



NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals
Monthly Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2023

Call To Order

Having achieved a quorum, Jennifer Eber called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present (13)

Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Vet Med Association
Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau (L)
Marga Culp – General Public
Jennifer Eber – 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 – Humane Cruelty Investigator
Tyson Morrill – NH Sportsmen
Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
Wendy Munroe – NH Vet Tech Association
Tom Seymour – General Public
Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association (L)

Commissioners Absent (8)

Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
Cynthia Collins – General Public
George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State / NH Musers
Dr. Stephen Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
Thomas DeRosa – General Public
Chief David Goldstein – NH Police Chief's Association
David Watters – NH State Senator
Dr. Jeri Zezula – General Public

Public Present

None

Membership

Hannah Majewski, of the UNH Cooperative Extension, was introduced as the newest Commission member. She is in the process of completing the information to submit to the Governor's office to be appointed.

The meeting started with introductions given the fact that Hannah was new to the Commission.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Jennifer Eber asked for amendments to the January 2024 meeting minutes. Not hearing any, Heather Faria motioned to accept the meeting minutes. Wendy Munroe seconded the motion. The motion passed with 10 Aye, 0 Nay, and 3 Abstentions (due to absence).

Old Business

Cost of Care Update

Jennifer Eber reported that Jeri Zezula is still communicating with Commissioner Jasper at the Department of Agriculture. Commissioner Jasper said he has two new applications he has yet to process. He will be getting us more information on the cost of care.

Meeting Requirements & Governor's Office

Jennifer Eber advised that the Governor has approved the request to reduce the number of mandatory meetings from eight (8) to four (4). Meeting more than four times each session is permitted, but no less. She also said the Governor's Executive Order is being re-written and until that time, we still have the requirement of 8 meetings.

Focus Point: Goals for This Year

Review of Educational Resource List.

Tyson Morrill offered that we should be proactive for future actions/activities. He indicated that we should perhaps have a goal of educating the Governor and legislature on animal cruelty issues and the abilities of the Commission. Jennifer Eber indicated individuals could assist by testifying on topics as individuals or on behalf of their organization. She stated that Jeri Zezula had noted that the legislature often could use assistance on law enforcement issues.

Patricia Morris offered that we should push to have more clarity in current laws, especially the 14-day status conference requirement that courts seem to not understand. Trish observed that often the court does not understand what powers it has and the need to take action regarding the welfare of the animals. In addition, there needs to be more education on the cost of care fund, including its existence and how to apply. She summed it up as perhaps a general education of the judiciary and that a possible means to undertake it would be to update the Manual on these two topics. Jennifer Eber suggested this could fall under the education tier to further educate courts in order to educate on both status conference and cost of care.

Jennifer Eber mentioned that Jeri Zezula had shared her ideas to have a prosecutor assist with the work of the Commission. Patricia Morris offered that having somebody from the NH DOJ be a member of the Commission would be helpful and the Commission had tried in the past to have a NH DOJ attorney. Jennifer thought this could allow us to tap into DOJ resources.

Jozi Best felt there were too many goals listed and we should consider trimming the list down to a manageable size. Perhaps the list could be categorized such that each item would be a subcategory.

Heather Faria summarized the goals as (1) Improve the Administration of Animal Cruelty cases, including the reporting and processing through the law enforcement and court system; (2) Improve the methods for holding animals; and (3) Improve the cost of care system.

Jennifer Eber indicated that Dr. Crawford had sent an email stating that he supports additional educational opportunities. He notes that the public incorrectly assumes who has authority for animal issues and that only law enforcement may act in these instances and the public needs to be educated accordingly. Reporting to any other

authority lengthens the duration of the issue. Jozi Best offered that education is fine, but law enforcement can be reluctant to get involved. Sheila Johannesen offered that ACO frustrations occur where adequate resources are not readily available. Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy indicated that it often feels like we are not gaining ground despite smaller steps forward.

Sheriff Wright offered that perhaps goals should be defined first then plug applicable items under each goal to fulfill each objective. He said the Attorney General is the top law enforcement official in NH and they drive efforts statewide. Educational efforts are best pushed to, and through, the AG's Office. Legislation alone will not resolve issues. Jennifer Eber mentioned that about 2 years ago the Attorney General discussed having an attorney on staff handling animal cases as their prime responsibility. However, it does not appear that such position was filled. Sheriff Wright said the Attorney General can also drive effective restitution where needed and was supportive of having the AG have an attorney on the Commission.

Jozi Best made motion to request the Governor have an attorney from the NH DOJ have a seat on the Commission. Shelia Johannesen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Kurt Ehrenberg asked if the Governor's Office was supposed to have the liaison attend meetings. Jennifer Eber replied that they have been extended invitations. Trevor from the Governor's Office attended one meeting back at the Department of Safety in 2022 or 2023. It has been quite a while since a representative last attended. Patricia Morris suggested explaining the financial impact on municipalities and their tax dollars where cruelty cases are prohibitively expensive could incentivize attendance by the Governor's liaison. Jozi Best felt the Commission needs to be more action orientated to build stronger reputation with Governor's Office.

Marga Coulp suggested the Commission increase general public PR in order to enlist public assistance with policy and legislation change. She also thought that a campaign to educate public on reporting cruelty cases. She suggested doing an article in animal shelter mailers. Patricia Morris noted that past issues included the lack of funding for PSAs and other such publicity. A PSA is probably less expensive now with current technology. Jennifer Eber suggested that the Commission could create a goal to cover education of the public.

Jozi Best indicated her desire to have a representative from the Department of Agriculture where Dr. Crawford has had difficulty fitting these meetings into his hectic schedule. A designee is permitted per the Governor's Executive Order. Jennifer Eber said she would look into working with Dr. Crawford to see if we could have a representative from the Department of Agriculture.

Discussion of Two Goals to accomplish and roadmap for each.

New Business

Legislative Updates

House Bills:

LSR 2092/HB1117 (Stringham): Relative to protections from fraudulent untrained service animals.

Hearing on 1/31 was cancelled.

LSR 2098/HB1173 (Rochefort): Relative to disposition of vicious dogs.
No hearing date has been set.

LSR 2126/HB1182 (Read): Relative to equine practices & animal cruelty.
Hearing was on 1/16; work session was 1/31; Executive Session was 2/6; bill was designated as ITL.

LSR 2362/HB1316 (Mackenzie): Relative to dog co-ownership.
No hearing date has been set.

LSR 2244/HB1255 (Horrigan): Relative to historic horse racing moratorium.
Hearing was 1/30; work session set for 2/13; Executive Session set for 2/14.

LSR 2362/HB1316 (Mackenzie): Relative to co-ownership of dogs.
No hearing date has been set.

LSR 2431/HB1556 (Ammon): Relative to exemptions from rabies vaccine.
No hearing date has been set.

LSR 2432/HB1325 (Mannion): Relative to allowing private ownership of small-tailed monkeys, raccoons, foxes, skunks, otters, & kangaroos.
No hearing date has been set.

LSR 2552/HB1526 (Aron): Relative to conditional licensing of vets educated in other countries.
Hearing date was 2/6.

LSR 2708/HB1680 (Kelley): Relative to prohibiting retail sale of dogs, cats, & rabbits
Hearing 1/16; work session 1/31; Executive Session 2/6; bill was designated ITL.

LSR 2719/HB1102 (Read): Relative to definition of animal cruelty.
Hearings 1/16 & 1/22 cancelled.

LSR 2731/HB1501 (Hoell): Relative to repealing annual dog registrations.
No hearing date has been set.

LSR 2756/HB1505 (Prudhomme-O'Brien): Relative to establishing an animal abuse registry.
No hearing date has been set.

LSR 3136/HB1626 (McGuire): Relative to repeal of certain designated funds & relative to the apportionment of dog license fees.
Hearing 1/8; Executive Session 1/8; bill was designated OTP.

Senate Bills:

LSR 2921/SB587 (Pearl): Relative to animals brought into this state.
Hearing 1/9; Executive Session 1/18; bill was designated OTPA.

LSR 2941/SB385 (Pearl): Relative to the cost of care fund.

SB363 (Innis): Relative to wagering on simulcast dog racing.
Hearing 1/10; Executive Session 2/8; bill was designated OTP.

SB346 (Watters): Relative to the prohibition of dogs for hunting coyotes.

SB541 (Innis): Relative to the prohibition of cat and dog sales by retail pet stores.
Hearing 1/4; report 2/15; referred to interim study.

SB548 (Lang): Relative to removing gray squirrels from the definition of game animals.

SB97 (Watters): Relative to product testing on animals.

New Cruelty Cases

Patricia Morris: reported on a recent case involving rottweilers – 19 surrendered; 11 are in homes. There was an issue of whether a puppy that was born after the animals were seized was the property of the owner.

Marga Coupl: Reported on a case of huskies – 4 in tough shape. Charges have been filed.

Heather Faria: Hookset case involving lab mixes. All but 1 surrendered.

Comments from Members/Guests

Jozi Best mentioned that the Farm Bureau is hoping to expand efforts to retain more new veterinarians in NH. They are looking to increase funding for veterinarian students provided they stay within NH for 3 years.

Jennifer Eber asked if publicity helps with cruelty or abuse cases in the future in terms of public awareness of the issue and funding. It was offered that it can be tough for supporting agencies trying to respond to public inquiries.

Jennifer Eber asked Heather Faria if this meeting space would be available for the March meeting. Heather said she would need to check.

Adjournment

With no further business to conduct, Sheila Johannesen motioned to adjourn. Jozi Best seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Jennifer Eber adjourned the meeting at 11:48 am.

Next Meeting

March 14, 2024, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, Location to Be Determined

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Seymour, Secretary
Jennifer Eber, Co-Chair