

Task Force for the Humane Treatment of Animals

Minutes from December 2, 2015 Meeting

Members in attendance: Co-chair Michael Freda, Co-chair Diane Collette, Cynthia Theran, Mark Bailey, Edward O'Brien, Raymond Connors, Kimberley McDonald.

Chairman Freda convened the meeting at 2:18 pm. He began with introductions of the members

Public comment on the agenda, there was none

Chairman Freda moved onto discussion on the minutes from the November 3rd task-force meeting. There being none a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes, the minutes were approved.

Chairman Freda announced that this would be the second to last meeting of the task-force in statute. He stated that as the final business of the task-force would be finalizing the language for the initiative recommendations for legislation for the 2016 session.

The chairman than moved onto presentations on those initiatives.

Mark Bailey began with healthy and treatable animals in municipal shelters. Mark Bailey left draft language out for public review. He then discussed the changes that had been made to the updated language for the draft.

Dr. Kimberly McDonald asked for clarification on what a term in the language meant with regards to licensed animal behaviorists.

Mark Bailey and Cynthia Theran clarified.

Ray Connors stated that there were no statutes regarding the licensing for animal behaviorist thus the addition of that language would leave a hole in the bill proposal.

Cynthia suggested striking that section.

Mark and Ray concurred with that suggestion to strike the last section of the draft language to remove reference to animal behaviorist. It was agreed by the task-force members that the minutes should reflect the agreement to strike that section.

Chairman Freda allowed Mark Bailey to continue on to mandatory spay and neuter draft language.

Mark stated that the updated language added cats to the statute. He added sections allowing an extension for animals too sick and young for spay and neuter.

Diana Collette asked for a correction to the language to read extension for animals too sick **or** young.

Mark agreed with the correction and stated that it was a typo.

Chairman Freda asked the task-force members for approval for this language. The language was approved with memorialized corrections.

Chairman Freda moved onto initiative three a breeder licensing program headed by Sgt. Paula Keller (absent)

Sgt. Paula Keller's draft language for a breeder licensing program was summarized and read allowed by Chairman Freda. He also provided background on the reasoning for the proposal.

Mark Bailey asked how closely Sgt. Keller's proposal modelled the New Britain ordinance.

Chairman Freda stated that New Britain model was the basis for the proposal.

Mark Bailey then stated that there was precedence for the proposal.

Ed O'Brien asked what the trigger for the breeder's license exactly, and how strict were the requirements.

Dr. Kimberley McDonald stated that her impression was that it would be required for anyone breeding of a dog.

Ray agreed with the intention stated by the Dr. McDonald, that the objective of the proposal would be to stop backyard breeding completely to prevent to overabundance of unwanted companion animals.

Cynthia was wondering if the breeder license would be exclusive to backyard breeders and not people that fell under the Kennel license law.

Ray took the question on by stating that people who own a Kennel license are breeding animals for sale, or show. Anyone breeding three litters or more per year are required to have this license and it allows for animal control officers to inspect a licensed persons residence or facility to make sure healthy conditions for the animals are met. If they are found to be in violation of those conditions than they are eligible for a jail time depending on the degree of offence. Ray contemplated whether not including the kennel license in the breeder license requirements would help or hurt the bill proposal.

Cynthia Theran thanked Ray for his clarification and pointed out that the kennel license would have more stringent license requirements based on his explanation.

Dr. McDonald asked for clarification on whether it was three or two litters per year for the kennel license.

Ray corrected himself and agreed that it was two or more litters per year was the requirement for the Kennel license. Ray stated that the hole in the proposal was the licensing fees. Since a person need to license their dogs anyway they can simply opt to license several dogs and get the kennel license rather than the breeders license and he pointed out zoning restrictions can override any licensing a resident can get.

Mark Bailey stated that one of the concerns with this bill was for legitimate line breeders. He stated that having them occur another requirement would seem unfair.

Chairman Freda moved onto the task-forces third initiative. A volunteer model for municipal shelters headed by task-force member Paula Poplawski.

Chairman Freda stated that Paula was not able to attend due to illness. He instead read Paula's report for a shelter volunteer model.

Paula's report included firsthand experience with implementation of the model in a volunteer municipality (West Haven). She stated in her report that she met with the head animal control officer (Sgt. Pimer) as well as the 4 full time and 4 part time staff at the shelter. She stated in her report that there needs to be an emphasis that this recommendation does not suggest a means for reducing staffing at these facilities but rather a means to supplement the care being provided to the animals by the staff.

Chairman Freda commended Ed O'Brien a task-force member and Mayor of the city of West Haven.

Ed stated that the staff members of his city's animal shelter were excited to implement the model to see how it works.

Mark Bailey asked for clarification as to whether the proposal being put forward would be a recommendation to municipalities or a mandate. He also asked if it was only to be recommendation, how the proposal would be written as legislation.

Chairman Freda stated that they had settled on the proposal being a recommendation only. He also stated that they would still need to work out how the volunteer model recommendation would be implemented as a legislative proposal.

Dr. Kimberley McDonald asked to know what the liability of the towns was for the volunteers.

Mark stated that he wasn't completely sure what the legal liabilities for the towns were. He did state that the city of New Haven was satisfied with their volunteers signing a liability waiver.

Edward O'Brien stated his opinion regarding the West Haven liability waivers and why his former volunteer program failed.

Chairman Freda stated he would be implementing this model as well. He stated that they would need to continue to work on how they implement this voluntary municipal model into legislation.

Chairman Freda moved onto the fourth initiative: A registry for offenders convicted of animal abuse.

Cynthia Theran began by stating the proposal would look to amend the current statutes regarding animal abuse to include a registry for those offenders convicted of animal abuse. She stated that she was looking to alter her recommendation by looking into how other states and counties implemented similar laws. These states included Tennessee and counties of New York state including the city of New York.

Chairman Freda stated that he had received a handout from Representative Diana Urban with statistical data on about 80,000 animal abuse cases nationwide each year the majority of which are being dismissed.

Cynthia stated that they had drafted a legislative summary with included intent for the proposal so that legislators understand the purpose and justification for the legislative proposal. This summary included an explanation of how sellers of animals can have access to this database prior to the sale (or adoption) of an animal so as to prevent repeat offence. She also brought up the relative high rate of recidivism in people convicted of certain animal abuse crimes and the relation between these crimes and other abuse related crimes against human victims, thus displaying a need for such a registry.

Cynthia also brought up that the proposal as it is written currently puts the burden of oversight on the state agency that they saw best fit although.

Ray stated that he believed that if anything positive were to come from the task-force it would be this registry.

Cynthia stated that statistical data from over thirteen hundred animal abuse cases stated that only about 20 of those ended in convictions with about a third being dismissed. She stated that this kind of bread down of case vs conviction rate was inconsistent with what is normally found for other types of crimes. She stated while this registry was a first step in reducing animal abuse crimes she also pointed out that it could only be implemented for people convicted of the crime and not those accused so working on trying to legitimize the pursuit of a conviction for an animal abuse case should be a necessity the task-force should also work on in the future if it is renewed.

Cynthia also stated that the proposal would also include a punishment for those adoption organizations or pet sellers that do not check the registry prior to sale of a pet.

Chairman Freda brought up the low rate of convictions for this offence roughly 80% of the cases result in no conviction.

Ray commented on the types of abuse that occurs with animal abuse and the offenders that commit these crimes often go on to commit other abuse related crimes often against minors.

Chairman Freda brought up the relationship between animal abuse and child/ domestic abuse as well as other crimes.

Chairman Freda asked if this was the final language to be presented

Cynthia stated that there was a need for some clean up and asked the task-force members for suggestions.

Chairman Freda asked that those recommendations come by next week.

Chairman Freda stated that the task-forces final goal was to recommend an extension for the task-force. He suggested getting the task-force a permanent extension.

Mark Bailey asked for a schedule for the recommendation deadlines for the upcoming deadline of the task-force.

Chairman Freda obliged him that they would indeed need to move quickly to finalize those recommendations. The last meeting in statute would be January 6th and that the finalized proposals would need to be done prior to that.

Public comment Joseph Pisano

He had a suggestion regarding definitions of inbreeding.

He wished to change the language to instead state that breeding dogs should not be siblings or parents to children.

Line vs inbreeding. Kimberley stated that she would explore the language further to clarify what inbreeding was.

Rep. Urban spoke on the animal advocate and why there is such a problem of getting convictions in animal abuse cases. She would like to implement an animal advocate program where someone advocates for the animals as the animals in court so that the judicial system starts taking these cases seriously.

Dr. Kimberley McDonald asked Rep. Urban what it was that caused such a low conviction rate and in particular whether it was a lack of veterinarian preparation for testimony in court.

Rep. Urban stated that she believed that it was simply a lack of empathy for the animals by the jury or Judge because they were not people.

Cynthia suggested that a study of child abuse cases because children do not speak in court.

Chairman Freda asked for any other public comment.

Toni Cadet executive director of Animal Haven in North Haven.

She made the suggestion that the task-force look into mandatory reporting for veterinarians or clinics that see abuse in animals.

Chairman Freda thanked Ms. Cadet for her Testimony

He then adjourned the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm.