



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

January 9, 2025

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 (L)
Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
Jennifer Eber – General Public / Co-Chair
Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States (L)
Tona McCarthy – Humane Cruelty Investigator
Tyson Morrill – NH Sportsmen
Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association
Tom Seymour – General Public / Secretary
David Watters – NH State Senator
Jeri Zezula – General Public / Co-Chair

Commissioners Absent (6)

Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Vet Med Association
Cynthia Collins – General Public
Dr. Stephen Crawford – NH State Veterinarian
Tom DeRosa – General Public
Bjarna O'Brien – ACO Association of NH
Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

Commissioners Pending Appointment (3)

Marla Fields – NHDOGS (In Attendance)
Hannah Majewski – UNH Cooperative Extension (Absent)
Chief David Suckling – NH Police Chiefs Association (In Attendance)

Public Present

Linda Dionne – NH Animal Rights League

Introduction of Members & Public Attendees

Attending Commissioners, including those pending appointment, introduced themselves to the public attendee. Public attendee introduced themselves and the group they were representing.

Review and Approval of The September 2024 Minutes

With no amendments offered, Doug Barry motioned to accept the meeting minutes and Jozi Best seconded the motion. The motion passed with 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, and 3 abstentions (Representative Comtois, Tyson Morrill, Trish Morris) due to absence.

Handouts for This Meeting (5)

Cost of Care Spreadsheet

Old Business

Correspondence with Governor's Office

Three appointments remain pending. The Governor-elect and her office will be in place before this day is done. It is hoped the new Governor will review the pending appointments soon.

Update on Commission Members

There are three prospective Commission members awaiting appointment: Marla Fields representing NHDOGS, Hannah Majewski representing the UNH Cooperative Extension, and Police Chief David Suckling representing the NH Police Chiefs Association.

Marga Coulp retired. This opens a seat for a General Public representative.

Wendy Munroe, representing the NH Vet Tech Association, offered to step aside for another to serve. To date, no one has volunteered leaving Wendy in this seat.

Judicial Council

The Commission has had prior discussions on cases in which the Court does not hold a status conference within 14 days of charges being filed when there are live animals being seized and/or the Court does not realize its full powers to address issues related to the animals. In discussion with the Judicial Council, it was suggested that the Commission could draft court rules to present to the Council at its meeting. The Council met in January, prior to this meeting and so Jennifer Eber will draft rules to discuss at the next Commission meeting and hopefully present to the Council at its meeting in the spring.

NH DAMF Correspondence (re Cost of Care)

The Cost of Care application is not found on the Department of Agriculture's website. The Department Commissioner advised that the application will likely be added once the department's new website is up and running which he said will happen in February. The Commission will stay on top of this issue.

New Business

Draft bill for Statutory Commission

Discussion ensued as to whether to proceed crafting the language for legislation or to table until we are able to determine if working with the new Governor will be able to accomplish the goals of the Commission. . It was decided to proceed with language development in order to have the proposal ready, just in case. The new Governor may choose to review the existing Executive Order and leave unchanged, cancel, or revise to her preference.

No further revisions to lines 1 through 53 were noted. The balance of the draft to line 91 was discussed with special attention given to the suggested membership. Of note was the reduction in public representation from 6 to 4, the additions of the New Hampshire Municipal Association and the New Hampshire Animal Rights League, and increasing the representatives from the New Hampshire House from one to two. It was decided to hold off on adding the Animal Rights League until the Commission has had a presentation from the group.

There was a motion to seek to add the NH Municipal Association and NH DOJ (previous vote approving) to the Commission and reach out to the Governor's office to inquire whether this could be done in new Executive Order. Doug Barry motioned to approve the draft legislation as

noted above. Kurt Ehrenburg seconded the motion. The motion passed with 7 ayes, 0 nays, 3 no vote (left early), and 1 recusal (Tom Seymour is also on the Board of Directors of the New Hampshire Municipal Association).

Legislative Preview

See Attachment #1

Discussion on required sheriff's training bill

Representative Comtois has introduced a bill (HB 153) requiring each county to have a deputy sheriff and a state police officer "receive training regarding animal cruelty". At this time law enforcement recruits receive a 2-hour training session which is basic in nature and is now offered online. Kurt Ehrenburg said that UNH Durham offers ACO training and suggested this could be utilized possible use versus recreating something. Jozi Best advised the Farm Bureau also has bill in play, which is essentially the same. Dr. Zezula mentioned that animal investigations are significantly different than typical law enforcement investigations. Representative Comtois asked if she should add county attorneys. Jennifer Eber asked if the Commission should take a position on this bill. It was generally accepted that the Commission should wait until the bill pushes through the House with the official language. Senator Watters said the Commission should be willing to attend and testify at legislative hearings. Members must remember they cannot testify on behalf of the Commission, but can as individuals.

Doug Barry, Trish Morris, Dr. Jeri Zezula, Jennifer Eber and Marla Fields offered to act as an ad-hoc committee and advise Representative Comtois on suggested amendments. Commission members may contact any of the 4 mentioned above with suggestions.

Draft Torture Definition Bill

Senator Watters bill to amend RSA 644 is moving forward. Major revision included the term "purposeful" which adds definitive reference to intent. Lengthy discussion took place without this Commission taking a position. The Commission discussed taking a vote to support the legislative but decided to put this topic on hold until next meeting.

New Cruelty Cases/Issues

None were reported.

Additional Input / Comments – Members & Public Attendees

Dr. Jeri Zezula presented items found in her office that could be used as a reference training materials with youth. The items were coloring books that emphasized proper care and treatment of pets and domestic animals.

Tyson Morrill asked if the Commission should schedule a meeting in February in order to keep with the rapid processing to new legislation. Jennifer Eber suggested the Commission stay "on call" should there be legislative that the Commission wants to support and the new Governor approves such position.. If approved, a February meeting will be scheduled. Jennifer will advise accordingly.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, motion to adjourn was made by Kurt Ehrenburg and seconded by Doug Barry. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:57 am.

Next Scheduled Meeting

March 6, 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

Attachment #1

Bill Number	HB/SB	Bill Title	Sponsor(s)	Status
2025-0018	HB	removing the penalty of forfeiture for non-payment of dog licenses.	Tom Mannion	LSR
2025-0031	HB	prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.	Mike Bordes	LSR
2025-0041	HB	relative to the duties of the fish and game commission.	Cathryn Harvey	LSR
2025-0115	HB	increasing the cost of service for notice of civil forfeiture of unlicensed dogs to the rate for certified mail.	Charlie St. Clair	LSR
2025-0255	HB	enabling local governing bodies to regulate the muzzling of dogs.	Jodi Newell	LSR
2025-0256	HB	allowing the ownership of certain squirrels and raccoons.	James Spillane	LSR
2025-0319	SB	proclaiming the Virginia opossum the state marsupial of New Hampshire.	Donovan Fenton	LSR
2025-0329	SB	declaring the third week in September to be New Hampshire Service Dog week.	David Watters	LSR
2025-0481	HB	prohibiting the sale and use of adhesive-based rodent traps.	Linda Haskins	LSR
2025-0495	HB	requiring that two or more law enforcement officers in each county receive training regarding animal cruelty.	Barbara Comtois	LSR
2025-0537	HB	relative to group licenses for dogs.	Mike Bordes	LSR
2025-0540	HB	relative to applications to the cost of care fund for livestock care.	Barbara Comtois	LSR
2025-0541	HB	relative to animal chiropractors.	Diane Kelley	LSR
2025-0550	HB	raising the minimum fine for attacks by nuisance dogs.	Len Turcotte	LSR
2025-0570	HB	relative to the use of the term "foal" and "colt."	Peter Bixby	
2025-0666	HB	prohibiting the importation and sale of live bait fish from out of state.	Patrick Long	LSR
2025-0711	HB	directing the department of agriculture markets and food to create forms for businesses to request information about service animals and establishing a committee to study the protection of business owners from requests to accommodate customers with fraudulent or untrained service animals.	Jerry Stringham	LSR
2025-0769	HB	defining and prohibiting wanton animal waste and prohibiting certain wildlife hunting contests.	Kristina Schultz	LSR
2025-0783	HB	relative to animal testing funded by New Hampshire state funds.	Diane Kelley	LSR
2025-0789	HB	regulating the use of leashed tracking dogs in the recovery of deer moose and bear.	Michael Murphy	LSR

2025-0813	HB	allowing the sale of rabbit meat in intrastate commerce.	Kevin Verville	LSR
2025-0956	SB	establishing a marine habitat fee.	David Watters	
2025-0823	HB	relative to loss of consortium involving pets.	Ellen Read (Prime)	
2025-1090	SB	relative to the definition of "torture" in animal abuse cases.	David Watters	LSR