

Task Force for the Humane Treatment of Animals
Minutes from June 5, 2015 Meeting

Members in attendance:

Co-chair Michael Freda, Co-chair Diane Collette, Cindy Theran, Paula Poplawski, Sargent. Paula Keller.

Members Unable to Attend: Mark Bailey, Raymond Connors and Kimberley McDonald

Others present: Laura Berman and Frank Ribaud

Chairman Freda moved on to section 4 of the agenda, in which old business and the meeting minutes from their May meeting were reviewed. A motion was made to have the minutes accepted, and it was seconded. All members present voted to accept the minutes.

Chairman Freda reviewed all their objectives from the past meeting and on the agenda today. He went into detail about working to recalibrate their objectives as a task force, and have new guiding principles. He explained how S.B. 309 detailed some of these objectives he hopes the task force stays focused on.

Chairman Freda then moved on to item 5 and discussed S.B. 351. This extends the task force's legality to keep meeting until January 2016, and that they must present findings in February 2016 for the start of the short session. The committee as a whole expressed how they want to keep moving forward in its findings. All members were in agreement that this extension allows them the time to come up with new ideas and work on its prioritization.

Chairwoman Collette spoke about how attendance for members of the task force is a problem—people are not showing up, but members of public and other mayors and first selectmen routinely express to committee members how much they would like to join. The committee believes that, as time goes on, they will have more members.

Chairman Freda moved the discussion to begin talking about the first item on their three-item action plan for the day. Sgt. Keller spoke about how she is working on contacting cities for breeding permits. It takes a couple months, from start to finish, for them to become implemented. She recommended the task force ask the state for

a statewide law that requires municipalities adopt breeding permits. She wants to ensure that municipalities use it as an ordinance first, and go from there to see if there is a need for it or not.

Mark Bailey provided an update to Mr. Freda to discuss enacting state laws regarding euthanasia. Mr. Bailey could not attend the meeting so Chairman Freda provided Mr. Bailey's update which included that state laws and statutes need to be updated to ensure that animals stay healthy, and shelters should not be euthanizing healthy animals due to lack of space. There is the need to find other alternatives, and examining the question in how do other states handle this issue? While the task force does not want to put too many restrictions on municipalities, they need to provide alternative spaces for shelters that fill up fast. The update included how there needs to be more work done to find out what these alternatives are if not euthanasia. He also brought up the question of what is the status of taking in other state's animals. The state already has limited resources, and it is not fair to displace our own animals for other states' animals. It is imperative the task force look into the reason why people are adopting from other states' shelters and not the ones in their own state.

Chairman Freda also brought up the issue of looking into what shelters have an overflow. Who has space and who has reached their capacity? He brought up how important it is for shelters to communicate where there is room and where there is not, so animals looking for a home have somewhere to go. It was suggested that people only bring in dogs from out of state that are "adoptable," and it really does not matter if the dog is healthy or not. It is a money-driven system. Shelters, in a sense, "invest" in making dogs adoptable. The task force discussed the possibility of making it seen as being supportive of Connecticut by adopting Connecticut dogs and that Connecticut dogs may come from "preferred shelters." The dogs coming from out of state shelters are contributing to the state's euthanasia rates and costs.

Paula Poplawski spoke next about the voucher system in Connecticut. She communicated with a person from the Department of Agriculture to discuss animal population control program. Mr. Frank Ribaldo from the Department of Agriculture was in attendance as part of Mrs. Poplawski's update and request to address the task force. Mr. Ribaldo was going to present in public comment. Mrs. Poplawski would like to also look through the statistics for towns across the state to see how this is working.

Laura Burban from Branford attended and asked for some time to speak. The task force allowed a second public comment time for her to speak. Unfortunately, the

first part of her testimony is unusable due to her microphone being off. Once it turned on, what she said was captured through the recording system.

She discussed a fundraiser and event she was hosting to raise awareness for animal issues. She also discussed setting adoption fees reflecting that pets have been spayed and neutered. She also brought up the idea of banning pets go out of state if they are not spayed or neutered. Cost and time constraints are factors in why dogs and cats are not necessarily always being spayed and neutered. She recommended that the state should have someone who comes and does this for municipalities. One of the problems, she thinks, is that there are no veterinary schools in Connecticut. The UCONN School of Agriculture offers some courses, as does Quinnipiac, but there are no resources available overall. Municipalities have to travel far to have their veterinary needs taken care of at costs they can afford. She also discussed how there are no repercussions for owners who do not vaccinate their pets. Some municipalities have a veterinarian on its shelter staff that comes in once a week to vaccinate shelter pets. It is a paid position through the towns.

Frank Ribaldo then spoke to discuss the voucher system at a state level. Most veterinarians are part of the program and are paid for their participation in the voucher system. There was a state a survey, and 90% of pets adopted from municipal shelters are new clients. Requiring a mandatory sterilization system would only cause more work and stress for municipalities and veterinarians. People oftentimes take vouchers and use them and there are no repercussions if they are not used. A 2012 law has worked well with this issue. This “transform law” allows for animal control officer to assign temporary ownership, and take a pet to the veterinarian if necessary because the pet has not received its shots or vaccines or is not spayed/neutered.

Mr. Ribaldo then suggested the need for a town or city register that specifies its relationship with its veterinarians. He has seen success is bigger cities like New Haven and Bridgeport. They have high rates of sterilization success. Unfortunately, they received a good portion of their funding from dog bites and surcharges. He also brought up the idea of a state law requiring that private animal shelters require a license. They should be regulated and inspected. A state law would ensure that these shelters maintain high levels of health and safety standards. Ms. Ribaldo discussed the need for oversight in this area.

As discussed earlier in the meeting, Mr. Ribaldo also brought up the issue of animals coming in from out of state, and that there is a need for funding to address this problem (like raising the low income funding for municipalities from 20 to

30%). He also believes dog bites and feral cats are huge problems, and that overpopulation is still a relevant problem despite success made in the voucher system. This is because, in some cases, the voucher system does not cover all the costs in a veterinarian's office.

Chairman Freda concluded the meeting, and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made and seconded, and the meeting was officially adjourned.