed and passed to the Governor for signature providing the Governor with insight of the impact of the bills in question.

Membership Meeting / Time & Date

- Heather Faria thought if we could get the Executive Order changed perhaps we would see greater attendance and participation by more Commission members. She suggested changing meeting frequency to twice a year during the fall & spring. Or to every quarter and scheduled around the legislative calendar, as suggested by Tyler Morrill. She pointed out that agenda items rarely change minimizing the need to meet every month. Further, she suggested that much of the work done by this Commission can be accomplished outside of meetings.
- Shelia Johannesen thought meeting twice a year was not enough. Tom Seymour agreed saying quarterly would be more appropriate. Tom said monthly meetings typically fit organizations needing to discuss day-to-day operations and this Commission does not have such demands.
- Questions also included the attendance standards and if Commissioners could be removed. It was resolved that standards are not present, and that Commissioners may not be removed as they are appointed by the Governor.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Meeting Attendance & Meeting Date/Time to be continued in the June meeting.

Website Analytics

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- Dr. Jeri Zezula has been granted permission to use the Google Analytics software gather data regarding website use. However, she has yet to find the time to drill into the data. She asked if any Commissioners had experience with Google Analytics, she would appreciate assistance.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Anyone having Google Analytics experience to contact Jeri to help.

Reports On Any Cruelty Cases

- Tona McCarthy provided some insight into his work as Animal Cruelty Investigator / Humane Agent with the NHSPCA. He noted that he is seeing an increase in the financial burden carried by owners that is directly, though unintentionally, negatively impacts the animals in their care. Tona says he tends to work with owners to remedy issues before taking legal actions. He typically gets owners to agree to surrendering the animal if the care is more than they can maintain. He did not know if the Cost-of-Care Fund was being used by municipalities involved in his cases.
- Jozi Best said she is seeing the same issue. She is also concerned some owners do not know everything they should in order to provide proper care. She is also seeing increasing financial difficulties faced by the older population trying to provide adequate care.

Comments from Members/Guests

- None were offered.

Adjournment

- With no further business to conduct, Sheila Johannesen motioned to adjourn. Wendy Munroe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Co-Chair Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:26 am.

Next Meeting

- Date/Time: **Thursday, June 8, 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
Dr. Jeri Zezula, Co-Chair