



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

**November 7, 2024**

**Call To Order**

Achieving a quorum (8 required), Co-Chair Dr. Jeri Zezula called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.

**Roll Call**

Commissioners Present (11)

Doug Barry – NH Federation of Humane Organizations  
Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau  
Marga Coulp – General Public  
Jennifer Eber – General Public / Co-Chair  
Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States  
Tona McCarthy – Humane Cruelty Investigator  
Wendy Munroe – NH Vet Tech Association  
Tom Seymour – General Public / Secretary  
David Watters – NH State Senator  
Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association (L)  
Jeri Zezula – General Public / Co-Chair

Commissioners Absent (79)

Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Vet Med Association  
Cynthia Collins – General Public  
Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative  
Dr. Stephen Crawford – NH State Veterinarian  
Tom DeRosa – General Public  
Hannah Majewski – UNH Cooperative Extension  
Tyson Morrill – NH Sportsmen  
Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association  
Bjarna O'Brien – ACO Association of NH

Public Present

Marla Fields – NHDOGS (Commissioner Status Pending)  
Joan O'Brien – NH Animal Rights League  
Ellie Lively & Father and NH Civics Representative – NH Kid Governor

**Introduction of Members & Public Attendees**

Attending Commissioners introduced themselves to the public attendees. Public attendees introduced themselves and the groups they were representing.

**Review and Approval of The September 2024 Minutes**

With no amendments offered, Jozi Best motioned to accept the meeting minutes and Doug Barry seconded the motion. The motion passed with 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, and 3 abstentions (Marga Coulp, Kurt Ehrenburg, & Senator Watters) due to absence.

## Old Business

### Correspondence with Governor's Office

Marla Fields' appointment is underway. She should be confirmed in about a month.

Marla is George Cook's replacement representing dog groups where George has retired.

Chief David Goldstein has retired from active law enforcement and there are questions as to whether he will continue to represent the NH Police Chief's Association on this Commission. Jennifer will reach out to Chief Goldstein.

UNH Extension still does not have a representative as Hanna never submitted her letter of interest and resume. Jeri will reach out to move that process along.

### Judicial Council

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, a meeting took place with Jay Buckey of the NH Judicial Council. Jennifer Eber provided background information for the newest Commission members and guests in attendance. Resulting from the recent meeting, Jay Buckey suggested drafting specific language for a court rule (district and superior court) regarding status conferences. Jennifer offered to create a draft for the Commission's review and approval.

A brief discussion regarding search warrants and animal seizures and Jozi inquired as to whether we could write rules that would require the court or law enforcement to have some standard to seize animals. There was further discussion on probable cause.

### Draft Torture Bill

Senator Watters is moving forward with this bill and will be asking for LSR action. He also requested for the Commission to offer up to five (5) members of the NH House of Representatives to sign on to the proposed legislation. Members should submit suggestions to Senator Watters for consideration.

This topic shifted to a brief discussion regarding abandonment. Ellie Lively, the NH Kid Governor, offered her thoughts on the subject and she is in the process of writing a blog on animal abandonment.. Senator Watters offered to have Ellie come to speak to the NH Senate regarding the amendment to add torture language.

### New Hampshire PetSave

Dr. Jeri Zezula reported that Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy is still gathering the necessary information to bring the website up as they do not wish to start from scratch. Once the website is up, a review of the content will follow.

### Revisit Abandoned Pet Issue

At our last meeting, Bjarna O'Brien raised the problem of pet abandonment. There was a discussion of how the cruelty statute has a very vague definition of abandonment and that certain abandonment does not necessarily meet the definition of cruelty. Tona offered that if an animal is left at the shelter, the staff will assess the medical condition of the animal and only pursue charges if the animal has not been properly cared for. It was decided that the best way to address this issue is through education.

### NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food Correspondence re: Cost of Care

Department Commissioner Jasper has been contacted and asked where to find information about the Cost of Care program for public use and if the associated documentation has been revised to agree with recent law changes. No response has been noted as of this meeting. It

was suggested that Commissioner Jasper could be asked at a Farm Bureau conference being held this weekend.

## **New Business**

### Draft bill for Statutory Commission

Senator Watters offered a few pros and cons to consider when deciding if the Commission would prefer to remain in effect by Executive Order or by NH Statute. Where any legislative action would occur next year, there is plenty of time to query Governor-Elect Ayotte. He felt that due to longevity of the Commission, it is reasonable to think it could continue by Executive Order. That said, if the Commission is created by statute there would be staff help, it would add authority to commission, and provide a greater voice with legislature. The language to provide a fund that is able to accept donations would need to have expenditures approved. If continuing under an Executive Order, an EO revision should include the fund its operation.

Senator Watters indicated the Commission can also independently ask for the ability of the Commission to raise and expend funds. The funds would need to be held by a Department, but it would allow the Commission to seek donations and expend funds. Jennifer raised that we had discussed costs associated with public outreach. Doug asked if any donations would be tax deductible and Senator Watters said yes. Jeri added that people could make donations to cost of care fund and those deductions were tax deductible.

The co-chairs will reach out to Governor-Elect Ayotte to see if she has any thoughts regarding this subject.

### Legislative Preview

It is still early in this session, and it is expected to have more LSRs than is currently in play. The legislation entered thus far are a ban on the declawing of cats, a redefining of the duties for NH Fish and Game, and establishing maximum municipal funding after natural disasters.

### New Cruelty Cases/Issues

Nothing was reported.

## **Additional Input / Comments – Members & Public Attendees**

The Commission was reminded of the free online training offerings from The International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association on “The Foundations of Forensics”. All training sessions are held remotely. One need only sign up.

## **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was made by Sheriff Wright and seconded by Marga Coulp. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:52 am.

## **Next Meeting**

January 9, 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