

Task Force on the Humane Treatment of Animals in Regional and Municipal Shelters

Meeting Minutes  
January 9<sup>th</sup> 2015

Members Present:

Michael Freda  
Mark Bailey  
Dr. Kimberly Macdonald  
Paula Poplawski  
Sgt. Paula Keller

Members Absent:

Raymond Connors  
Deborah Fuller  
Diane Collette

Others in Attendance:

Laura Burban  
Gordon Willard  
Elizabeth Abbe  
Debbie Monsom

Meeting Facilitator: Michael J. Freda

The regular meeting of the Task Force on the Humane Treatment of Animals in Regional and Municipal shelters was called to order at 2:14 PM, in the State of Connecticut Legislative Office Building (LOB), 300 Capitol Avenue, Room 2B, Hartford, CT 06106 by Michael Freda.

*Public Comments:*

Michael Freda convened the meeting and asked the task force members to introduce themselves. Before public comments are made, Mr. Freda passed out a manual that he prepared for everyone. Mr. Freda then goes through the different sections of the manual. After going through the manual and asking if there were any questions from the task force members Mr. Freda moved on to item II of the agenda, public comment relative to the agenda. Seeing none he moved on to Item III of the agenda, review and discussion of minutes of December 3, 2014 meeting.

*Review and Discussion of minutes of previous meeting:*

Freda then asks if there are any comments on the minutes.

Mark Bailey asks Kimberly if her name is being spelled correctly in the minutes.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Freda asks if there is a formal motion to accept the minutes.  
The motion was made by Paula Poplawski and seconded by Sgt. Paula Keller.

Mr. Freda asks if there were any other comments and seeing none all voted aye.

Mr. Freda then passed out a template for the minutes, which he has asked the Planning and Development committee to consider using.

*Old Business:*

Mr. Freda moved on to Item V on the agenda, old business. Mr. Freda explained that in this task force they take the minutes from the previous meeting and make them into an action plan of discussion. Mr. Freda stated that the action plan for the current meeting had nine items and item one was identifying individual member priority list of goals and objections. He then stated his goal was to know the other task member's priorities so that they could see where the common priorities are and focus in on those while reconciling any discrepancies of opinion. He then opened it up for discussion.

Sgt. Keller stated that her first goal was addressing one of the numbers in the MACO report that Mr. Freda has sent. She stated that the number that concerned her the most was the 18,072, which is the number of animals that were impounded in municipal shelters across Connecticut in a one year period of time. She stated to lower the euthanasia rate that number has to go down.

Sgt. Keller stated the amount of money that it takes to care for the dogs in the shelter is estimated to be over \$1 million that municipalites have to pay. To lower this number she suggested that the licensing have to be enforced more.

Sgt. Keller goes on to state that the live release number in suburban areas are much lower than urban areas. Sgt. Keller said one of her goals is to see if there is available funding from the state to enforce the violations of not licensing dogs in urban areas. She also would like to educate police officers state wide in animal enforcement.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she would like to see standard application process for adoptions, standards and a registry for rescues and fosters, training for ACOs specifically how to handle a wildlife situation instead of destroying the animal. She also stated that she would like to see stronger penalties for animal abuse and a state mandate for spay, neuter and breeding regulations.

Dr. Macdonald stated that she likes the goals of the previous speakers and would like to see a collaborate structure where rescues shelters and animal control officers can work together to make sure the animals are getting cared for in a timely fashion. She would also like for animal control officers to get more appropriate education.

Mr. Bailey supported everything said so far and will dedicate his resources to help achieve these goals. He stated that he wishes that all animals who are homeless are receiving humane care to the best medical standards. He also stated that he would like to standardize these goals on a

national level. Mr. Bailey would also like to see a proper amount of data supplied in order to improve the humane treatment of animals.

Mr. Freda stated that he would like the task force members to send him their recommendations to have them memorialized.

Mr. Freda then moved on to item 2 on the action plan.

Mr. Bailey stated that the mission statement is in draft form

Mr. Freda asked if there was any discussion on the mission statement.

Ms. Poplawski stated that there were members of the task force missing and that the task force should wait before moving forward with the topic until the other members have had a say

Mr. Freda states that Raymond Connors and Diane Collette are not present at the meeting

Mr. Bailey stated that they are not proposing to move forward with the language just where they are currently on the language

Mr. Freda stated that the task force will table the topic and discuss it in the next meeting. Mr. Freda then moved on to item three on the MACO report analysis and asked if there was any observation or comments

Sgt. Keller stated that the best live release rates were in suburban areas with single family homes and that the live release rates drop in the towns and cities that are urban. Sgt. Keller also stated that if the intake number drops then the euthanasia number goes down and the live release rate goes up.

Sgt. Keller went on to say that the MACO reports aren't always representing the true picture of what's going on in the state, giving dog bites as an example of increased euthanasia statistics.

Mr. Freda said that he would love to hear recommendations on statistics of the MACO report.

Mr. Bailey agreed with Sgt. Keller and would like to see statistics broken down more than the MACO report gives. Mr. Bailey also noted that improving the live release number comes with a lot of funding.

Ms. Poplawski said she was having difficulty looking at the chart because she believed it was mislabeled.

Dr. Macdonald stated that it was ordered backwards.

Mr. Freda then stated that the live release rates were labeled in ascending order not descending order.

Dr. Macdonald stated that looking at the chart in green it is important to look at the number of towns that achieved the 88.42% live release rate. She stated that the number of animals impounded for each municipality is different.

Mr. Bailey stated that the formulas were based on per 100 animals. Mr. Bailey stated that the live release formula is there to compel shelters to look at the other numbers to see what was high or low and what to improve on and that there were several different factors to take into account with each different shelter.

Sgt. Keller stated that another thing that may throw off numbers is that the report isn't giving what shelters also take in cats, so there is a mixed number between cats and dogs.

Mr. Bailey stated that the similar breakdown in the formula he was speaking of does separate cats and dogs, but there is one number that mixes it. Mr. Bailey stated that is incredibly important to separate cats and dogs because cats seem to go underrepresented in humane welfare.

Sgt. Keller stated that Raymond Connors had made a comment via email that some towns deal with hoarding cases which will throw the numbers off. Sgt. Keller says that the number that she is looking at that is important the number of animals that are redeemed. Sgt. Keller stated that enforcing the licensing is a daunting task and that if the state is willing to spend money to accomplish the task there would be a significant drop in the number of intakes in two to three years.

Mr. Bailey stated that the community live release formulas are not in front of them at the moment. They are able to show how collaboration is taking effect in different regions.

Mr. Freda asked Sgt. Keller that the recommendations of adding another column to the MACO report should be handled through Ray and the Dept. of Agriculture?

Sgt. Keller stated that would be the start, yes.

Mr. Freda stated that they should memorialize those columns and make the recommendations to Ray when he is present at the next meeting or before the next meeting.

Sgt. Keller stated that they could do that before the next meeting

Ms. Poplawski stated that she would like to see the MACO report go away and be replaced with something that gives the task force and everybody else what they need. Why just add a column when you can re-do the whole report that gives all of the information.

Mr. Freda stated that the task force should take a look at how that we be formatted.

Ms. Poplawski stated that they should try to convince Ray to accept the other format and to test it at a few shelters to see what problems they incur. She also stated that she would hate to see the MACO report reworked because it won't be as complete as they want it to be.

Mr. Bailey agrees with Ms. Poplawski and that the data in the MACO report are what the funding organizations need to see in order to grant money to the shelters to improve their live release formulas. He also stated that New Haven as started to use the asimilar form and there have been no problems with it.

Dr. Macdonald stated that adopting the asimilar report it does help the state to function in a larger group on a national level.

Mr. Freda agrees with the points about moving in a different direction rather than reworking the MACO report, but how do they implement that?

Sgt. Keller stated that it would probably be something that starts with the Department of Agriculture, especially about how to approach this.

Mr. Freda then asked if there was a formula to convert these statistics through the asimilar formulas to come out with a new number.

Sgt. Keller stated that she doesn't think they have all the information that they would need.

Mr. Freda then asked if there was a way to get the information to him and he will do the mathematical reformulation.

Ms. Poplawski stated that this was data that was already a year old, can't they move forward why are they moving back?

Sgt. Keller stated that a good starting point would be July 1<sup>st</sup> because the MACO report starts at one on that date.

Mr. Freda asked if someone could come up with the formula by next meeting so they can formally propose is to the Dept. of Agriculture in terms of what that would look like.

Mr. Bailey stated that it would look exactly like the asimilar chart with the formula.

Mr. Freda asked for a motion to have the formulas memorialized from asimilar into a legible type of formulaic format and make a recommendation to the Dept. of Agriculture by next meeting.

The motion was made by Mr. Bailey and seconded by Sgt. Keller.

Mr. Freda asked if anyone want to take a look at euthanasia rates as part of the MACO stats they have.

Sgt. Keller stated you cant get a true read on the euthanasia stats because they don't know if the dog was euthanized because it came in on a dog bite and it's different than shelters euthanizing for space or time.

Dr. Macdonald stated that it confirmed what geographical areas need to be addressed.

Mr. Bailey stated that the information on the survey will help understand the reasons for euthanasia.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 4 on the action plan and asked if there were any comments.

Mr. Bailey stated that the goal was to have something to present to the task force in February and that they have just drafted the content of the survey. Mr. Bailey said there several things that need to happen before it is presented to the task force. Mr. Bailey suggest to form a sub-committee to polish language of the survey.

Mr. Freda asked if there were any other comments

Sgt. Keller stated she wasn't at the last meeting so she wasn't able to see the draft.

Mr. Bailey stated that only Mr. Freda has seen the draft.

Mr. Freda asked if anyone was interested in working on the sub-committee and also stating that they were missing two members and one future appointment.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she would like to work on the sub-committee

Mr. Freda stated the members are Mr. Bailey, Ms. Poplawski, and Dr. Macdonald.

Mr. Bailey suggested asking for the serviced of people that are outside of the task force

Mr. Freda then moved on to the next item on the action plan and that he had reached out to a different number of organizations.

Mr. Bailey stated that reaching out to the US Human Society was great.

Mr. Freda then moved on to item 7 of the action plan.

Sgt. Keller that Ray Connors and herself are in the process of formulating the ACO training for Connecticut. They hope to roll out the program in about one year.

Sgt. Keller would like to reach out to other municipalities and encourage them to send police officers to attend the training.

Mr. Freda on January 13<sup>th</sup> there will be blood sport training and that the venue will change.

Mr. Bailey stated that it is essential for ACOs to get training but consider offering similar training to those working in animal rescue.

Sgt. Keller stated that currently the ACO training is only for appointees and animal control officers but maybe there could be a separate kind of training that isn't as lengthy as the current training.

Mr. Bailey stated that it would be great to have some type of training for animal rescue.

Sgt. Keller stated that she thinks this goes along with one of Ms. Poplawski's goals of some form or register for the rescue.

Mr. Bailey agrees that representatives of the best shelters build these standards.

Sgt. Keller then suggested that to get into a registered rescue the person would have to take a class.

Dr. Macdonald supported everything said already and that these suggestions will help animals get into homes.

Mr. Freda asked if the task force thought this was a work in progress or a motion able item for the meeting today.

Sgt. Keller said that it would be best to put it on the agenda for next meeting because there are absent members.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she is eager to start something with the rescue and to talk to people about what they would like to see.

Mr. Bailey agreed with Ms. Poplawski.

Ms. Poplawski asked if she was refined to speaking with the rescues if they are present at the meetings or reach out to them.

Mr. Freda said to come back with multiple recommendations and moved on to item 8 on the action plan. Ray Connors provided a list of online ACO training courses and Mr. Freda asked Sgt. Keller what her opinion is.

Sgt. Keller thinks the online training courses are good but it is important to have some kind of structure with training, stating that practical skills are important. She stated that she would not be comfortable with an ACO officer getting accredited with only online training and wouldn't agree with that. She stated that it should be a supplement to training.

Mr. Bailey stated that online training would only be supplement and is trying to get in contact with the Center for Shelter Dogs near Boston.

Dr. Macdonald stated that there are a diverse group of people training to be animal control officers that have different ways of learning and there should be components of everything.

Sgt. Keller agrees that it would make a great supplement

Mr. Freda stated that there would be a focus on the ACO actual training and online training would be a supplement. Mr. Freda then moved on to item 9 of the action plan. He stated that Branford is a good example of a volunteer model that works.

Mr. Bailey stated that is good to form a partnership with other organization that has great understanding of volunteerism. He stated that he would like to see a step forward with humane society working to formulate a model.

Sgt. Keller stated that the volunteers need a better understanding of what their duties are and that the municipalities need to make rules and regulations that the volunteers must follow.

Mr. Freda stated that this is something that has happened before and the best direction is to look at the best volunteer program and get municipalities to embrace it.

Mr. Bailey agrees with everything that has been said and encourage volunteer programs because some shelters don't take volunteers and without volunteers the animals don't get the best care.

Ms. Poplawski likes the idea that is not mandated but anything can be solve with the proper education, training and how they package it. She stated she supports drafting a program and enlisting help from shelters with successful volunteer programs.

Mr. Freda entertained a motion to form a sub-committee to formalize the volunteer program or wait until there is a full task force.

Ms. Poplawski stated she wishes to wait until everyone is present.

Mr. Bailey stated that there should be a quorum to vote on.

Sgt. Keller stated that they should wait to form the sub-committee because the absent members may want to be on the sub-committee.

Mr. Bailey withdrew his concern

Mr. Freda stated the goal is to form a sub-committee and moved on to item VI on the agenda, new business, and believed that it had been covered. Mr. Freda then moved on to item VII of the agenda, open forum, and asked the task force members if they had any comments. Seeing none Mr. Freda moved onto item VIII of the agenda, public testimony.

*Public Testimony:*

Mr. Freda called on Laura Burban to open the public testimony.



Ms. Burban wanted to address a point that Sgt. Keller made and that the human society runs different than the animal shelter. She stated that there needs be a structure in place for a volunteer program for when the program is proposed to other municipalities.

Mr. Freda asked if there were any questions

Mr. Bailey asked how essential would it be to have Ms. Burban's participation in forming the guidelines.

Ms. Burban stated she would be happy to participate.

Sgt. Keller stated that they would love to have a volunteer program but volunteers need to understand the perspective of animal control.

Ms. Burban stated that at her shelter a dog bite doesn't mean euthanasia and that it depends on the circumstances and bite history. She stated that there are many questions about whether to euthanize a dog or not and the public needs to understand that. She stated that they used certifiable trainers to rehabilitate the dogs.

Mr. Bailey stated that he would like to offer suggestions to volunteer programs that could use improvements and asked if she thought it would help to offer these suggestions to these programs.

Ms. Burban stated that she agreed. Ms. Burban then said that building the volunteer program took years to get going and get people trained and engaged during normal business hours.

Dr. Macdonald stated to Sgt. Keller that euthanizing an animal control is not the only facility to feel pressure and that if there isn't proper time to dedicate to volunteers it will fail.

Sgt. Keller stated that at her shelter the volunteer program had to be started from scratch. She then asked Ms. Burban if the volunteers were covered under any type of liability insurance.

Ms. Burban stated that there is always a staff member of the shelter there to watch the volunteers and if there was anything to go wrong she thinks the town would be responsible. She stated that there is a training program for the volunteers.

Mr Freda thanked Ms. Burban and asked Gordon Willard to come to the stand.

Mr. Willard stated how the CT Humane Society could be helpful to the taskforce and offering resources. He stated that they have offered three officer trainings this year and there are lots of resources across the country they can utilize. Mr. Willard stated they have about 400 volunteers across 3 different locations in different communities. Mr. Willard is very interested in the statistics the task force has accumulated about the different communities that need assistance.

Mr. Freda thanked Mr. Willard for the tour of their facility and had three questions for him. They are: His position on where the CT Human Society stands on privatization, position on pit bulls, and his position on animals from the south.

Mr. Willard stated that the CT Humane Society wants to collaborate with other shelters and animal control. He stated that they are only interested in helping animals.

Mr. Willard stated that they are very well in placing the bully breeds and do very well with pit bulls because they put them with different breeds and market them well. He said that 30 years ago there was the same problem with German Shepherds and Doberman Pinschers and now they rarely get any to come through their doors. He wishes that insurance companies would back off of the breed.

Mr. Willard stated that animal control numbers have gone down in the state and now it is likely to see more animals that are adopted than bought from a breeder. Mr. Willard stated that the CT Humane Society door is always open and they will do everything they can to place an animal in a home.

Mr. Freda asked if there were any questions.

Sgt. Keller thanked Mr. Willard for taking a bully breed from their facility and asked if they put a number on the amount of bully breed dogs they will have in their facility at any one time.

Mr. Willard stated there was no rule of thumb for bully breeds and that you have to recognize the area that's around and what areas are willing to take the pit bull breed.

Sgt. Keller stated that most of the bully breed adopters from her shelter are from suburban areas and now there is more awareness about this breed. She asked if the CT Humane Society would take a dog to see if it can be adopted because they have more foot traffic.

Mr. Willard stated that they already do that and the same for cats also.

Mr. Freda asked if Mr. Willard would give a background of Theresa who attended the meeting with him.

Mr. Willard then gave the background of Theresa.

Sgt. Keller asked if what is treatable and not treatable for injuries and what is the protocol for animals that need treatment.

Mr. Willard stated that it's a work in progress and that it depends on the extent of the injury and that currently they don't run an emergency clinic.

Dr. Macdonald stated that if they go to the website it has a lot to offer.

Mr. Willard stated that it requires a lot of education because it requires medical background and the smaller facilities would struggle.

Mr. Freda asked if there were any other questions and seeing none thanked Mr. Willard.

Elizabeth Abbe of Protectors of Animals took the stand and explained her animal rescue group. She stated that they work with the Wethersfield pound and that the volunteer program is very successful. She offered POA to the task force to look into their volunteer program.

Mr. Freda asked if Elizabeth would give her contact information and thanked her for coming.

Debbie Monsom from Thank God Rescue approached the stand and explained her rescue to the task force members. She stated that they don't have the same resources as the other shelters but they are available to help.

Sgt. Keller and Mr. Bailey thanked Debbie for the work their shelter does.

Mr. Freda asked if there were any other questions and seeing none thanked everyone for coming and stated the next meeting would be February 4<sup>th</sup> at the LOB.

Mr. Freda entertained a motion to adjourn.

He motion was made by Mr. Bailey and seconded by Ms. Poplawski

Meeting was adjourned at 4:16 PM by Michael Freda. The next general meeting will be at 2:00 PM on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in the State of Connecticut Legislative Office building (LOB), 300 Capital Avenue, Room 2B, Hartford, CT 06106