



NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals
Monthly Meeting Minutes
September 14, 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 10:03 am by Co-Chair Dr. Jeri Zezula.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present (16)

- Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau (L)
- Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative (L)
- George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State & NH Musher's Association
- Thomas DeRosa – General Public
- Jennifer Eber – Co-Chair, General Public
- 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
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinarian Technician's Association
- Tom Seymour – Secretary, General Public
- David Watters – NH State Senator
- Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association (L)
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

Commissioners Absent (6)

- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Marga Culp – General Public
- Dr. Steve Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
- Mary Davis, UNH Cooperative Extension
- Chief David Goldstein – NH Police Chief's Association
- Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association

Public Present

- Bedford, NH Police Chief John Bryfonski (Filling in For Chief Goldstein)
- Jana McMillan, Hudson PD ACO

Introductions

- Dr. Jeri Zezula welcomed Bedford Police Chief John Bryfonski, who was filling in for Chief Goldstein, and Jana McMillan, Hudson PD ACO. Commission members introduced themselves and identified their role on the Commission.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Dr. Jeri Zezula asked if anyone had amendments for the June 2023 meeting minutes. With no amendments offered, Heather Faria motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Kurt Ehrenberg seconded the motion. The motion passed with 13 Aye, 0 Nay, and 3 Abstentions (due to absence).
- **Next Steps:**
 - Dr. Jeri Zezula to post the meeting minutes on the Commission website.

Old Business

Cost-of-Care Update

- Dr. Jeri Zezula led a discussion of the previously distributed summary of Cost of Care cases to date. It was clarified that the program will reimburse up to \$20 a day for animal care, though organizations may submit expenses for less than \$20 a day. Program reimbursements will not occur once the animals have been surrendered. The program is designed to accept application and payout on a quarterly frequency.
- Conversations between Dr. Zezula and Department of Agriculture Commissioner Jasper revealed that there is currently over \$400,000 in the fund with another \$300,000 to be transferred in the following fiscal year. The ability for the public to make donations to the fund have yet to be defined. Commissioner Jasper stated that there is not money automatically going into the cost of care fund from the commercial feed fees.
- Chief Bryfonski informed the Commission that this was the first he had heard of the Cost of Care fund. He said he suspected that few other police chiefs were aware of the fund and feels we need to do more to educate others regarding this fund. Kurt Ehrenburg agreed thinking we should do more to educate law enforcement at all levels. Kurt is working with NH Federation of Humane Societies to put on training for prosecutors, including police office prosecutors. Chief Bryfonski, as president of the Chief of Police Association said that he could help blast our more information on the cost of care fund or any other training.
- Heather Faria spoke about the NH Federation of Humane Organizations providing information and support to the municipalities they work with when completing the application. She said they have also had discussions about how it could be made possible for shelters to complete the application and submit directly.
- The Commission agreed we should continue to collect Cost of Care program data quarterly. It was also agreed that we should not interfere with the fund's budgeting requests as it is too soon to see if the amounts requested are excessive or insufficient.
- Senator Watters stated that he thought the caps of \$500 per animal and \$5,000 per case were too low. It was discussed that this cap appeared to be part of the regulations but not the RSA. Senator Watters expressed concern that the regulations went beyond the statutory provisions.

Survey on Animal Cruelty

- The volume of survey comments present difficulty in breaking out a meaningful analysis. Tyson Morrill noted that the General Public and Other categories account for over 30% of the comments made. He suggested taking another look at these two groups to see if the comments could be shifted to another group of specific interest. This would provide a consolidation of comments and add context to those same comments. Dr. Zezula offered to reconfigure the survey filtering and send the results to Tyson and Tom Seymour so they may take another look at quantifying and analyzing the data.
- Jennifer raised the issue of going back to the reason why we did the survey and to see if we could pull any general data from the survey that we could use as a press release to start general education/discussion about animal cruelty. Tyson stated that this could be done.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Dr. Zezula to reconfigure the survey filtering and send to Tyson and Tom Seymour so they may take another look at quantifying and analyzing the data.

Meeting Times/Place

- Jennifer Eber asked if Thursdays were still an accepted meeting day. The question was not definitively answered.
- The discussion turned to the meeting frequency. Heather Faria suggested we meet less than the prescribed eight times each session. She made motion to ask the Governor to revise the Executive Order to require a minimum of meeting 6 times each session. Many on the Commission felt that a minimum of 4 times a year would be a better fit. Heather revised her motion requesting we ask the Governor to revise the Executive Order to require a minimum of 4 meetings each session. Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy seconded the motion. The motion passed with 16 Aye, 0 Nay.
- Kurt Ehrenburg hoped we could move to remote work sessions, especially with regard to legislative work, as he felt this would improve attendance and expedite work. Work Sessions and Subcommittee work may be held remotely provided the numbers present did not equal the Commission quorum of 8.
- The group discussion that even with the minimum number at 4, we may still need more meetings to address issues throughout the year.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Co-chair Jennifer Eber to submit formal request to revise the Executive Order changing the minimum meeting frequency from 8 to 4.

New Business

Governor's Report Feedback

- While there has been no feedback, Trevor asked some legislative regarding the possible legislation noted at the end of the last Governor's Report. Dr. Zezula responded to the inquiries. No further response from the Governor's Office has been received.

Legislative Review / Preview

- Being early in the season, there were no bills to review.

- A number of Commission members reported that bills were in the works to ban hunting coyotes, to ban the use of rodenticides, and to ban the use of animals in product testing. It was noted that all issues wildlife related are not within the purview of this Commission.
- Jozi Best suggested legislation could be added to bolster the number of veterinary technicians entering the field and provide extra capacity for agencies with veterinarians strained beyond capacity. Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy and Representative Barbara Comtois explained the significant complexities involved with such an idea. Along with Wendy Munroe, they detailed all the work being done to provide the result Jozi was hoping for.

Laws Enforcement Training

- The 2-hour law enforcement training program is online and required of all recruits. However, the Police Standards and Training Council reports that the resources website has not been utilized. They said they don't think anyone knows the program is there. Chief Bryfonski felt law enforcement training should be mandatory with re-training every 3 to 5 years. He also said that online training is preferred as officers may take the classes suiting their schedules and it also saves the municipalities significant costs related to the class training time, alternate shift coverage, and overtime.

Reports On Any Cruelty Cases

- While no specific cases were discussed, Tona McCarthy brought up a case involving a boarding facility. Tona discovered that current regulations do not extend to boarding facilities. Boarding facilities lack the formal controls and inspections that are afforded to animal shelters and rescues. The ensuing conversation involved the intricacies and complications involved in trying to legislate boarding facilities and whether animal cruelty laws that were currently in place were sufficient to cover private businesses.

General Discussion on Goals for 2023/2024

- Topic omitted due to time constraints and will be carried over to the October meeting.

Comments from Members/Guests

- Topic omitted due to time constraints and will be carried over to the October meeting.

Adjournment

- With no further business to conduct, Representative Comtois motioned to adjourn. Sheriff Wright seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Co-Chair Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 12:02 pm.

Next Meeting

- Date/Time: **Thursday, September 14, 2023 / 10:00 am-12:00 pm**
- Location: **To Be Determined**

Respectfully submitted,

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