

Task Force for the Humane Treatment of Animals
Minutes from August 7, 2015 Meeting

Members in attendance:

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

Members Unable to Attend: Raymond Connors and Cindy Theran

Chairman Freda convened the meeting at 2:30 p.m. and began with announcement of visiting guest and then task-force members' introduction.

He then asked for comments from the task-force members being none he moved onto approval of the minutes from the last July task-force meeting.

The minutes were approved.

Chairman Freda moved onto item 4 of the agenda and introduced David Fisch of the radio program Fisch in the Morning on 104.1FM. David went on to outline his efforts in the community through his show to get adoptions for shelter animals throughout the state. He stated that his success record with pet adoptions was around 90% and he would like to get the word out to other community shelters that have adoptable pets to contact him.

Ed O'Brien asked about how to go about contacting his show.

Mark Bailey asked about legislation suggestions. David Fisch stated he would like to see insurance for animal healthcare stating that it would be make it more equitable for families to own healthy pets.

Chairman Freda moved onto item 6a the task-force action plan. Chairman Freda briefly explained the action plan and gave the floor over to Mark Bailey who leads the sub-committee action plan for regulation euthanasia in municipal animal shelters. Mark Bailey stated an update to the research to the sub-committee. Mark stated that he researched laws in other states to draft a proposal that would resemble a usable law that could be passed in the legislature.

Mark Bailey brought up that he would like to make the mandatory spay/neuter law with conjunction with the voucher system.

Sergeant Keller brought up concerns that it might be difficult to bring full attention to the issue with the other projects currently in the mix for the task-force. She also stated concerns over the costs to the municipality and issues regarding legality of transporting these animals.

Chairman Freda asked for clarification from Mark Bailey to address the Sergeant's concerns.

Mark Bailey stated that because of the current voucher system the cost would be very little to the municipality and that because of the CT votes for animals support with regards to the issue this was the time to act.

Paula Poplawski stated that she felt that issue was a better for submission as a legislative recommendation than her subcommittee's volunteer model. She stated that she could work on it with Mark and roll back the roll of the volunteer model issue with the task-force.

Mark Bailey stated he would put together a very specific presentation of how the program works in his municipality New Haven.

Diana Collette asked how it worked in Mark's shelter if an animal required other medical procedures.

He responded by saying that volunteers were usually able to raise money for the animals medical needs.

Kimberly McDonald stated that she also supported the mandatory spay and neuter idea and that she did not believe it was something the task-force should hold off on.

Sergeant Keller stated that she did like the idea but that staffing for shelters and law enforcement were too strapped to provide that kind of service.

Kimberly McDonald stated that volunteers were often capable of stepping in to fill the role of staffing for those shelters.

Sergeant Keller stated that liability was again the biggest issue with have volunteers fill those roles.

Mark Bailey stated that CT votes for animals were capable making good a suggestion regarding this issue as it's been something they have been working on for a number of years.

Kimberly McDonald asked what the liability would be for a veterinary staff member to transport a shelter animal.

Sergeant Keller stated that she would need to look into that possibility.

Michael Freda made a motion that for the mandatory spay and neuter project be fully researched starting with Michael Freda's New Haven model which would be presented to the committee as a presentation. The motion was seconded by Paula Poplawski. A voice vote was taken.

Michael Freda moved onto breeder licensing/permitting.

Sergeant Keller stated that currently New Britain, Meriden, New Haven, and Waterbury were the four municipalities currently working on these programs. She passed out handout of research she had acquired on other municipalities across the U.S. that had current or were working on breeder licensing/permitting. She noted of particular interest L.A. which requires a permit for intact dogs. So all dog owners or guardians were required to spay or neuter their dogs unless specially permitted by the City.

She stated that one of the other municipalities she reached out to bring into the fold of breeder permitting had been resistant to the idea. She was stated she was pleased with the insight into what kinds of resistance any state wide legislation would face. She stated that one of their issues was allowing animal control officers to inspect the premises of a breeder to be sure animal abuse in the form of a puppy mill is not occurring.

Sergeant Keller also noted going back to her research one of the municipalities breaking up the breeder permit into two categories hobby and professional permits.

Kimberly McDonald asked for clarification of what it meant to be a hobby breeder and what the limitations on that vs a professional breeder would be?

Sergeant Keller stated that she did not see any sort of limitation on sales of puppies in either of those categories and could not distinguish a difference between the categories in any other sense.

Michael Freda moved onto item 1c Paula Poplawski the volunteer model.

She asked Laura Burboun to make the presentation as an animal control officer in Branford; she had been working with Paula Poplawski on the volunteer model for animal shelters throughout the state.

She stated that she was actively working on putting together a presentation on the model she and Paula were working on but that it wasn't quite done yet. She stated that it was more work visiting these shelters around the state than she and Paula had originally thought. She did state that she had learned that many of these shelters functioned quite differently from location to location.

Sergeant Keller asked if there was a problem with availability for volunteers such as during the week when volunteers are at their normal 9-5 jobs.

Laura Burboun stated that there were ways that a few shelters worked around that issue by having set blocks volunteers can sign up for rather than having them simply coming in whenever they can.

Mark Bailey asked if Laura had a compelling argument for those who are skeptical of volunteerism within the shelters.

She stated while there are down sides, volunteers generally contribute positively to the shelter either by getting more pets adopted or by achieving funding for the shelter through connections with the community that an animal control officer might not have.

Chairman Freda moved onto discussion of proposed business including item 1 tracking system for people convicted of animal abuse and item 2 a voucher program.

Chairman Freda asked if these were ideas that should be moved to the priority list of legislative recommendations.

Edward O'Brien stated that he would support the tracking system initiative in the first phase of recommendations.

Sergeant Keller stated that it probably wouldn't be that difficult to implement a program such as this simply because it would just be about getting the support and funding to implement the database.

Chairman Freda made a motion to enter a tracking system for people convicted of animal abuse into the first stage of recommendations.

He moved onto the voucher system and asked Sergeant Keller what her take on the state of the voucher system which is currently administered by the Department of Agriculture.

Sergeant Keller stated that at the moment the voucher system seemed to be stagnant. She said that she would like the current system in place to change and have her be able to decide which shelter pet would be a good home pet and then be able to get the pet neutered and be reimbursed for the procedure through the voucher system.

Mark Bailey agreed with Sergeant Keller and added that it was ridiculous that the voucher system as it functions now does not trust its municipal animal control officers to know what animal is adoptable.

Chairman Freda moved onto Member feedback

Mark Bailey announced that the beagle freedom act was going to be enacted as law this week.

Chairman Freda asked for public Comment

Elizabeth Abbey from CT votes for animals came up to note that she was behind the animal abuse tracking program but that there was accelerated rehabilitation programs that allowed crimes such as animal abuse to be expunged from the offenders record after a year. She stated that a proposed bill that did not make it out this past session would have removed that loophole she suggested that the task-force support that legislation if proposed again.

Owen Little East Haven animal control officer spoke next. The issue he brought forth was an issue of convictions in animal cruelty cases. Being that the people in his profession were not usually trained law enforcement officers it was less likely for the court system to take the cases that he and his colleagues brought to court seriously. He suggested either strengthening the training requirements for animal

control officers. He also suggested creating an emergency protocol to allow for a mutual aid system where officers from adjoining towns could assist in case such as the ones where a large number of animals are seized from an owner.

Chairman Freda stated that as a member of the south central region of governments he would be will to propose such a program to allow mutual sharing of resources between animal control officers.

Sergeant Keller stated that she felt that there was a pervasive bias in the court system and in law enforcement in general that animal law is not taken seriously. She stated that generally everyday police officers tend to freeze when it comes to animal abuse cases and not do their due diligence on those cases. She stated that it would be advisable to increase training be it for everyday police officers or for animal control officers so that the conviction rates on these cases increase.

Owen Little stated that he was really looking to professionalize his occupation through this mutual aid idea so that he could bring better material evidence before the court system in cases of animal abuse.

Laura Borboun asked Sergeant Keller about her animal control officer training which she is rolling out for the first time in several weeks.

Sergeant Keller stated that the training would provide animal control officer with at least minimum knowledge of officer safety training, and field operations training.

Chairman Freda adjourned the meeting at 4:04 p.m.