



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

September 19, 2024

Call To Order

Achieving a quorum (8), Co-Chair Dr. Jeri Zezula called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present (15)

Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Vet Med Association
Doug Barry – NH Federation of Humane Organizations
Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau Cynthia Collins – General Public (L)
Cynthia Collins – General Public
Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative (L)
Tom DeRosa – General Public
Jennifer Eber – General Public / Co-Chair
Tona McCarthy – Humane Cruelty Investigator
Tyson Morrill – NH Sportsmen (L)
Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
Wendy Munroe – NH Vet Tech Association
Bjarna O'Brien – ACO Association of NH (L)
Tom Seymour – General Public / Secretary
Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association (L)
Jeri Zezula – General Public / Co-Chair

Commissioners Absent (7)

George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State / NH Musers
Marga Culp – General Public
Dr. Stephen Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States
Chief David Goldstein – NH Police Chief's Association
Hannah Majewski – UNH Cooperative Extension
David Watters – NH State Senator

Public Present

Joan O'Brien – NH Animal Rights League
Lindsay Hamrick – Humane Society of The United States

Introduction of Members & Public Attendees

Attending Commissioners introduced themselves to new Commissioners and the public attendees. New Commissioners gave an overview of their positions and the groups they represented. Public attendees introduced themselves and the groups they were representing.

Review and Approval of June 2024 Minutes

Amendment of the June minutes was requested revising the meeting date as the year was wrong. It written as 2023 and should have been 2024. No other amendments were offered. Jennifer Eber motioned to accept the minutes as amended. Wendy Munroe seconded the motion. The motion passed with 13 Ayes, 0 Nays, and 2 abstentions (Tom DeRosa and Patricia Morris) due to absence.

Old Business

Correspondence with Governor's Office

The Governor's liaison has responded but was not able to make this meeting. The Executive Council has approved new members (two present today) and the new number of mandatory meetings (going from 8 to 4). The request to add a representative from the AG's Office has not been taken up.

Appointment of Cooperative Extension, ACOANH Members, and NEFHO Members

Please note reference above.

Additional Changes to Membership

Investigating the possible additions of representatives from the AG's Office and NH Municipal Association. Dr. Jeri Zezula offered to contact NH Municipal Association.

Judicial Council – Formal Request for October presentation

Follow up on possible presentation to Judicial Council as was discussed with Jay Buckey. Status conferences would be of special focus. Jennifer Eber offered to reach out to obtain date for presentation (Oct?). Trish Morris is interested in attending. Once Jennifer has the date, she will distribute to the full group.

New Hampshire Petsave - "Report Animal Cruelty"

Jennifer Eber reported working with Heather Faria on the website. Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy said the NH Veterinarian Medical Association and NEFHO plans to relaunch the website. She will advise once running and pass along the URL.

NH Kid Governor – Action Items

The NH Kid Governor's term will be expiring in a couple of months. Discussion revolved around whether we want to do any further collaboration before she leaves office. Jennifer Eber will be in contact with her and will report back at November's meeting.

Meeting Dates: September 19, November 7, January 9, March 6, May 8

As mentioned above (Correspondence with Governor's Office), a reduced mandatory meeting schedule was approved. The Commission must have at least 4 meeting per session. However, the Commission opted for 5 meetings and the dates are listed above. Dr. Jeri Zezula said we will need to play this by ear as legislation may dictate additional meetings.

New Business

Draft bill for Statutory Commission

For benefit of the new Commissioners, Dr. Jeri Zezula provided background information. She described the difficulty doing things as the Commission must obtain permissions, which slows the process. In prior meetings, Senator Watters recognized these issues and suggested the Commission become a statutory commission. Jennifer Eber also noted we would be able to obtain funding, grants, etc. Jeri set up a working committee that looked at different state commissions for suggestions. The Commission on Aging bore the closest resemblance to our objectives and was used as a model.

There was discussion on some of the drawbacks of a statutory commission in that you are at the mercy of the legislature. Trish Morris discussed her prior dealings with other Governors. There was also discussion about whether we should be affiliated with a Department, such as the Department of Agriculture. After considerable discussion regarding the possibility of seeing who the next Governor would be, Representative Comtois made motion to postpone further discussion and any decision making until our November meeting. Sheriff Wright seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Draft Torture Bill

Laws in other states were reviewed and draft definitions were developed and distributed. A rigorous review of proposals ensued. Jozi Best suggested defining the term “omission.” She felt the term is too broad and objective. She fears it is subject to broad interpretation and needs to be narrowed. Trish Morris and Jennifer Eber explained that it is a term of art to describe something that is not an affirmative act. They both said the term pertains to **purposeful** acts or omissions and is already in numerous RSAs. Any conduct that did not meet the definition of torture would be a fact presented at trial.

Trish suggested using a single definition to keep language the same. She motioned to adopt definition number 1. Sheriff Wright seconded the motion. The motion passed with 12 ayes, 0 nays, with Jozi Best, Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy, and Representative Comtois abstaining.

Legislative Preview

Representative Comtois advised that legislation to ban the use of glue traps and the declawing of cats were slated for this upcoming session. There was discussion about glue traps.

New Cruelty Cases/Issues

ACO O'Brien said she was encountering a trend where dogs are being abandoned. The bulk are coming from out of state. Doug Barry indicated he was seeing the same thing, especially with animals requiring medical care.

Trish Morris discussed a case involving 17 charges in Laconia related to the docking of dogs' tails. This included \$30,000 in restitution for animal care costs. She expressed disappointment that they had to address thru civil courts where the typical process failed to resolve the issue.

Tyson Morrill said he has experienced difficulty related to the dissemination of the state's cost-of-care fund information while trying to explain the fund to an officer. Jozi Best agrees and has encountered same issue – people do not know about it and it is not readily found. The Department of Agriculture is in charge of fund administration. Representative Comtois suggested contacting NHMA where they are focused on municipal expenses. Representative Comtois and/or Jeri will raise the issue with the Department of Agriculture. If it is on this page, then all other interested parties can provide link of their web page.

Tona McCarthy asked if the county sheriffs could assist with local search warrants, and such. Sheriff Wright offered to open time during a Sheriffs Association meeting for a presentation detailing the proposal. However, he also said the prosecutors should be involved as well. Representative Comtois provided background information regarding past legislation covering this topic.

Additional Input / Comments – Members & Public Attendees

Lindsay Hamrick offered up an online resource. She said that Shelteranimalscount.org provides a great deal of useful information that would be of benefit to the Commission.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Representative Comtois and seconded by Sheriff Wright passed unanimously. Dr. Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:40 am.

Next Meeting

November 7, 2024, 10 am - 12 pm
At the Banks Humane Education Center, Pope Memorial SPCA

Respectfully submitted,

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