

NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals  
Monthly Meeting Minutes  
June 8, 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 (13)

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State & NH Musher's Association (L)
- Jennifer Eber – Co-Chair, General Public (L)
- Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States
- 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 (L)
- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Tom Seymour – Secretary, General Public
- David Watters – NH State Senator (Left early)
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

Commissioners Absent (8)

- Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
- Marga Culp – General Public
- Dr. Steve Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
- Mary Davis, UNH Cooperative Extension
- Thomas DeRosa – General Public
- Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinarian Technician's Association
- Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

Public Present

- None

Introductions

- Dr. Jeri Zezula welcomed new Senator Watters. Commission members introduced to the Senator 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 8 Aye, 0 Nay, and 5 Abstentions (due to absence).
- **Next Steps:**
  - Dr. Jeri Zezula to post the meeting minutes on the Commission website.

**Old Business**

Vacant NH Police Chief Association Position

- Previous NH Police Chief Association representative Wolfeboro Police Chief Dean Rondeau has retired. The Governor's office is working on filling the position. Jennifer Eber will follow up with the Governor's office.

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- **Next Steps:**
  - Jennifer Eber to follow up with Governor's office on filling the open seat from the NH Police Chief Association.

Governor's Required Report

- Dr. Jeri Zezula led a discussion on the draft report that was primarily focused on the four (4) proposed bills, including poisoning statutory language and choosing one other initiative from the following: Adding Veterinarian Immunity in 644:8a & 644:8g, Coordinating Equine RSAs 644:8 & 435, or Adding Starvation as A Felony (644:8-IIIa).
- Heather Faria recommended we hold the list of proposed legislation until next session where we have not touched these all year. She also said it would have been helpful to have the legislation in front of us for review. Jennifer Eber explained that this would fill a section on future actions and, where we had the Governor's approval, we should flag one. Dr. Jeri Zezula said this legislative proposal was considered a trial to see how far we could initiate legislative action. Senator Watters reminded the Commission that there is plenty of time to consider the proposals ahead of this fall. Most agreed it would be best to keep the information in the report but hold off choosing an action until this fall. Jeri suggested some changes should include a refresh in the definitions of cruelty. Jozi Best felt that starvation should be used as an example in the report. However, she agreed that we should not take a position until we take a better look. Jeri thought this will only work provided all members come to meetings prepared by doing the homework needed. Jozi asked Jeri to define "prepared" where her technology issues prevent her from downloading and viewing digital content. Jennifer offered to print and mail documents to Jozi.
- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy extended her thanks and appreciation to Heather Faria for her hard work extracting and compiling the data in the report. Heather, in turn, thanked George Cook, Dr. Steve Crawford, and Tom Seymour for their valued contributions.
- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy made motion to approve the required report with amendments. Shelia Johannesen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Next Steps:**
  - Dr. Jeri Zezula to amend the report to include the list of possible legislation to pursue.
  - Jennifer Eber to print and mail legislation documents to Jozi Best for review.
  - Dr. Jeri Zezula and Jennifer Eber to amend and submit report to Governor's office.

Chair's Report to Governor

- Dr. Jeri Zezula identified attendance as a main issue to be addressed. Jozi Best suggested notifying organizations if their representatives were missing too many meetings and ask them to appoint alternates. Jeri said the Executive Order only authorizes the Department of Agriculture to appoint an alternate. Heather Faria suggested changing our meeting frequency to quarterly as fewer meetings might be more appealing to others and increase attendance. Jennifer wondered how we would track legislative activities with only four (4) meetings. George Cook thought quarterly meetings might not properly align with the legislative calendar. Shelia Johannesen did not think much would be accomplished with fewer meetings. Heather said we could always call a special meeting, if needed. Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy reminded everyone that

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bills too often change significantly after passing through all stages in the legislature than when they were first introduced. Jane also suggested reducing meeting time from four (4) hours to three (3). Jeri said she would revise the report to indicate we would like the option to consider fewer meetings.

- George Cook made a motion to accept the report with amendments. Kurt Ehrenburg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- Tyson Morrill suggested moving meetings around the state and possibly adding guest speakers. Heather Faria informed the group that her organization has recently finished construction on a new training and education center and offered the center for a meeting space. The Committee accepted the offer and will meet there for the first meeting this coming fall.
- **Next Steps:**
  - Dr. Jeri Zezula to amend the Chair's Report to The Governor and submit to the Governor's office.
  - Heather Faria to secure the new training and education center for the Commission's September 2023 meeting.

Cost-of-Care Update

- Jennifer Eber advised that the collaborative approach with Commissioner Jasper is yielding good results. George Cook had questions about specific information, notably the Feed Tax revenue data. George was also curious about the specific cases behind each municipalities' application. He offered to send his questions to Jennifer who, in turn, indicated she would continue to ask for more details behind each Cost-of-Care case.
- Jennifer Eber emphasized that individual Committee members should be cautious in seeking to obtain information from Commissioner Jasper if such action could be viewed as part of Commission work and derail the efforts that the Commission is taking to work cooperatively with the Commissioner..
- **Next Steps:**
  - George Cook to email his questions to Jennifer Eber.
  - Jennifer Eber to continue communications with Commissioner Jasper regarding Cost-of-Care program information.

Survey on Animal Cruelty

- Dr. Jeri Zezula informed everyone that the latest survey closed with 712 responses. While very happy with the number of responses, she was disappointed that the objective check-off questions were not completed on a large number of responses and it seemed that many respondents just wanted to state their opinions on the text questions. The survey software (Qualtrics) had advised against the lengthy check off questions and apparently so did the public. Jeri said she will filter the results by interest groups over the summer. She also asked for volunteers to assist with the data analysis. Tyson Morrill and Tom Seymour volunteered.
- Group discussions revolved around what the Commission should do with the data once the analysis is complete. Jennifer Eber suggested issuing a report that the media could make use of and further our efforts to have animal cruelty issues discussed by the general public. Jozi Best

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agreed that a press release would be beneficial overall and would also highlight the Commission and its work.

- **Next Steps:**
  - Dr. Jeri Zezula to filter the survey data.
  - Tyson Morrill and Tom Seymour to assist Jeri with the data analysis.

**New Business**

Legislative Update

- HB 231 (Relative to Declawing of Cats): Kurt Ehrenburg reported the bill was tabled.

Membership Meeting / Time & Date

- All though Senator Watters said the legislative sessions always involve Thursdays, Jennifer Eber reported the Committee survey on this matter indicated that Thursday was the preferred day of the week and that mornings were preferred. She then suggested to continue our current meeting schedule of Thursdays from 10:00am to 12:00 noon.

Reports On Any Cruelty Cases

- Tona McCarthy said he has several cases pending and all were small in nature. One case he related involved two (2) dogs in Bath, NH. Both dogs were emaciated. However, the Chief of Police declined to charge the owners because the owners surrendered the animals.

**Comments from Members/Guests**

- None were offered.

**Adjournment**

- With no further business to conduct, Sheila Johannesen motioned to adjourn. Dr. Jeri Zezula seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Co-Chair Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:52 am.

**Next Meeting**

- Date/Time: **Thursday, September 14, 2023 / 10:00 am-12:00 pm**
- Location: **Pope Memorial SPCA  
95 Silk Farm Road, Concord NH  
(Green Building on Right)**

Respectfully submitted,

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