



*Governor's Task Force
On the Humane Treatment of Animals
Meeting Minutes for August 9, 2007*

The following committee members were present: Sheila Presby, Dick Wentzell, Joyce Matott, Joanne Bourbeau, Stephanie Frommer, Mark Ellingwood, Roni McCall, Dr. Steve Crawford, Steve Sprowl, George Cook, Virginia Hokenstrom, Elin Phinizy, Susan Morrell, Peter Marsh and Senator Sheila Roberge

Also present were: Diane Puckhaber, Nancy Johnson, Katie Lisuik, Peter Makfin, Anne Taylor and Jean Slepian.

Kelly Ayotte, NH Attorney General spoke of the connection between animal abuse and human violence. Domestic violence situations are another means in which an animal may also be involved in animal cruelty.

Kelly told of how she recently spoke to Wayne Pacelle of HSUS as he is reaching out to the attorney generals across the country to speak about the definite challenges of bringing animal cruelty cases into court.

Joanne Bourbeau and Steve Sprowl - spoke about dog fighting and cockfighting magazines being sold in NH on Amazon.com. Amazon has publicly stated that they are only a conduit for selling the magazines.

Kelly stated selling these magazines is illegal under NH law. These magazines are essentially selling contraband.

She went on to state that animal cruelty cases are often difficult cases to prosecute - murder, white collar crime are more what the AG's office handles - country attorneys are the front line to getting the animal cruelty cases into the courts.

Training for law enforcement concerns were another thing Kelly spoke about and mentioned that Dr. Zezula's courses at UNH were one of the ways to go to further educate people regarding animal cruelty.

Kelly spoke of advocating for increased training and/or conferences is something that this taskforce might be able to focus attention on to help educate the public as well as law enforcement.

Interested in our recommendations to the governor and would like to review them and welcome our thoughts and concerns.

Senator Roberge spoke about Dr. Zezula's courses and the survey's we sent out to get input from the various PD's shelters, cruelty investigators.

Also she spoke about the online course that was begun this past year and that the next one comes up again in September.

Joanne Bourbeau mentioned to Kelly Ayotte that she would like to see animal cruelty investigations be a part of the law enforcement curriculum.

Kelly said because of the limited time to do the initial police academy it would be more effective if it becomes part of the police standards and training as a continuing education program after they graduate from the academy.

Kelly would like to see a continuing education class on this for new police officers at UNH because the police department has to take continuing education courses yearly. She mentioned that the courses might be structured similarly to the domestic violence and child abuse conferences that the DA's office offers.

Dr. Crawford asked of Kelly if the classes work better on-line or a face-to-face conference. Kelly stated the District Attorney's office created a distance learning training on cyber crimes and seems to have gotten more people to participate. The online course also contained a testing component in order for the course to complete.

Steve Sprowl - stated animal cruelty should be taught at the academy - Steve as a 23 year police officer and now SPCA cruelty investigator said "When they get to the animal cruelty section of the criminal code they are told only to read about it on their time and not during the academy time" Steve went on to say "Towns often don't allow the ACO's to take private courses because of the towns finances". He further stated that Police Chief's have contacted Steve regarding the laws as they don't often understand the nuances of the law and that ACO's go to the part time academy but are not getting to learn about animal cruelty in the time frame allotted for the courses.

Kelly state perhaps a specific course for the ACO's and individuals who are dealing with animals might be one of the recommendations this taskforce made to the governor.

Sheila Presby spoke about how the Funding subcommittee was working on ideas to get money to pay for court cases - suggestions such as lottery tickets was one of the suggested ways of getting some funds but that the lottery law is written that it must go to education and was unclear how the race tracks were getting funds from the advertising of lottery tickets. Peter Marsh stated that the racetracks are now not getting this money from lottery advertising.

Next Executive Councilor Ray Wieczorek spoke informally to the taskforce.

Mr. Wieczorek is from District 4 - which includes Manchester and 10 other towns - consisting of some 250,000 constituents.

Ray has had pets all his life - in WWII - as a young man he had a half coon dog and German shepherd who he volunteered as a century dog for the army. Ray has a news clipping stating "Boy too young to fight for America sends dog instead - the dog served 4 years - was in the Philippines and South Pacific - and the dog was returned to Ray after service.

The dog was given a Ruptured duckpin which is given to WWII discharged veterans. - the dog wore the pin and at the local tavern always was fed hot dogs as his reward for service.

Ray also mentioned he had a collie who had 13 pups and had to have his children help him take care of the feedings because of the number of pups.

Ray's current dog is a cockapoo - is 12 years old. - and recently had to take go to the cardiologist because of some breathing issues. Ray was amazed at the cost for medical procedures and medications - the veterinarian had said the dog has about 9-12 months left in her but she is doing well and is coming along well - Ray thinks the dog is going to prove the veterinarian wrong.

Ray remembers when this group was formed under Governor Benson. Ray stated he has nothing but contempt for those people who harm animals. And asked our taskforce member Susan Morrell not to listen when he spoke of what he would do if he came across someone harming an animal.

He understands that the taskforce has a difficult task to get people to treat animals properly and looks forward to the recommendations we make to the Governor regarding the humane treatment of animals.

Executive Councilor Ray Wieczorek ended with the following quote from Otto Von Bismark "People who love sausage and people who believe in justice should never watch either of them being made".

At this point the taskforce went into its Agenda for today's meeting by first approving the minutes of the previous taskforce meeting.

- Old Business

 - Subcommittee Updates:

 - Subcommittee of Re-Codification

 - Peter Marsh mentioned that the window for introducing new legislation is September 10-23 for the house and for the Senate it is November

 - Subcommittee on Education

Joanne Bourbeau stated that the Conference on Domestic Violence was a great success

Subcommittee on Funding

Dick Wentzell went on record stating he still believes the registry of deeds will be receptive to increasing fee's to fund court animal cruelty cases. He cited House Bill 2 for LCHIP. Senator Roberge reminded Dick that this bill passed only as a legislative issue and that this initiative is a dead issue as reported in previous meetings.

Dick had other agenda items:

1. That the taskforce purchase a tape recorder for the taskforce secretary - Roni McCall stated that she does not feel she needs a tape recorder to take minutes. Senator Roberge reminded Dick that this taskforce has no budget and cannot therefore make such a purchase.

2. Dick requested that if a taskforce member were to miss three meetings that you are off the taskforce - Elin Phinizy said only the governor can remove appointed taskforce members.

3. Dick requested that announcements of meeting notice to be put on the NH cruelty taskforce website - Dick was reminded that this already is in place.

Mark Ellingwood suggested that perhaps once a year the taskforce members be polled and asked if they intend to continue to be members

Dick requested that the secretary call taskforce members to remind them of the next taskforce meeting as he felt that email was not an adequate means of notification. Senator Roberge addressed this and stated that as chair she felt the email notice and the notices on the website was sufficient notification.

Dick then requested that the taskforce members should RSVP to the announcement regarding the meetings and that if they don't reply, the taskforce secretary contact them. Roni McCall replied to this that this was again overkill and that as adults we should be able to keep our own calendars.

Dick then went on to request that the Taskforce be allowed to make its own rules - the answer is no, the Governor's mission statement is clear on what is asked of this taskforce.

Senator Roberge opened up the discussion of "Where does the taskforce go from here?"

Should we meet every month - Susan Morrell suggested perhaps every other month

George Cook suggested that if we have a more substantial agenda it would require us to meet more frequently.

Many of the taskforce members have stated they are quite frustrated with the way things have panned out. Some of the reasons are:

- In 2006 no legislation passed as a result of this taskforce initiative
- The taskforce cannot come up with a way to get funding to help defer the cost of getting the animal cruelty cases into court, especially for small towns who are already financially strapped dealing with the large quantities of animals seized.

Senator Roberge went onto say that the Bedford Animal Rescue League is proving to be successful to raising funds to help the community deal with animals with several initiatives including a grant to help fund low cost spay and neuters.

The Senator also felt that Education is where we should be focusing our efforts.

Susan Morrell stated her frustration that we can't come up with end result legislation - she suggested that we concentrate on the recommendations to the Governor rather than trying to find solutions to the problems of animal cruelty. She believes that we can still be hands on as individuals and in our jobs but not as a taskforce. Susan asked is it "Our job as a taskforce to find solutions to getting funding?"

Susan suggested we step back and make the recommendations and not try to solve the problem. We keep wanting to reach out to the next step before we have completed the initial step we are working on.

Peter Marsh agreed - the mission says to evaluate and provide recommendations. Peter doesn't think it is the role of this taskforce to be a legislative initiator. He further went on to state that the taskforce has been in effect for 3 years and hasn't been able to work effectively - Peter further suggested that we take from all the past minutes what we have worked on

Peter feels that NH animal cruelty laws are strong but the problem lies in how the people who maintain the laws translate them through enforcement.

Peter recommended the taskforce do a really good report to the governor and proceed from there.

Senator Roberge then asked if anyone had anything else they wanted to report or discuss.

Mark Ellingwood let the taskforce know that the Piping plovers problem with feral cats was resolved successfully this year - that it was a win win for both Fish and Game and the feral cats support community.

Dick Wentzell requested that the governor be invited to our next meeting. - Peter Marsh suggested this be done - after the recommendation report to the Governor is completed.

Joyce Matott stated she reads sports illustrated and has become very interested in the Vick dog fighting case - Joyce asked how NH law stands regarding dog fighting

- Dr. Crawford answered stating - 644-8A animal fighting - our laws are strong in NH - that it is a Class B felony of up to 3 ½ to 7 years in jail. Those attending the fight would also be prosecuted. Those involved in planning, owning, owning the property are also prosecuted under NH law.

Dr. Crawford - asked that the Humane Taskforce web be re-written regarding anonymous reporting of animal cruelty. The State Veterinarians office only takes complaints about animal welfare cases in writing and not anonymously as the website has erroneously stated.

Dr. Crawford then went on to update the taskforce on the 2006 horse seizure case - he stated that county attorney took most of the time getting to know the laws and did an excellent job defending this case. He further suggested we contact Jack Bell and tell him how much of a good job he did for this case and the horses. The defense attorney argued that RSA 644 regarding horses is in contradiction of RSA 435A regarding horses. Dr. Crawford suggested that both attorneys might want to come talk to this taskforce regarding their experience with this case.

The meeting then went to a discussion of the agenda for the next meeting. The taskforce agreed that the Governor's report needs to be completed therefore everyone should come into the next meeting prepared to complete this report

Dr. Crawford suggested that we each send comments and recommendations from the draft report to the Governor be sent to the taskforce secretary who in turn will send them collectively onto each member of the taskforce. The deadline for these comments, recommendations and/or suggestions is October 1st to the taskforce secretary at noabuse@inhumane.org.

The taskforce secretary will include an email copy of the current draft report to each taskforce member as soon as possible.

Our next taskforce meeting is scheduled for October 15th at 2pm at which time the taskforce will complete the recommendation report to the Governor.

Submitted on August 15, 2007 by Roni McCall, Taskforce Secretary