

## Humane treatment of animals task force meeting

The meeting convened at 2:04 PM

Michael Freda opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He thanked the task force members for joining and acknowledged the public who came to attend the meeting. He also thanked CT-N for broadcasting the meeting and thanked the viewers across the state. Task force members introduced themselves.

Kimberly introduced herself as a veterinarian from North Haven  
Mark Bailey, chairman of City of New Haven Humane Commission  
Paula Poplawski, chair of New Britain Animal Welfare League Commission  
Dianne Collette, NECOG ACO and co-chairman of task force  
Ray Connors, Chairman of CT Department of Agriculture, supervisor of animal control division

Michael Freda asked for public comment on the agenda. There was no public comment on the agenda, so the committee moved on to Item # 2—old business

Mr. Freda took the minutes from the last meeting and distilled these minutes into action points that were bundled under the category of “old business”.

Michael Freda passed out a summarization of the minutes from the last meeting. This became the basis for discussion. Mr. Freda stated that the action points were intended to create a list of things to hand over to the state legislature to work on in the upcoming legislative session. He stated that the goal of this is to put in more effective systems and procedures to enhance animal welfare in Connecticut.

Item 2 A: a review and discussion of the minutes of the October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

Mr. Freda asked for comment on the minutes of the October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

There were no questions or comments on the October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting minutes.

He then entertained a motion to accept the minutes of the October 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting

Ray Connors moved acceptance of the minutes of the October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

Mark Bailey seconded the motion

There was no other discussion regarding the minutes.

All voted in favor of accepting the minutes and the motion passed.

Item 2C: Review of all motions passed at October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

Mr. Freda asked the task force to look at the summarization of the meeting

10 points:

Point #1: Deciding whether the task force should formally recommend to the state a change of designation for the classification of dog pounds within municipalities and changing this to animal shelters—this was a motion that was accepted and passed at the October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

Mr. Freda asked for comment on this.

Mark Bailey: asked whether the task force was to comment on just the content or whether the task force was having the discussion on each of these items and the reports and follow-ups that might work with the action points.

Mr. Freda responded that would like to discuss all the points, but was open to discussion as to how the task force would like to proceed. He suggested starting with the first action point and working on from there. He then asked for input on the first item. He mentioned that the designation of a building as an “animal shelter” was better than calling a building a “pound”, as this does away with an antiquated designation. He asked the task force if they would like to move forward with this recommendation.

Mr. Bailey stated that he was in favor of recommending a change in the designation and that agrees that there are negative associations with the term “dog pound”. He also stated that with the recommendation there should be a statement of vision or an ethical philosophy pertaining to animal welfare that comes with calling something an animal shelter.

Mr. Freda asked for additional comments.

Mr. Connors responded that when he brought this up last month at the last meeting, it was so that the task force could recommend that statutory change in the language because currently all state regulations have laws that deal with municipal shelters say “dog pound” on them, so the recommendation would be to make this a statutory change in the wording.

Miss Poplawski asked whether changing the name meant a philosophical change.

Raymond responded that he looked at this from the statutory language aspect.

Mark said that he was in favor of the recommendation, and also asked how the task force felt about changing the language.

Mr. Freda stated that he agreed that this proposed language change was an interesting one, and questioned whether changing the statutory language would change the philosophy, and perhaps the task force could also develop procedures to help these facilities change their philosophy as well. He then asked for comment.

Mark agreed that this was a good way to approach the issue and voiced that it would be a good idea to stop calling shelters “dog pounds” because these facilities often house other animals, such as cats.

Raymond commented that from a regulatory standpoint and looking at the way that the law is written, municipalities are only obligated to impound stray dogs and to quarantine cats for bites, and that there’s nothing that allows them to house stray cats unless the town adopts an ordinance to do so. So there would be several changes that would have to be made to put this into law.

Mr. Freda asked for additional comments.

Kimberly said that she believes the term “shelter” is a more appropriate term for today’s standards, and, rightly or wrongly, the public does want to go to a shelter versus an impound, whether it is to get their dog or find a new one.

Mr. Freda asked for additional feedback. There was no additional feedback. He then requested a motion to decide whether to recommend this legislative language change to change the term “dog pound” to “animal shelter”. He asked for a motion on this.

Mr. Bailey made the motion. Miss Poplawski seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All task force members voted in favor.

Mr. Freda then asked the task force to look at Item 2 on the agenda. He mentioned that the task force was still in sections 2 B and 2 C of the agenda, and probably going into section 2 D

Point 2: task force was to review the current list of animal shelters and determine the standards and review Connecticut’s municipal animal shelters to improve adoption practices and awareness.

Paula commented that she would like to see things like shelter capacity and contact information on the current list of shelters, along with whether the shelter is run by the police department or the city.

Raymond responded that this kind of information is not something kept by his department, but it is something that can be collected.

Mr. Freda stated that he thought this was a very good recommendation because the task force has a list of all of the shelters across Connecticut. He asked whether Raymond thought this was a worthwhile task for the task force or whether the task force had the resources available to compile this information.

Raymond stated that it may be difficult to find the resources to add this information to the current list of shelters.

Mr. Freda suggested that the task force could develop a subcommittee of 2 or 3 members to develop this list, and that one way to compile the data might be to send out a blast email to all of the ACOs (Animal Control Officers) across the state and asking them for this information.

Raymond responded that even his was a hurdle because his department doesn’t have email addresses for all of the ACOs in the state.

Paula said that she would work on this by pulling together as much information as she could, which she would have prepared for the next meeting. Dianne stated that she would be happy to help Paula with this.

Mr. Freda noted that Paula and Dianne would be working on developing this information which would include a database of emails and other information. He then asked for any other comments or feedback on Point #2.

Mark said that the task force needed to gain an awareness of the shelter practices that are in place now in order to determine the standards of review within Connecticut's municipal animal shelters. He suggested putting together a survey that would incorporate data on volunteer participation, shelter operations, live release rates, and euthanasia would be helpful to the task force.

Kimberly asked whether there was a true standard for the dog pound shelters across the state, and whether there was standard testing of dog temperaments prior to adoption.

Dianne responded that there aren't any standards as far as temperament testing but that ACOs have regulations that they have to follow for facility operation.

Kimberly asked whether there were regulations regarding the overall practice in each shelter, and if there were any regulations beyond the current state recommendations.

Dianne responded that there are no current regulations beyond the current state recommendations.

Michael said that there are housing regulations, but that it's up to each municipality to adopt their own policies as far as their adoption protocols or their euthanasia policies. The state does not get involved in telling municipalities how to operate their facilities.

Michael asked whether the task force can take the current regulations and use them as a foundation to set additional standards knowing that the state doesn't regulate municipalities.

Mark said that his work and study of the shelters in his region indicates that many shelters are looking for this kind of guidance. He suggested gaining a better understanding of current practices and using a survey to gather this information. He mentioned that there is a great degree of variability pertaining to shelter operation across the state.

Raymond responded that this is where public testimony will play a huge role where the task force can find out what is going on statewide. He mentioned that it would be helpful to invite national groups to come in so that the task force can find out what's going on in other parts of the country with regards to standards and protocol.

Mr. Freda thanked Mark for volunteering to step in and help and mentioned that this would be an issue for discussion at the December meeting. He stated that at the December meeting and every meeting thereafter, the task force would include public testimony as an agenda item.

Mark asked whether the task force could get some representatives from national shelter organizations that have advanced in particular areas, and that he had some recommendations as to whom the task force could invite to testify.

Raymond acknowledged that Amy Hornish from the Humane Society of the United States was in attendance and that the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

plays an active role in the legislative process, and that these organizations would likely welcome the opportunity to speak before the task force.

Mr. Freda noted that for Point # 2, Mark is going to come up with a list of recommendations for the task force in terms of standards of review for municipal shelters to submit for legislative consideration.

Mark also mentioned that he offered to create a survey so the task force can gather information so that the task force can follow through on this.

Mr. Freda thanked Mark for his correction and asked for further comment on Point #2. There was no discussion. The group then moved on Point #3: to determine whether or not the task force should recommend training standards to be adhered to at the shelter level for ACOs. He asked for comments on this.

Kimberly asked for clarification as to whether there are current standards or training that prospective officers have to go through.

Dianne responded that right now, new ACOs are required to do 80 hours of training, and present ACOs are required to do 6 hours, and that new ACOs are also required to do 5 hours of Connecticut law training with the commissioner.

Kimberly asked whether training referred to properly handling an animal incident, or knowing and being familiar with the laws. She also asked what kind of training new ACOs got with respect to how their shelter runs, their budget, paperwork, or animal behavior.

Raymond stated that the statute has actually spells out exactly what the curriculum is supposed to be, and that it shadows the national ACO's association training academy, and this includes everything from shelter operation to constitutional law to animal behavior to proper food and diet to animal first aid. New ACOs are also required to go through a minimum of 80 hours, and most have significantly more hours of training than this. The annual training is also a minimum of 6 hours of annual training, but a lot of officers go way past that. His office frequently sees people doing 50-60 hours per year.

Kimberly commented on her personal experience of being in New Haven and now North Haven for now a total of 10 years working at an emergency hospital where she's worked with a lot of ACOs, and she's unfortunately had to deal with a lot of situations where the ACO did not know how to properly handle dogs we ll. She stated that she didn't really feel safe with some people, and that 6 hours is too low for training. She stated that ACOs should go through some sort of cross-check to make sure that their training is standard across the state, and not just in that town where the ACO is better trained or in towns with more competent ACOs.

Raymond responded that this was likely the purpose of the law that called for mandatory training across the state. He mentioned that the law has only been in effect for 2 years, so it may take some time to weed out the bad ACOs, and that since the law has been instated, he's seen more competent ACOs.

Mark mentioned that there are lots of opportunities for supplemental training, often offered by animal welfare organizations that award certificates upon completion, and that the task force should recommend bringing this to the attention of current ACOs. He was also concerned about the small amount of hours required of new ACOs.

Michael asked whether it would be helpful if the task force reviewed at the next meeting the actual standards and laws that are in place and perhaps build off of that. He asked whether this would be a plausible action point for Point #3.

Members of the task force agreed that this would be a good idea.

Mr. Freda stated that at the next task force meeting, they will be reviewing the actual statute that's in place, and then make suggestions based on this review.

The group moved on to Point #4 to determine whether its timely or too premature to reach out to the national organizations on animal welfare for funding, and if it is too early for this, to come up with a time frame.

Paula stated that she didn't think that the task force was ready to present this, as it was still reviewing the material.

Mark shared two documents to share related to the expectations of grant organizations. He reached out to various organizations, being Maddy's Fund and the Multnomah County Shelter in Oregon, the Sarasota County Shelter in Florida, and other shelters that have received national funding. One of the documents gives details as to what the requirements are for national funding and what kinds of things these organizations are looking for. This was also an opportunity to discuss the Asimolar accords and the role they play in terms of shelters getting national funding. Some organizations are looking for an adherence to the Asimolar Accords, which are the result of a gathering that took place in 2004 that propose a national standard for the humane treatment of animals in public shelters.

Mr. Freda asked if perhaps this data was beyond the current scope of the task force and this would be helpful further down the line.

Other task force members commented that it was a bit too early to discuss this, and that they needed to work on more concrete things first.

Mark stated that this was an opportunity for the task force to discuss national standards and reach out to organizations that have received national funding and see what they've done. The data he provided was meant to provide a framework for further discussion.

Mr. Freda spoke on Point #4, stating that the task force was not yet ready to act on it, but that it would be discussed at later meetings and acted upon at the appropriate time. He thanked Mark for the documentation provided and asked for additional discussion on Point #4. There was no additional discussion. The task force moved on to Point #5: to review suggested language and

improve existing legislation regarding standard practice of humane welfare for animals. This was a motion accepted and passed at the last meeting

Michael commented that Point #5 tied into what the task force discussed earlier and suggested that the task force add this to its discussion items pertaining to statute at the next meeting.

Mark suggested that it would be helpful for the task force to know which state statutes would be helpful to focus on, as there are many state laws to sift through.

The task force moved on to item #6 regarding a review of other states' animal abuse registry policies and potential adopters' past history with animals. Mr. Freda noted that this was a topic of discussion that the task force had at its last meeting regarding animal welfare.

Paula asked where the task force would get this information from.

Michael said that the information was supposed to be from the legislative review process, and asked Raymond if he had any feedback.

Raymond said that when ACOs are doing adoptions, they don't have access to NCIC records, and it would be helpful if ACOs could access this information. He also said it would be helpful to have ACOs that had CLEC training so that they could see if a person's name is on the national crime index.

Paula asked if most shelters have internet and computers.

Raymond responded that some shelters are still behind the times in terms of technology.

Mark responded that New Haven does have internet access at their shelter facility, and that the ACO is able to access this through his telephone, and that they are currently implementing shelter management software programs as a means of updating their current system.

Mr. Freda said that in relation Point #6, he would have the Office of Legislative Research and would also contact CCM to look into what other states do.

Task force members voiced their approval of this.

Mr. Freda said that he would like to have this research done by either the next meeting or at the group's meeting in January.

The meeting moved on to Point #7: a review of whether the task force should move forward with the animal abuse registry and which state agency should manage this. The motion was passed and accepted at the last meeting, so Mr. Freda wanted to open it up to the floor for discussion. He recommended that the task force start with Item # 6 and review what other states have been doing, and use this as a foundation to build on Item # 7.

Mark asked Ray for input on how the new child abuse/ animal abuse law works.

Ray summarized this law, stating that in October 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, the public act was implemented that requires ACOs to report suspected animal abuse to the commissioner of agriculture within 48 hours. That information is then compiled and turned over to the Department of Children and Families, which reviews this information and cross-references it to see if they have any open or active cases dealing with the suspected parties involved in suspected animal abuse. At the same time, if DCF suspects animal abuse, they also notify the commissioner of agriculture. In just the past month, 8 cases have been submitted to DCF and DCF has submitted two cases to the Commissioner of Agriculture.

Mark stated that it would be helpful to continue to collect statistics and data as far as the impact of the new law.

Ray said that he would be happy to supply this information after January 1st and that he thought the law was making a huge difference.

Mr. Freda reiterated that the task force would be collecting data under Point # 6 and using that to build into Point # 7, and the task force will continue to review statistical information. The task force moved on to Point # 8: review any research done on other models regarding rescues and adoptions. This Point was a motion passed and accepted at the last meeting.

Mark stated that he had met with the Multnomah county shelter for the purpose of doing research and distributed a handout with the details of his research. This shelter serves as a public animal shelter for Portland and the area around it and the shelter adheres to the Asimolar Accords. In 2006, this shelter adhered to these principles and was able to increase their live release rate and put healthy and treatable animals into homes. This allowed them to increase their live release rate, between 2006 and 2013, from 78% to 92% with dogs and with cats from 37% to 82%. The shelter was able to accomplish this by adhering to the Asimolar Accords and by getting national and benevolent funding. This also helped the shelter to establish a community standard that healthy and treatable animals deserve homes. The program at this particular shelter is data-driven, which allowed them to examine the euthanasia rate and address various issues related to euthanasia. This shelter also collaborated with other shelters, which helped to contribute to their live release rate. Also, the term “no-kill” is synonymous with the term “healthy and treatable” and doesn’t suggest that animals that are terminally ill and suffering will be sustained regardless. The idea behind a no-kill community is that the veterinary, rescue communities and public shelters work together and pool resources to find ways for healthy and treatable animals to find homes. This particular shelter has received additional funding because of the good work that they’ve done.

Los Angeles, Baltimore, Jacksonville and Denver are all cities that have committed as a community to have a no-kill environment.

Mr. Freda distributed an article Columbus, Georgia, which was another city that was able to reduce their euthanasia rate from 78% to 19% over a 3-year period. The article also highlighted an 8-point plan that depicted the shelter’s philosophy.



Mark commented that the plan indicated in the article was a lot like the philosophy used at the Multnomah county shelter in Portland.

Ray asked how the Multnomah county shelter addresses the issue of dangerous dogs.

Mark responded that there was an evaluation process and dogs that are evaluated as being dangerous go through an attempted rehabilitation program, which works in many cases. The dog is humanely euthanized if this doesn't work.

Kimberly reported that she had worked with a bull dog that was, by the breed's nature, more aggressive than other dogs and she worked with the ACO to find her a better placement where she is not a danger to anyone. She spoke of the merits of proper placement and finding good homes for these animals.

Raymond stated that he's familiar with one ACO who is very good at getting animals into good homes. He suggested that the task force recommend that ACOs be required to submit monthly reports to the department of agriculture that list the reasons for euthanasia, as this kind of data would be very helpful to the task force.

Kimberly asked about the source of where these dogs are coming from. She voiced concern that the public is not really well-educated about the resources available to them with regards to spaying and neutering and general animal wellness care. She believed that this particular population was feeding the shelters and perhaps the task force could consider finding ways to reduce the number of dogs entering shelters.

Other task force members agreed with Kimberly's statement.

Raymond said that public outreach and education are both very important and his department has been doing humane education in schools. There are also some municipal dog pounds that have dog food banks and there are some towns' food pantries that stock dog food. There are also low-cost vaccination clinics that are available to dog owners that are short on resources. It is also helpful to train ACOs in handling families with that want to get rid of their pets, as sometimes these people will turn their dogs out onto the streets if the shelters don't take them in.

Regarding action Point # 8, Mr. Freda suggested that the task force review any research done on other models regarding rescues and adoptions. He suggested that the task force use OLR and CCM to determine what other programs exist to prevent animals from going into shelters and also make a recommendation as to how the state can reduce the euthanasia rate.

Mark agreed with this, and spoke to the merits of collecting data at the state level. He also mentioned that the national expectation is that shelters don't euthanize for space, and the task force should focus on helping shelters avoid having to do this.

Other task force members agreed that it would be helpful for shelters to solicit national funding.

Mr. Freda stated that he would work with CCM and see if they have any research on euthanasia for space, and suggested that the task force contact OLR regarding the same topic. The task force moved on to Point # 9: review any research done regarding national organizations who use a volunteer program in shelters and see if there is any input on job descriptions. This was a motion passed and accepted at the last meeting. Mr. Freda asked for input.

Mark stated that when he visited the Multnomah county shelter, he visited with their volunteer coordinator, which was a paid position with the responsibility of overseeing and regulating volunteer activity at the shelter. He had a copy of the volunteer training manual from this shelter and offered to share it with the task force. One of the things that made the volunteer program at this shelter successful was that the volunteer coordinator would match tasks to volunteers' skill sets, which made it easier on everyone.

Mr. Freda noted that Hamden and North Haven share an animal control facility and the volunteer program there has been unsuccessful due to lack of infrastructure. He suggested that the task force come up with guidelines as to the roles volunteers should play in these shelters so that municipalities can get better outcomes from their volunteer programs.

Paula agreed with this approach.

Mark said that the problem he's seen has been largely with poor volunteer management. He has seen models of very successful volunteer programs and offered the Multnomah county volunteer handbook as a means of developing a model that would work for Connecticut.

Ray spoke to the importance of having a volunteer coordinator in the case that municipalities have volunteers in their shelters. However, he does not think that it should be mandated that municipalities hire volunteer coordinators if they do not have volunteer programs. Volunteers are frequently very helpful to ACOs and there are benefits to animals as well as the volunteers themselves. If a municipality does elect to have a volunteer program, they should hire a volunteer coordinator.

Mr. Freda brought up a comment that Ray made at the last meeting where he mentioned that some of the senior citizens come in and participate as volunteers to reduce animal stress, and this has the added benefit of providing therapy for the seniors and improving their quality of life.

Kimberly spoke to the benefits of having volunteers help at animal shelters, as this also allows dogs to be exposed to multiple people, which means they're less likely to be entirely attached to one person.

Mr. Freda suggested that the task force come up with a list of set job responsibilities for volunteers that will take into account the information Mark provided and expand on these ideas.

The task force moved on to Point # 10: Review any research done by OLR regarding what other states are doing with regards to 501 (c) 3 organizations or rescues that work with municipal shelters. There is no current research done by OLR on this subject and Mr. Freda proposed making this an action point for the next meeting.

Mr. Freda referred back to Agenda Item # 2 under Old business, and noted that the task force has gone through all of the action points.

Mark asked whether the task force needed to make any sort of motion to carry forward with the action plans.

Mr. Freda said that the motions had already been passed, so the task force did not need a motion. He directed the task force to Item 2 G under other old business and asked if there were any questions or comments about other old business. There were no questions or comments. He then directed the task force to Item # 4, which he categorized as an informational update. He noted that there is a collaborative program taking place in January not necessarily under the purview of the task force, but he did want to make it known as an informational item for the task force and the public. The Police Officers Standard Training Council (POST) is collaborating with an organization to host a training for ACOs on dog fighting.

Ray elaborated that this is a blood sports training program for police officers and ACOs, prosecutors and judges. The training is going to take place on January 13<sup>th</sup>. Ray has been working with the training coordinator and POST, and the training does not have any costs associated with it. This is part of the continuing education program for ACOs and is a component of police officers' in-service training. There doesn't seem to be that much organized dog fighting in Connecticut, but it could still happen.

Mr. Freda stated that he had spoken with Susan Rainville, the training coordinator and that he'll be meeting with her next week and he would like to extend the invitation to task force members to meet with her.

Mark mentioned that there has been a resurgence of discussions around dog fighting and he brought up the social media aspect of dog fighting awareness campaigns. He brought up a case in Tennessee where 50 dogs were found in a fighting ring and spoke to the importance of discussing this topic more in-depth.

Kimberly said she was interested in attending the event.

Mr. Freda asked for those who wished to attend the training to email him so that he could make arrangements. He expressed his appreciation for the POST training and said he would like to see more things like this in the future.

The task force then moved on to Item # 5 on the agenda, being open forum and commission member feedback.

Paula noted that the task force is to review the statute and current training for ACOs and she requested that this be put on the December agenda. Michael responded that this would be placed on the December agenda.

Mark said that he appreciated the distillation of the 10 talking points for this meeting and suggested that the same thing be done for the next meeting.

Mr. Freda said that he would do the same thing for the next meeting.

Ray reiterated that he would like to have public testimony at the next task force meeting.

Mr. Freda noted that there were two suggestions for the next agenda, being that there needed to be public testimony at the next meeting and that the task force also review current statutes and training.

Mark asked whether the public testimony was intended to be open testimony, or if there would be specific topics that the public could comment on.

Ray responded that this would be open testimony and that it would be good for the task force to hear what people are thinking.

Mr. Freda stated that the group would work toward this goal and that the meeting would now go into a public comment section under Point #6

Sergeant Keller from the New Britain Police department spoke before the task force . She has been overseeing the animal control facility for the past year. Regarding improving adoption control practices, she did an overhaul of the adoption form when she took over the shelter. The new form asks more questions so that ACOs can have a better idea of the kinds of homes that these animals are going into. She suggested that the state mandate a standard adoption form, as this would allow municipalities to obtain the same information across the board.

Regarding background checks, Sgt. Keller has used judicial databases to search for prior criminal convictions, and found this helpful. She also said that in the task force's recommendations for ACO training, they should emphasize hands-on training, as this ensures that ACOs know how to properly handle animals. ACOs can encounter some very dangerous dogs, and it's imperative that they get the proper training to ensure that animals are handled safely.

Sgt. Keller also suggested that new ACOs do some form of an internship with an existing ACO and that perhaps animal control departments should be tiered in a similar fashion to police departments. Also, police officers should not be overlooked in terms of training—Sgt. Keller gave an example of herself attending a required 2-hour animal control training as part of her qualifications to become a police officer, but this was never spoken of again in the police department. When an ACO is not available, the police officers take animal calls. Typically these calls are referred to the ACO, which can be overwhelming in urban areas. The task force needs to look at recommending a re-training of the police force on animal law, as a lot of officers aren't well-versed on this, which can lead to the officer avoiding the situation altogether. If ACOs become more comfortable with the laws, they will be better at enforcing them.

Sgt. Keller also said that education is an important aspect of law enforcement. If municipalities can get more dogs licensed, which people are required to do under state law, then ACOs and police officers can do a better job of keeping track of dogs. It would also be helpful if police officers had greater familiarity with animal laws, as there are more police officers than ACOs and they interact with more people and more animals. Pertaining to cross-reporting of animal abuse and child abuse to DCF, she discussed the fact that DCF is not typically first on the scene of an incident, but that this is typically handled by police officers, so if there is to be cross-reporting, police officers should be able to report child abuse as well as animal abuse.

Sgt. Keller also passed a breeder's ordinance in New Britain, which requires people who breed dogs to have breeder's permits and litter permits to ensure that breeders aren't overbreeding their dogs. She stated that this is one way to control the population of dogs in the city. Her department also did a door-to-door canvas that she did to see how many dogs in New Britain were licensed. They found that during this time of enforcement, 111 people got their dogs licensed and they handed out 50 city ordinance violations.

Kimberly asked how Sgt. Keller handles a situation where there is a pregnant licensed dog that is not licensed for breeding.

Sgt. Keller said that right now, there is a lax ordinance on the breeder's permits for the first year, but that ACOs and police officers do give verbal warnings if they find someone with a pregnant dog that is not licensed to breed. She keeps track of this information in a log book, so if they go back to the same place and find more puppies, then the animal control department will seize the dog.

Kimberly asked whether Sgt. Keller referred people to a low-cost spay and neuter clinic in the case that she finds someone breeding dogs without a license.

Sgt. Keller responded that this is something her department does, and that she works hard to educate the dog-owning community regarding vaccinations and licensing. One of the issues is that people sometimes use their dogs as a source of income, and those are the people that her department is targeting.

Mark asked the task force if instituting a breeder's ordinance could become state law.

Ray said he was going to discuss the details of Sgt. Keller's ordinance with her, and that he would be better able to discuss this after he's had a chance to get the details.

Sgt. Keller then discussed what her department does with regard to keeping track of euthanasia. She does not euthanize for space, and she has her ACO keep files on the dogs that are euthanized and they do use temperament as a qualification when doing intake of new dogs. She stated that the municipality doesn't want to take the responsibility of adopting out a dog that may be harmful since they behave differently when they're in the shelter, so her department does a lot of evaluation of dogs before and after they are brought into the shelter. She suggested that perhaps the state could apply for funding for a rehabilitation center where municipalities can take their problem dogs that are aggressive. It is difficult for municipalities to rehabilitate these dogs, as this is a long process, but perhaps there can be a state facility for these animals.

Mark commented that having such a facility is feasible in Connecticut, and said that national funding groups are likely to fund this sort of thing.

Sgt. Keller also elaborated on the volunteer program at the shelter in New Britain. She said that due to bad experiences in the past, they have done away with the volunteer program. There is, however, a community service officer program in New Britain where volunteers will go through

a training program and are able to go out and proactively patrol. Sgt. Keller is cross-training these individuals to work at the shelter where they help with adoption procedures and have been working with dogs and are starting to gain more access to the shelter. This is particularly helpful with the dogs that are kenneled too much or become too attached to one person.

Sgt. Keller has also been working with the corporation council on instituting a zoning ordinance regarding multifamily buildings. One of the issues with these is that there tend to be lots of dogs in these buildings that aren't allowed outside, so the dogs become hostile and are more likely to bite people. Also, due to the fact that some New Britain residents move frequently, they can't always take their dogs with them when they move, so it becomes the job of the animal shelter to take them in. One of the ways that they're working to make this better, is through enforcement of licenses, and her hope is that, through licensing more dogs, more responsible dog owners will be identified and fewer people that are irresponsible will own dogs.

Mr. Freda told the task force that he's requested that Sgt. Keller become a member of the task force and that she would be a member by January.

Task force members voiced their approval of this recommendation.

Kimberly addressed some of Sgt. Keller's testimony, stating that when shelters turn away dogs, the owners often bring them to her for euthanasia, and she knows that if she tells them no, the dog often ends up on the street any way and back with animal control.

Sgt. Keller said that she had spoken with another officer from Hartford and that both cities have noticed greater numbers of dogs that they've taken in over the last 2 months. She said that if dogs are adoptable they will absolutely take them in unless there isn't room in the shelter.

Kimberly agreed, and said that irresponsible dog owners should be held accountable. She also discussed the issue of people adopting dogs that are found to have issues, then going back to the municipality and demanding that they fix whatever the defect the dog has. She suggested that there should be language on the adoption form to protect municipalities from this potential cost.

Sgt. Keller said that in addition to adjusting New Britain's adoption forms, she has people sign a waiver stating that the adopter is accepting 100% responsibility for the dog, and that the municipality is not going to be financially responsible for any future costs.

Kimberly agreed that this was a good idea, and likely helps the shelter reduce costs.

Sgt. Keller said that one of the things that has made her successful, is that she has hand-picked the team that works with her, which means that the ACOs she has are very competent.

Kimberly asked Sgt. Keller about the education of police officers in handling animal control cases.

Sgt. Keller said she often works to get more police officers into the shelter to work with the dogs so they're more familiar with them.

Mark commented that it is a good idea to have a standardized adoption form and asked if this could be put on the task force agenda. He also asked Sgt. Keller about the relationships that she's been building with rescue organizations in New Britain.

Sgt. Keller said that they do work with a few rescue organizations, but there are not state regulations on these organizations. These organizations often come in and only take small, adoptable dogs, as opposed to dogs that have been in the shelter for a while that are larger and perhaps less adoptable. She expressed concern over these shelters giving these dogs out to foster homes that do not go through background checks, as there aren't state regulations on these rescues.

She did recently get permission to use foster families in New Britain, and noted that these families will get a home visit and a background check to ensure that they can be trusted. She noted that sometimes the rescue groups are the biggest hoarders of animals because they want to take all of them in.

Mark noted that there are reputable foster organizations that are accountable for the work they do, and that this was something to look into more. He suggested that the task force should develop standards for evaluating these rescue organizations so that ACOs and the public can trust them.

Sgt. Keller said that she would like to see rescue organizations be endorsed by the state so that it's easy to tell if they are going to be trustworthy and make sure the dogs go to good fosters.

Paula commented that Sgt. Keller has required dogs in New Britain to have a parvovirus vaccination, and that she would like to see this done at the state level.

Raymond stated that currently, only rabies vaccinations are required, as rabies is a public health risk, and that vets aren't required to report parvovirus cases to the state. He also made some clarifications with regards to ACO training. His department is responsible for training new ACOs when municipalities only have one ACO. They have been able to add an hour to POST training. He's also seen a lot more sergeants at the municipal level, and his department has done a lot of internal investigations where they assisted municipalities with issues that they had with ACOs. It's more common practice for supervisors to oversee ACOs now, which is more beneficial. He asked Sgt. Keller if the increase in impoundments over the last few months has had anything to do with the new ordinance.

Sgt. Keller responded that it's likely that the new ordinance has had an impact on the increase in impoundments, but that she hopes it's also having the effect of getting responsible dog owners to get their dogs vaccinated. She said she has noticed that numbers typically rise in October and go down in February. She suspects that this is because people tend to move in the summer time and when they live in their new apartments that don't allow dogs, there's a one-or two-month grace period where the landlord allows the dog, and then after that's over, the dog has to go.

Kimberly commented that she sees the fewest dogs in October and the most dogs after the new year, and this might have something to do with the trend that Sgt. Keller sees at her shelter.

Mr. Freda thanked Sgt. Keller for her time and asked for additional public comment.

Susan Linker from Our Friends Animal Sanctuary was next to speak. She discussed the fact that a lot of the animals being adopted from municipal pounds are not spayed or neutered prior to leaving. While there is a voucher program in a lot of these municipalities, only about 60% of adopters use this program. Also, most municipalities don't keep statistics on euthanasia of cats and Ms. Linker suggested that if there could be some equal treatment in terms of these statistics, it would be helpful. She also mentioned that many of the municipal shelters are in buildings that are falling apart and perhaps in towns' capital improvement plans, they could either build newer buildings or repair existing ones.

With regard to animal rescue groups, Ms. Linker said that she would love to see the professionalization of these organizations and develop a list of these organizations that are viable nonprofits. She suggested that any reputable shelter would welcome the opportunity to be licensed, which would allow them to distinguish themselves from less reputable organizations. She also recommended that to improve dog licensing, the state could require veterinarians to forward copies of rabies vaccinations to town clerks' offices so that ACOs could compare the rabies vaccination lists with the licensing lists and see who has been licensed and who hasn't gotten a rabies vaccination. This would increase revenue to towns and also increase licensing.

Mark mentioned that in New Haven, dogs that are adopted go directly to the veterinarian to be spayed or neutered and vaccinated. He also stated that there are several new facilities being built in Connecticut.

Ray also commented that there are lots of municipal shelters being built statewide.

Michael thanked the task force and the public for their attendance and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kimberly moved to adjourn the meeting. Mark seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 PM