

Task Force for the Humane Treatment of Animals
Minutes from July 8, 2015 Meeting

Members in attendance:

Co-chair Michael Freda, Co-chair Diane Collette, Cindy Theran, Paula Poplawski, Sargent. Paula Keller. Edward O'Brien, Mark Bailey, and Kimberley McDonald

Members Unable to Attend: Raymond Connors

Chairman Freda convened the meeting at 2:23 p.m. and began with announcement of a new member to the committee, Edward O'Brien Mayor of West Haven and introductions of the Task-force members.

Chairman Freda asked the Taskforce to reiterate the core-tenants of the Task-force for the public.

He then moved onto section 1 subcommittee updates. Item 1A Enacting laws regarding animal Euthanasia.

Mark Bailey went first and explained in-depth the progress being worked out regarding state laws for animal euthanasia. He described that the decision of euthanizing should be discretionary to the animal control officer rather than a result of the length of time an animal resides in a shelter. He also stated the Connecticut shelters should focus efforts on obtaining funding for animal shelters from such organizations as Maddie's fund a non-profit which provides funding to animal shelters. He also brought up a Delaware law that animals are only euthanized if there is no space for them at an animal shelter or other appropriate housing for an animal. Cindy Theran stated that she believed that all of these ideas could be formulated into a strong legislative recommendation in the future.

Chairman Freda moved onto item 1B. Breeder Licensing.

Sergeant Paula Keller began her update of Breeder Licensing. She stated that local and city ordinances around the state have cut down on the number of stray and abused animals by limiting breeding and asking that pet owner obtain a license to breed their pet. This is to cut down on the number of unwanted pets. Her update was focused on New Britain and the specific ordinances in her municipalities. She stated that the breeder permitting process is in-depth and current state laws prohibit the sale of puppies at ages less than 8 weeks of age thus it is in municipalities' best interest to prohibit and require licensing for breeding to prevent illegal breeding.

Sergeant Keller also brought up similar interest in municipalities to enact similar ordinances such as the one in New Britain.

She also stated that these ordinances allowed legal authorities a greater amount of flexibility to enforce these current state laws in the community which would end up saving the city money.

Mark Bailey asked if there was a reasonable likelihood that these city ordinances could translate well into statewide laws.

Sergeant Keller stated that she believed that this would translate well into state law and that there was clearly a need for it based on evidence collected from her city and the various other cities' implementing their own programs.

She did state that there would likely be a few issues to be worked out such as the permitting process for breeders and whether municipal or state government would be responsible for their distribution.

Kimberly McDonald asked what the plan of action looked like in New Britain with respect to local enforcement of these ordinances.

Sergeant Keller responded with a detailed overview of the current program in New Britain.

Paula Poplawski stated that as a resident and animal advocate she believed the program to be greatly beneficial to the community.

Chairman Freda Moved onto item 1C Volunteer Model

Paula Poplawski stated that her organized subcommittee had met twice and was looking forward to having something to present at the next meeting regarding a volunteer model for the state.

Chairman Freda took the opportunity to explain the reason for the volunteer model recommendation to the state.

Chairman Freda Moved onto section 2 Discussion regarding a formal system to develop, identify, and log recommendations for submission to the state. He stated that the original bill that created the task-force asked that there be recommendations that the task-force submit to the state legislature to enact new laws. Because the task-force was scheduled to end as of February, 2016 he stated

that they should begin considering what those recommendations would be including the extension of the task-force into the future.

Sergeant Keller stated that she believed that Breeders permits should be one of the recommendations and that the task-force ought to work on making that permitting process into something that could be implemented on a statewide level.

Paula Poplawski asked for clarification on the need for a recommendation log.

Chairman Freda stated that his vision was that there may be numerous ideas that could be entered as recommendations from the task-force and that he wanted to formulate a system to log those ideas and perhaps in time vote on them to become recommendations.

Mark Bailey stated that he was prepared as was Sergeant Keller had stated that there were many aspects of the area of animal euthanasia and that to fully commit the resources necessary to provide a recommendation in legal language he at least would need to be dedicated to that task.

Sergeant Keller stated that she agreed that the ideas the task-force had were enough and voiced concerns that any new ideas whether good or not may over burden the task-force membership.

Chairman Freda asked if there was a consensus that the three subcommittee issues were enough for a first round of recommendations.

Mark Bailey stated that the current ideas were sufficient and should be the priority but that other ideas for future consideration could and should be logged as well. Cindy Theran echoed those sentiments.

Paula Poplawski brought up a new idea regarding pet reclassification as sentient beings.

Sergeant Keller stated that there may be legal issues; Mark Bailey stated that other states were exploring those ideas and that he could do some research on that issue.

Edward O'Brien asked if the creation of a tracking system for individuals convicted on animal abuse was something that could be added to the issues list for review.

Chairman Freda echoed the sentiment adding that animal and human abuses were found to be behaviorally linked in individuals.

Mark Bailey asked that the voucher system be added on to the list of issues to be explored, as that was a topic brought up in previous meetings.

Cindy Theran and Mark Bailey stated that they would like to fully pursue their three main topics but still pursue these other ideas.

Chairman Freda stated that they would pursue those three topics and vote on some of the other ideas to be added to the recommendation list for January 2016.

Chairman Freda moved onto member feedback and discussion

Seeing none Chairman Freda moved onto public comment.

Elizabeth Abbe from Connecticut votes for Animals. She stated that her organization lobby's for animal welfare bills. She asked that there be an interchange of information from the taskforce so that her organization could support the bills that would be the result of the task-force.

There was positive reception from various members of the task-force and Chairman Freda asked how Elizabeth Abbe how this cooperation would be pursued.

She stated that the task-force could form a subcommittee or just participate in the one Mark Bailey was forming regarding animal euthanasia.

Donna LaPlant came to discuss dog licensing because dogs that are licensed spend less time in shelters. She wanted to have veterinarians turn over proper vaccination records to the town so that the town would be easily accessible to the town clerk when licensing dogs. She stated that she believed that this would also provide a method to encourage licensing of dogs.

Chairman Freda asked that if this information was turned over could it be distributed to animal control officers as well.

Donna agreed that they could do that yes.

Kimberly McDonald (veterinarian) weighed in with concerns regarding the legality of personal information being turned over to the town and whether it would be considered an invasion of privacy.

Sergeant Keller stated that the issue would certainly need to be looked into before that kind of plan was approved to allow veterinary records of any kind to be given over to the local governing body.

Donna LaPlant brought up that online registration was also becoming more popular and that this kind of information provided through a veterinary database could be provide convenience for a dog owner wishing to license their dog if they do not need to fax or mail their rabies vaccination certificate to the town.

Cindy Theran questioned whether a veterinarian would be required to notify a patient that his/her information will be provided as record to the town.

Kimberly McDonald agreed that most patients would likely be alright with this sharing of information but that there should be some sort of waiver to agree that this information will be shared to the town.

Donna LaPlant brought up the fact that legally people are required to license their dog in the state so this information should really be handed over regardless and that it would be a tool for law enforcement.

Edward O'Brien asked if dog licensing information was available to the public.

Donna LaPlant stated that it was under the FOI act laws.

Edward O'Brien stated that responsible dog owners would likely be okay with giving this information out thus anyway.

Chairman Freda announced that the next meeting would be the first Friday of August the 7th.

A motion was made to adjourn

The meeting was Adjourned a 3:32 p.m.

