

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

Members Present:

Michael Freda  
Mark Bailey  
Paula Poplawski  
Cynthia Theran

Members Absent:

Raymond Connors  
Dr. Kimberly MacDonald  
Sgt. Paula Keller  
Dianne Collette

Others in Attendance:

Nicole Brooke  
Judy Umstead  
Laura Burban

Meeting Facilitator: Michael Freda

The regular meetings of the Task Force on the Humane Treatment of Animals in Regional and Municipal shelters was called to order at 2:00 PM, in the State of Connecticut Legislative Office Building (LOB), 300 Capitol Avenue, Room 2B, Hartford, CT by Michael Freda.

*Public Comment:*

Mr. Freda opens the meeting by asking the members to introduce themselves and announces who is absent. He stated that they will be changing the order of the agenda and moves onto item 2 of the agenda, Public Comment. Seeing none Mr. Freda moved on to item 5 of the agenda, Old Business.

*Old Business:*

Mr. Freda explained and reviewed the action plan to the members in attendance.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 1 of the action plan, discussion and conclusion regarding a universal system for stray animals to be put back into home if they are not microchipped.

Mr. Bailey asked where they left off on the issue.

Mr. Freda stated that it was a discussion last meeting and suggested tabling the issue until next meeting because members of the task force were absent.

Ms. Poplawski suggested that this could be tied in with the licensing animals.

Mr. Bailey agreed with Ms. Poplawski's idea and would like to see an assessment of how the animal got away from their home.

Ms. Theran agreed with the Ms. Poplawski and Mr. Bailey and that it is important for other members to participate in the discussion.

Mr. Bailey that adding this to the licensing discussion makes the most sense.

Mr. Freda stated that they will table this discussion and moved to item 2 of the action plan, and an update on the ACO survey to be sent out. Mr. Freda explained the survey and stated that the sub-committee did a great job completing it and that the survey was ready to be sent out. He stated that they still need the addresses of the ACOs across the state.

Mr. Freda asked task force members if they should send it out in the mail or hand it out after the road show.

Mr. Bailey suggested do both to get the most information possible.

Ms. Theran agrees with the dual approach to get the most information possible. She asked whether the survey would be given to one location or one to each staff member.

Mr. Bailey stated that the survey was designed for one location to fill it out and explained the elements of the survey.

Mr. Freda explained the components of the survey and stated that this survey is a great way to start improving shelters.

Mr. Bailey stated that he would hope the survey can be made public.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she would like to regionalize the road shows and pick areas to meet.

Mr. Freda stated that last meeting they mapped out at least three locations: New Britain, the North East section of the state, North Haven Town Hall and maybe to go into Fairfield County more.

Mr. Bailey suggested scheduling two sessions for each region.

Ms Poplawski asked whether to set up the meetings or send out the survey and wait to see what comes back and figure out where to do the road show.

Ms. Theran stated sending out the survey first is a good approach to find out where the responses are coming from.

Mr. Bailey agrees and to set up a date to send out the surveys.

Mr. Freda stated that he wanted to look at the cover letter that will be sent out with the survey and stated that he will add that the task force is proposing offsite meetings and mapping out possible locations and to ask if the ACOs would be willing to attend.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she thinks they will not get the surveys back because they are doing the road shows.

Mr. Freda stated that they put a deadline date and after they get the surveys back they will do the road shows.

Mr. Bailey agreed.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she would like to the cover letter a date to return the survey.

Ms. Theran stated that she agreed with that approach.

Mr. Bailey suggested sending out a copy of the cover letter to elected officials of where the shelter is.

Mr. Freda said that he would speak to other mayors in his district.

Mr. Bailey suggested adding the names of the task force members on the cover letter

Mr. Freda agreed and asked if there were any other comments. He then moved on to item 3 of the action plan, review and consensus on the task force mission statement.

Mr. Freda stated the progress of the mission statement and the sub-committee's guiding principles and wanted to discuss the mission statement and guiding principles.

Mr. Bailey stated that he had sent his suggestions on the mission statement to Mr. Freda.

Mr. Freda asked if they have the mission statement and guiding principles.

Mr. Bailey stated that the guiding principles could work as a mission statement.

Mr. Freda read the proposed mission statement.

Mr. Bailey added his suggestion language to the mission statement.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she liked the mission statement.

Ms. Theran agreed with the revisions to the mission statement and that there needs to be more discussion on the guiding principles.

Ms. Poplawski suggested tabling the guiding principles until all of the task force members are present.

Mr. Bailey agreed.

Mr. Freda stated that in any organization there is a mission statement that is backed up by guiding principles, the mission statement is always up front and thinks that this is an appropriate concept for the task force.

Mr. Bailey stated that all the elements of the task force are included in the guiding principles.

Mr. Freda asked Mr. Bailey to redistribute the guiding principles to all members of the task force.

Ms. Theran suggested a strategic plan format to take from the guiding principles

Mr. Bailey agreed with Ms. Theran's statement.

Mr. Freda stated that item 4 and 5 of the action plan will be handled in the same discussion starting with item 5, taking existing MACO stats and putting them into a better format. Mr. Freda stated that Mr. Connors stated that the sub-committee has not yet formally met but when he and Sgt. Keller return they will discuss the MACO stats.

Mr. Freda stated that they need to update the MACO stats to a better format.

Mr. Bailey stated that info needs to be captured in a certain way to help the animal shelters improve.

Ms. Poplawski stated she is anxious to hear about how they feel about the changes in the report because it will show them a more accurate way to report.

Mr. Bailey stated that their ACO has already started to break down statistics more than the MACO report needs.

Mr. Freda stated that they need to figure out the delineation between cats and dogs.

Mr. Bailey agreed and that the ACO in New Haven already knows the distinction between the cats and dogs.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she doesn't think there is anything out there

Mr. Freda moved to item 6 of the action plan, a review of a formal campaign for licensing dogs. He stated last meeting there were two different discussions.

The first was if there should be a local campaign to license dogs or if the state should do it and the second was how to education people on the benefits of licensing dogs.

Mr. Freda stated that he informed the sub-committee he would be willing to attempt to help and coming up with a suggested marking campaign on licensing your pet.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she loves this and would like to see a Pitbull added.

Mr. Bailey also agreed and asked if maybe a cat can also be added. He also asked if the contact info would be to contact the local municipality.

Mr. Freda stated that since they are working with the state that the state could handle the licensing and come up with a procedure.

Mr. Freda passed out another recommendation to the task force that require state approval and asked whether to keep licensing at a local level or ask the state to help.

Ms. Poplawski asked how fast the state would jump on this because she believes that they could do both.

Mr. Freda stated that they aren't going to solve this today but it is an important initiative.

Mr. Bailey stated that the state level licensing would be better

Ms. Theran agreed that the state licensing would be the best.

Mr. Bailey stated that many people do not know about licensing their dogs and that there should be a statewide campaign to get the message out.

Mr. Freda thanked the assistant clerk of Planning and Development committee for helping present the pamphlet on his own time.

Mr. Bailey suggested reviewing the pamphlet and discuss this at the next meeting

Mr. Freda agreed and would like to hear any suggestions to add to the pamphlet.

Mr. Bailey stated that looking into cat licensing would be good, but doesn't need to be a priority.

Mr. Freda moved on to item 7 of the action plan, review and discussion of formalizing a non-mandated volunteer service for municipalities. Mr. Freda stated that the task force is trying to create the best volunteer program for animal shelter and commented that the Branford animal shelter has the best volunteer program.

Mr. Freda stated that the task force had accepted to ask Laura Burban to head up a sub-committee and that she has agreed.

Mr. Bailey stated that volunteerism isn't restricted to only working with the animals themselves but an important aspect to volunteering is fundraising.

Mr. Freda agreed and stated that the volunteer program is not going to be mandated.

Mr. Bailey asked who else is on the sub-committee.

Mr. Freda stated that they are still looking to add people.

Mr. Bailey suggested asking the CT Humane Society to be involved.

Ms. Poplawski asked if they were going to discuss assigning a member of the task force to each sub-committee.

Mr. Freda stated that the established sub-committees would fall under the auspices of the task force members. Mr. Freda stated the question is who will be the task force members to spearhead these sub-committees.

Mr. Freda stated that he thinks there will three other sub-committees and that there is an option of one member overseeing all of them or one task force member overseeing one sub-committee each.

Ms. Poplawski stated she wants to have the members split the sub-committees.

Mr. Bailey agreed to having a task force member for each sub-committee

Ms. Theran agrees with having a task force member for each sub-committee.

Ms. Poplawski stated that she thinks that the task force member wouldn't have to go to every meeting since they will be busy but to be sure to be updated on what the sub-committee is doing.

Mr. Bailey agreed

Mr. Freda stated that the first extension of the task force is the volunteer sub-committee and to assign someone to head up that sub-committee.

Mr. Freda stated that Ms. Poplawski created a questionnaire that asks which task force someone would like to be a part of and asks Ms. Poplawski to send it out so they can discuss it.

Mr. Bailey asked if this was for the task force members or general public.

Mr. Freda stated that it was just for the general public and that they would be assigning a task force member to head up the sub-committee and moved on to item 8 of the action plan, engaging other groups to speak to the task force.

Mr. Bailey stated that he is in the process of reaching out to the Center for Shelter Dogs, Little Guild of St. Francis, Maddie's Fund, and the Shelter Pet Project. He also suggested that they could get a representative from the ASPCA to come give testimony.

Mr. Bailey also would like to see legislators who are involved in pet welfare come to testify to the task force and also other chief elected officials of municipalities.

Ms. Poplawski would like to see the task force out there so that they won't have to invite people and that they will only limit themselves to the people they invite and asked how to get other people to come and testify.

Mr. Bailey stated that he thinks it already happening with some groups reaching out to the task force.

Mr. Freda stated that the New Haven Register ran a story on the task force that was also picked up by the Associated Press and he has received calls from California and Texas.

Mr. Freda also stated they are trying to get the task force extended for another year and summarized the action plan.

Mr. Freda then moved on to item 3 of the agenda, Review and Discussion of minutes of February 4, 2015 meeting.

*Review and Discussion of Minutes:*

Mr. Freda stated that there was some typos that will be corrected in the future and entertained a motion to accept the minutes.

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

Mr. Freda called for a vote and the motion passed.

Mr. Freda then moved to item 6 of the agenda, New Business.

*New Business:*

Mr. Freda stated that they have talked about item 6a, Develop a Follow Up Plan and asked if there were any other follow ups the task force wanted to speak about.

Mr. Bailey asked for a clarification if the mission statement was official

Mr. Freda stated they would be vote on it next meeting and asked if there were any informational updates.

Mr. Bailey stated that a bill in the Insurance committee has made it out of committee. The bill would not allow owners to be penalized based on the breed of dog they owned. He also stated that the Beagle Freedom bill, HB 5707, has a public hearing on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Bailey also stated that Maddie's Fund is having a webcast on March 19<sup>th</sup> and that he was looking at different models of across the country of the standards of humane welfare in shelters. Mr. Freda asked if there were any other updates.

Ms. Poplawski stated that the first road show for rescues is scheduled for March 11<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Freda then moved to item 7 of the agenda, Open Forum.

*Open Forum:*

Mr. Bailey stated that he submitted his goals and objectives so they are official now.

Mr. Freda stated that he asked task force members to submit their goals and objectives to him.

Mr. Bailey suggested moving forward and begin studying humane treatment of animals in the shelters and to suggest prioritize setting up a sub-committee next meeting to start that study.

Mr. Freda asked Mr. Bailey to email sub-committee suggestion to the task force and moved on to item 8 of the agenda, Public Comment.

*Public Comment:*

Mr. Freda asked Nicole Brooke to come forward.

Nicole Brooke stated that she was going to talk about the Companion Animal Protection Act. She then went on to describe the CAPA law and its history.

Mr. Freda gave a real life example of a pit bull who was put down and has how CAPA would view this decision to put the animal down.

Ms. Brooke stated that no kill means no killing healthy animals and without knowing the specifics of what was going on stated that there still will be a small percentage of killings.

Mr. Freda asked what is her experience been in a no kill state when an ACO has to make a decision on putting down an animal and the social media misinterpreting of the animal being put down.

Ms. Brooke stated that there is a system in place for euthanasia and used an example of a shelter in Nevada.

Mr. Bailey thanked Ms. Brooke for coming to the meeting and gave his interpretation about the law and asked if Ms. Brooke had any response to the Connecticut law as its written.

Ms. Brooke says that way the law is written after 7 days the shelter can kill. The law says that if there are empty cages you cannot kill and that if a rescue said they will take an animal you can't kill them and it needs to be legislation.

Mr. Bailey stated that New Haven considered an ordinance where no healthy animal can be euthanized but the ordinance conflict state law.

Mr. Freda stated that they are running short on time and thanked Ms. Brooke for coming.

Ms. Umstead stated that she didn't prepare but wanted to come and speak and she stated that she would like more animal control officers to come in to speak. She stated that animal shelters are at the bottom of town budgets.

She described examples of her shelter and how it is run.

Ms. Poplawski asked Ms. Umstead is she attended the blood sport training and that she never really knew the ACO's compassion at stopping this and would like to invite more ACOs from across the state.

Ms. Theran thanked Ms. Umstead for coming in and sharing the valuable information for the task force. She stated that it sounds like the current laws are limiting and that they could suggested some revision for the current language.

Mr. Bailey thanked Ms. Umstead for coming to the meeting

Ms. Umstead stated that she was just concerned about the welfare of the dogs.

Mr. Bailey stated that he agrees and suggests how do make what she is committed to, to make it a standard in the state.

Ms. Umstead responded how do you teach compassion and that people either have it or they don't.

Mr. Bailey agreed and that it ultimately depends on the compassion of who is there.

Mr. Freda stated that other people want to speak and thanks Ms. Umstead for speaking.

Laura Burban stated that ACOs need to be provided with more resources and that they want to do what's best for the animals but need the resources.

Mr. Freda thanked Ms. Burban for coming and asked if there were any other comments and entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:16 PM by Michael Freda. The next general meeting will on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, in the State of Connecticut Legislative Office building (LOB), 300 Capital Avenue, Room 2B, Hartford, CT 06106