

## **Task Force on Humane Treatment of animals in Municipal and Regional Shelters**

November 3, 2017

Members Present: Paula Poplawski, Chairman Michael Freda, Mark Bailey, Cynthia Theran, Officer Jim Davis(proxy for Sgt. Keller), Raymond Connors, Dr. Gayle Block

Members Absent: Sgt. Paula Keller, Edward O'Brien, Laura Burban

### **Calling the Meeting to Order:**

Chairman Freda convened the meeting at 2:12 pm

### **Member Introduction:**

Chairman Freda stated for the record that each of the task-force members was participating as free citizens despite their affiliations or employment.

Chairman Freda then moved onto member introductions.

### **Review of the Minutes:**

Chairman Freda moved to consider the minutes of the last meeting. He asked the members to review the minutes and bring up any necessary changes.

Mark Bailey suggested changing Officer Jim Davis's title from "ad-hoc member" to "proxy for Sgt. Paula Keller" to clarify his relation.

Cynthia Theran asked for a clarifying change to the testimony section of the minutes.

A motion was made to accept as amended the minutes of the October 5, 2017, task-force meeting.

The motion passed, Dr. Gayle Block abstained from the vote.

### **Public comment on the agenda:**

There was none.

### **Subcommittee updates:**

Chairman Freda explained the formatting and process for the Task-Forces sub-committees. He then turned it over to Mark Bailey to report on the progress of the first sub-committee.

Mark Bailey stated the sub-committee would focus on three main issues.

1. Clarification to the statutes regarding the confining of biting dogs. Animal cruelty statutes CGS. 22-358
2. Clarification and improvements to Desmond's Law. CGS. 22-380, CGS. 53-247
3. Vaccination requirements as a condition for adoption.

Chairman Freda stated that the sub-committee would come back next month with another update.

Mark Bailey stated it would take at least another one to two months before finalized recommendations could be made.

Mark Bailey brought up the 4th topic of discussion which was animals left in hot cars and getting Animal Control Officers (ACOs) the right to retrieve an animal left in those conditions.

Raymond Connors stated that ACOs did have the right to remove an animal from a car if the animal appeared to be in danger.

Raymond further clarified that the general public does not have that right.

Chairman Freda stated that the second task-force sub-committee did not have a chance to meet yet but would have a report next month on their topics.

#### **Statistical Data and Resource updates:**

Raymond Connors stated that there was some misinformation that was presented at the last meeting that he wished to address. This misinformation was that there were 168 different animal control offices in the state. Ray stated there were significantly fewer than that because there were several regional animal shelters. He also stated that there were only roughly 25-30 private animal rescues, but there were numerous animal import organizations, which was likely the reason for the confusion.

Ray Connors offered to provide the task-force statistics on euthanasia and sold as pet numbers from all the municipal animal shelters in the state.

Mark Bailey stated he had something to present that would fall under the resources section. He proposed that Maddie's Fund could provide a valuable resource for Connecticut shelters if they can apply for the grants. He specifically named several shelter initiatives that Maddie's fund is willing to fund with these grants.

Mark Bailey provided two hand-outs to the task-force. A basic animal data matrix which is used in recording shelter statistics based on a national standard and Maddie's Fund handout which list their available innovation grants.

Paula Poplawski stated that she liked the format of the matrix Mark provided.

Cynthia Theran echoed Paula's comments and asked that while the task-force is on the subject of data collection that they use it as an opportunity to follow up on the data/statistic related questions brought up at the last meeting.

Chairman Freda stated perhaps making a uniform statewide platform would allow shelters to be better equipped to apply for Maddie's Fund grants.

Mark Bailey agreed and reiterated that Maddie's fund encourages regional and multi-organization collaboration when looking at grant applicants.

#### Task-Force Member Feedback and Questions:

Cynthia Theran asked if some of the statistics that were brought up at the last meeting were available.

Ray Connors stated that the Department of Agriculture did not keep those statistics on Shelter capacities or average length of stay directly. He did state someone could calculate them based on the individual animal length of stay reports that the Department does have but that it would be an exorbitant amount of work.

Cynthia Theran stated that she believed that this type of data would be essential to provide benchmarks for improvement.

Moving on Mark Bailey asked if there was a defined difference between "dog pound" and "animal shelter."

Ray Connors stated that "dog pounds" were defined in statute as a location where animals are impounded and that "animal shelters" were private non-for-profit facilities. Ray Connors stated that the difference was a matter of semantics and would be very difficult to change in statute.

Mark Bailey stated that he wanted to have the task-force members aware of those definitions.

Dr. Gayle Block stated that she believed the term dog pound to be archaic and that all municipal dog pounds should be sheltering cats as well.

Chairman Freda suggested that at the task-force's next meeting should examine the definitions for both "animal shelter" and "dog pound".

Cynthia Theran was assigned the task looking up the statute definition for both terms.

Raymond Connors suggested a good way to clarify what the task-force members are discussing would be to use the designation municipal when referring to either municipal animal shelter or dog pounds.

Chairman Freda moved on to public comment.

**Public comment:**

Jennifer Merenda, Bridgeport Animal Control Officer, testified to the Task-force about the innovations and improvements made by the Bridgeport animal shelter program. Jennifer suggested ideas that the task-force could investigate to improve CT's municipal animal shelter services.

1. Officer safety training
2. Access to an experienced grant writer/researcher.
3. Research committee for shelter statistics.
4. Fund or grant program for ACO training/education opportunities.
5. Fund or grant program to assist underfunded facilities.
6. Network directory for ACO and shelter resources for medical, educational, and behavioral.
7. A state mandate on minimum staffing requirements for municipal shelters programs.

Jennifer stated that she hopes that the proposals coming from the task-force will be to assist rather than to penalize shelter programs and ACOs.

Wendy Legault, Advocate & private kennel owner, provided testimony to the task-force on animal rights initiatives. She proposed some alternative municipal shelter procedures to increase adoption rates and reduce kennel stress. She also recommended a mandatory microchipping program for shelter animal adoptees.

Thompson G. Page, Animal Welfare Attorney, provided testimony to the task-force regarding the issues and limitations of CT's new Desmond's law as well as the reasons for the low level of convictions in animal cruelty cases.

Rachel Solveira, Stratford Animal Control Officer, provided testimony to the task-force about the success her municipal shelter program and the improving nature of all CT shelter programs. She offered support for the idea of changing the term "Dog Pound" in statute to "Animal Care and Control Facility."

**Adjournment:**

Chairman Freda asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made and seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 pm.