

Task Force on the Humane Treatment of Animals in Regional and Municipal Shelters
Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2015

Members Present:

Michael Freda
Mark Bailey
Dr. Kimberly MacDonald
Sgt. Paula Keller
Paula Poplawski
Dianna Collette
Cynthia Ferron

Members Absent:

Raymond Connors

Others in Attendance:

Mark Moss
Elizabeth Abbe

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 2:20 PM, in the State of Connecticut Legislative Office Building (LOB), 300 Capitol Avenue, Room 2B, Hartford, CT 06106 by Michael Freda

Public Comment:

Michael Freda convened the meeting and asked the task force members to introduce themselves. Mr. Freda then introduced some people in attendance of the meeting. Mr. Freda asked if there were any public comments relative to the agenda. Seeing none Mr. Freda moved on to Item 3 of the agenda.

Review and Discussion of minutes of previous meeting:

Mr. Freda entertained a motion to accept the minutes of the January 9, 2015 meeting. A motion was made by Sgt. Keller and seconded by Mark Bailey. Mr. Freda asked if there were any other comments and seeing none all voted aye.

Old Business:

Mr. Freda moved on to Item 5 of the agenda to review the 9 Point Action Plan. Mr. Freda informed the public how the 9 Point Action Plan is made.

Mr. Freda distributed a handout with Sgt. Keller's and Ms. Poplawski's goals and objectives to review and accept.

Sgt. Keller's list of goals and objectives include:

1. Reduce the number of intakes statewide that go into animal control facilities.
2. Mandatory animal law updates for police personnel and zero tolerance policies.
3. Expand training curriculum for civilian ACOs.
4. Statewide regulating breeding of dogs.
5. Seek funding for municipalities for proactive enforcement
6. Cohesive adoption process for municipalities
7. State register for rescue groups

Mr. Freda then read Ms. Poplawski's list of goals and objectives, which include:

1. Standard application process for shelter application and adopters.
2. Standard registry for rescue groups and fosters.
3. Training for ACOs that include wildlife situations.
4. Stronger penalties for animal abuse.
5. State mandate for spay, neuter, and breeding regulations.

Mr. Freda asked if any of the members wanted to add any comments to the objectives and goals.

Dr. MacDonald suggested a universal system for strays and animals at large so they could be put back in homes if they are not micro-chipped.

Sgt. Keller asked Dr. MacDonald if she was referring to unclaimed animals and agrees that there should be system.

Mr. Bailey agreed with the idea because there are too many lost and found websites and centralizing the system would be better.

Mr. Bailey stated that one of his goals was to put healthy and treatable animals into loving homes and that the task force proved the necessary tools to find the animals homes.

Ms. Collette added it was not only about the lack of space for the animals being euthanized, but also time.

Sgt. Keller agrees with Mr. Bailey's goal but the task force needs to make a plan for municipalities to help with animals who are healthy but who stay too long in the kennel because these animals can get kennel crazy and is not humane treatment of the animals.

Dr. MacDonald suggested to Sgt. Keller that there are mental exercises to enrich the dogs so they don't go kennel crazy. She also added that one of her goals was standard medical care for the animals.

Mr. Freda asked if there were any comments

Mr. Bailey commented that the task force should keep track of ideas added to the agenda.

Mr. Freda asked if there were any other comments and seeing none moved on to item 3 a review of the proposed mission statement for the task force.

Mr. Bailey added that the draft took the wording of Senate Bill 309 and elaborated on areas of focus.

Mr. Freda stated that a memorialization of the mission statement is important and welcomed Ms. Poplawski to the meeting.

Sgt. Keller asked if the mission statement was going to be made with these guidelines.

Mr. Bailey stated that the guidelines could be condensed into a one sentence mission statement.

Mr. Freda asked the task force if a mission statement or guidelines were more important.

Sgt. Keller and Ms. Ferron both agreed that the mission statement was more important.

Dr. MacDonald, Ms. Collette, Ms. Poplawski, and Mr. Bailey agreed that both the mission statement and guidelines were important.

Mr. Freda stated that the task force would be staying with the guiding principles and that he would make a mission statement for next meeting.

Mr. Bailey stated that he would like to have an agreement on an end goal timeline.

Sgt. Keller stated that the guiding principles are good but they should take time to read through them and to correspond before next meeting and accept them so a mission statement can be made.

Mr. Freda asked if everyone agreed, and everyone did.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 4 of the action plan.

Mr. Freda stated that Connecticut has a live release rate of 88.6% and has no delineation of cats and dogs.

Sgt. Keller stated that she would like to see the MACO report goes away all together and to make a new form for the municipalities to use.

Ms. Collette likes the idea of separate intake forms and at her facility she uses a spreadsheet that separates the cats and dogs to give to her superiors.

Sgt. Keller asked Ms. Collette if she could bring an example of the spreadsheet for the next meeting.

Ms. Poplawski suggested emailing the spreadsheet to Mr. Freda to look at before the next meeting.

Mr. Freda stated the best next step is to get the Department of Agriculture to offer feedback on the suggestions to the MACO report and to move forward with it.

Ms. Ferron agrees and that the reports are hindered if cats and dogs aren't separated.

Dr. MacDonald asks if anyone knows if the shelters that don't take in cats use alternate resources.

Sgt. Keller stated that her facility doesn't accept cats but the Humane Society takes the kittens and there are other groups that deal with feral cats.

Ms. Poplawski asked why they are going back to the MACO report when the task force accepted a new way to report statistics.

Mr. Freda stated Ray Connors input is needed and that the task force can make recommendations to the Department of Agriculture as to why the MACO report is not good enough.

Sgt. Keller stated that the task force should make a report of what is wrong with the MACO report and present a replacement before they approach the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Bailey stated that the task force should look at the similar report structure.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she thought this was decided at last meeting.

Mr. Freda stated that a recommendation is needed to present to the Department of Agriculture and the task force should make a sub-committee. Mr. Freda suggested Dianne Collette and Sgt. Keller be in the task force, both agreed. Ms. Ferron also volunteered for the sub-committee.

Mr. Freda stated that the sub-committee will report back with a recommended strategy to present to the Department of Agriculture with a main goal of changing the nature of how the MACO reports are done.

Sgt. Keller stated that the reports were never changed because no one has scrutinized the MACO reports.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 5 of the Action Plan and asked if there were any suggestions on how to reduce the number of shelter intakes in the future.

Sgt. Keller stated that she took 8 towns from the MACO report with the most intakes and compared the number of licensed dogs with the population. She stated that she found that the towns with smaller populations with more single family homes have a higher number of licensed dogs than those cities with higher populations and multi-family homes. She stated that starting a campaign for licensing dogs would be a good idea.

Dr. MacDonald stated that she has worked in 3 of these cities and the mentality of the dog owners is to have puppies and people need to be held accountable. There need to be repercussions if not being held accountable.

Sgt. Keller stated that in New Britain they passed an ordinance that you need to have a breeder's license to sell puppies and that she will bring a copy of the ordinance next meeting. She also stated that it is a goal of hers to get the state to pass a law that says you need to have a permit to sell puppies.

Mr. Bailey stated that there are some problems with licensing. The fee is higher for dogs not spayed or neutered and lots of people don't even know about licensing. He stated that Portland, Oregon has a successful online licensing program.

Sgt. Keller stated that many towns currently have online forms for licensing that can be mailed in to the town clerk. She also stated that the Hartford town clerk suggested educational postings at veterinarian offices.

Dr. MacDonald suggested a licensing fair

Sgt. Keller stated that her town does rabies clinic where the town clerk comes and gives licenses.

Ms. Ferron suggested using pet supply stores as a way to make more public awareness about licensing. She also stated puppies can't be used as a way to create revenue.

Mr. Bailey agrees with the idea of reaching out to the pet stores. He asked if it is appropriate for the task force to make a list of why it's important to license dogs.

Ms. Poplawski stated it would be best to bundle the ideas as an educational component and has a personal issue with using puppies as a source of revenue. She stated she would like to see more penalties on that.

Sgt. Keller suggested creating a pamphlet for campaign for licensing and then the task force can move forward with distributing the pamphlet.

Mr. Freda stated he would put together the pamphlet but thinks starting another sub-committee to create the components for the pamphlet is best. He suggests Dr. MacDonald, Mr. Bailey, and Ms. Poplawski be in the sub-committee and all agree.

Dr. MacDonald stated that she tries to education her patients but there is no response from them and the ramifications of not licensing your dog need to be included in the pamphlet.

Sgt. Keller stated that the only ramification is a state fine and there is no penalty for breeding. She also stated she would bring in the New Britain city ordinance for next meeting. Sgt. Keller stated that many people don't take the vet's advice about licensing seriously and even though it puts vet in precarious position they should have a link to ACO.

Ms. Poplawski stated that the pamphlet should start with licensing.

Dr. MacDonald agreed.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 6 of the Action Plan, but since it was already discussed he moved on to item 7 of the Action Plan, a survey to identify the reasons for euthanasia.

Mr. Freda stated the sub-committee that was formed last meeting compiled a report and passed it out to the task force members.

Mr. Bailey stated that the survey attempts to capture information on shelters.

Mr. Freda stated he has put together a cover letter and how to send out the report.

Mr. Bailey suggested an online format for the survey to be filled out.

Ms. Poplawski asked Mr. Bailey to elaborate on what he means by online format.

Mr. Bailey stated he meant the ability to fill out the survey online instead of a paper copy.

Ms. Poplawski stated it would be best for it to be downloaded from online and sent out.

Mr. Freda asked what would be the best way to distribute the survey.

Ms. Collette suggested email would be best.

Sgt. Keller agreed that email would be best.

Mr. Bailey stated that the task force needs to emphasize the survey is how the ACOs will be heard and agreed with Ms. Poplawski's suggestion of a survey filling out party.

Sgt. Keller agrees that a meeting with ACOs to pass out the survey and discuss it is best.

Ms. Ferron agreed.

Ms. Poplawski agreed with taking the meetings out on the road.

Mr. Bailey also agreed and suggested coordinating the mission statement to go along with the survey.

Sgt. Keller offered the community room at the New Britain police department and auditorium where meeting can be held.

Mr. Bailey said he can help set a meeting up in New Haven.

Mr. Freda stated he could open up the town hall in North Haven for meetings.

Mr. Freda suggested hosting the meetings first then sending out the surveys.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 8 of the Action Plan, building standards for shelters and rescues and stated he gave permission for task force members to send out information on Facebook, which got little response.

Mr. Bailey stated that the survey will give important information on the issue.

Dr. MacDonald stated she knows reputable rescuers and can get information from them about the registry.

Ms. Poplawski stated she is looking for names and addresses for those interested in participating.

Sgt. Keller stated reaching out to reputable rescue groups will have ideas about the guidelines.

Ms. Collette stated she has a great network of other rescues.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 9 of the Action Plan, formalize a non mandate volunteer program for municipalities. Mr. Freda suggested that enlisting the help of ACOs to create this subcommittee to address this issue would be the best option.

Mr. Bailey agreed with the idea and would like to see Laura Burban placed at the front of it.

Sgt. Keller and Ms. Poplawski agreed.

Mr. Freda stated he would reach out to Ms. Burban to spearhead the committee.

Mr. Freda moved onto Item 6 of the Agenda, New Business.

New Business

Mr. Freda stated that the follow up plan mentioned under 6a in the agenda has been covered and asked if there were any questions, seeing none Mr. Freda moved on to item 6b on the agenda, Informational updates.

Mr. Bailey mentioned 3 legislative actions this session that are about the humane treatment of animals.

Mr. Freda stated that the task force cannot rotate the meetings from Wednesday to Friday because of the Legislative session but the task force can consider the issue when the LOB is not in session. He also stated that he is finding more interest in the task force from several legislators.

Open Forum

Mr. Freda moved on to item 7 of the agenda, Open Forum and seeing no task force member wanted to make a comment moved on to item 8 of the agenda.

Public Comment

Mark Moss of Thank Dog Rescue took the stand and stated that he loved what the task force is doing and would love to help.

Mr. Bailey asked Mr. Moss to describe the success of his rescue.

Mr. Moss stated that his rescue tries not to over judge people and to find loving homes for his dogs. He also stated that they have a great network on Facebook where questions can be asked.

Dr. MacDonald asked Mr. Moss what he thought of the registry.

Mr. Moss stated that he thought the registry is a great idea but would get negative feedback from rescues.

Dr. MacDonald asked Mr. Moss if she had to ask one question to determine if he had an outstanding rescue group or questionable rescue group what would it be.

Mr. Moss answered “why would you do this” and stated his love of dogs is why he has runs his rescue.

Sgt. Keller stated that she knows Mr. Moss and that he has been phenomenal to work with.

Mr. Moss stated that they are in almost every shelter in Connecticut looking for dogs to adopt and that breeding laws are important.

Mr. Bailey stated he thinks Thank Dog Rescue is changing the tone of the environment in a huge way and thinks that their social media helps convince the public to adopt.

Elizabeth Abbe took the stand and explained how the Manchester rescue shelter works with the ACOs and how the ACOs want to know the different rescue groups and their individual strengths.

Mr. Freda seeing no other public wanting to comment entertained a motion to adjourn.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:13 PM by Michael Freda. The next general meeting will on February 4th, 2015, in the State of Connecticut Legislative Office building (LOB), 300 Capital Avenue, Room 2B, Hartford, CT 06106