

Here are the minutes from the Richmond meeting of the Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare, held on Sunday, 11/28/04.

This was the final meeting of the “November round” of meetings and was another successful meeting.

Our intention, once these minutes have been posted, is to present the initiatives which are the result of all the meetings, the exchange of ideas and the various studies and projects done by so many of you. These will represent the will of Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare, and, where legislation is contemplated, VVAW will work to have that submitted to the General Assembly in January, 2005.

In addition, Don and I will continue to reach out to each constituency involved in Virginia’s animal welfare, meeting with each group, and urging their support of the efforts of VVAW. There will also be meetings with members of the General Assembly and county Boards of Supervisors. Once the initiatives are finalized this week, we urge you to arrange such meetings yourselves, and we will also try to attend with you if that is your wish.

Lillian Clancy and Don Marro

A meeting of the Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare regarding pet overpopulation started at 11:00 am at the Colony Club in Richmond. Once again, Suzanne Wolstenholme offered her facilities to the group, and once again we said yes. Thank you so much, Suzanne.

attendees:

Lillian Clancy  
Catherine Harold/independent  
Maureen Hill-Hauch/American Dog Owners Association  
Kim Kincheloe/Lion Heart Inc. and Kincheloe S/N Clinic  
Virginia Kincheloe/Lion Heart Inc. and Kincheloe S/N Clinic  
Cindy Leggett/Dogs Deserve Better  
Donald Marro  
Annie Pelfrey/independent; member, Central VA Collie Club; Volunteer w/ Operation Catnip  
Suzanne Wolsltenholme/Hanover Humane Society

unable to attend:

Katherine Norman  
Jim Perry  
Carol Rock  
Lyn Tamy  
Diane Tyson

Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves and spoke briefly of the group with which they are affiliated or otherwise described their reasons for attending.

## Agenda

1. Lillian Clancy opened the meeting by saying there are many things that need to be done for Virginia's companion animals, but no matter how inventive the programs, without adequate funding they will fall short of success.
2. Don Marro started by asking those at the meeting to get as many people as possible to participate in this effort, and to work at the Board of Supervisor level, and with their representatives in the General Assembly.

He said we need visibility in the next 6-8 weeks to accomplish our goals

He added that initiatives that emerged are legislative and moral persuasion efforts both.

He added that once the proposed legislation is in the hands of the potential patrons of that legislation, it will then be available to all on the VVAW website. He anticipates that will take place by 12/4/04.

He also noted that VVAW membership comments on the initiatives should continue after 12/4/04 so that any necessary modifications can be provided to the patrons before 12/11/04.

## FUNDING

3. Don discussed the \$32 million currently being spent in Virginia on animal control functions including public pounds. That money comes from the general fund that gets its funds from property taxes, and many other programs compete for general fund money. Don believes it is unlikely to expect any tax increases to fund animal welfare issues, but Dr. Escobar who heads the Virginia veterinary medical group, suggested an increase in pet food sales taxes that his group may wish to introduce and if so, VVAW will support.

In lieu of a tax on pet food, it seems that funds from dog licenses is the most likely source, and funds from such licenses could fund s/n, rabies, and animal control operations/personnel.

Don noted that compliance in the purchase of dog licenses ranges from close to zero to about 15%, and few jurisdictions require cat licenses.

With an estimated 2 million dogs in Virginia, even if all were licensed at the present cap of \$10 per animal, this would only raise \$20 million, which is less than the \$32 million now coming from the general fund.

Should the cap be raised to \$35 for dogs, with \$2 for any additional dogs in the household, and perhaps \$15 for cat licenses, with 70% compliance in single dog households

and 10% multiple dog households, more than \$50 million would be raised. This would be enough to fund s/n, rabies, animal control, and all the pounds and shelters in Virginia.

4. Don noted that the public-private agreement being used in Roanoke includes a bond issue, a model to be used down the road.
5. Kim Kincheloe noted that there was an attempt in 2003 by Flora Crittenden to raise the license cap to \$30.

Don responded that the VVAW initiative has free licenses, no change to kennel licenses for hunt clubs or breeders, earmarked funds, easier license availability with sales at vets, pet food stores, etc., and sharing statewide once all jurisdictions adopt higher fees.

Don mentioned that fees charged would be determined by local jurisdictions.

6. Maureen Hill-Hauch said it has been proven in many localities that when license fees are raised, compliance decreases. While she believes both dogs and cats should be licensed, she calls the situation “frightening” if compliance fell.

Don said there are also examples where higher fees and a culture of enforcement works. The intent is to make it “not ok” not to comply. Licenses will be free for those who say they cannot afford them. If licenses are free, and someone still doesn’t comply, then it is far easier to impose a penalty. It may be in a second year that free licenses are not awarded so easily, perhaps a means test then required. With free licenses and the \$150 penalty currently on the books for not having an animal licensed, and with zero tolerance, there would be real teeth for compliance. For those unable to pay the \$150 penalty for not getting a license, there could be community service.

Don continued: giving free licenses identifies all owners so that public safety and public health risks are significantly reduced, and increased revenues are possible over time.

7. Licenses need not only to be free as required, but they need to be easily available.
8. Maureen Hill-Hauch suggested the idea of being able to apply for a license at the same time the rabies shot is given.

Catherine Harold added that if rabies compliance is better than licensing compliance, perhaps this should be the way to go.

9. Catherine Harold said she got a license for her new dog yesterday from her vet, but does not know whether all vets are selling licenses.

She suggested an incentive be built in to the pricing for dogs that are s/n.

10. Don said that higher fees for licenses would not result in higher non-compliance if all the excuses for non-compliance were eliminated. He discussed meeting with Governor Warner's staff and the discussion of a task force to address the means for increasing compliance outlined above (free licenses, greater availability, earmarking, etc.).
11. Kim Kincheloe suggested that reminders about licensing could easily be included in tax bills and the like which local jurisdictions send out. Don agreed, saying that a simple programming change could print out that reminder.

Suzanne Wolstenholme said that Hanover does send out reminders about licenses, and also includes an envelope to encourage easy compliance.

Kim Kincheloe said it is necessary to show a current rabies certificate to be given a license.

Annie Pelfrey said some people do not pay for a license because funds from animal licenses go into the general fund.

Catherine Harold said an incentive to comply must be built in.

Don suggested that with funds earmarked for animal programs along with making the purchase of licenses easier, that such incentives are present.

Annie Pelfrey said she would only want to buy a license if the funds were earmarked for animal issues.

Catherine Harold wondered how difficult it would be for people to ask for free licenses if they have to disclose lack of means, especially if licenses were at retail outlets where cashiers are handling the transaction.

Kim Kincheloe suggested that saying they could not afford a license would be unlikely as it would be embarrassing.

Several then wondered if there might not be abuse of the ability to get free licenses.

Don said that is all right since all would be identified and one or two years down the road, the inability to pay for a license might require proof.

12. Don said that Dr. Escobar would be contacted to support vets selling licenses and clarify the issue by reinforcing that rabies tags are not licenses.

Catherine Harold suggested it might be a good idea to get on the agenda of a VVMA meeting.

13. Maureen Hill-Hauch says she is afraid that some will say their pet is s/n when it is not in order to get the reduced rate, and that perhaps a certificate from a vet would be appropriate.

Don suggested that this is for the local jurisdiction and its budget needs. Don suggested that VVAW not push to make vets police animal licensing, and that random audits after licensing to produce s/n certificates should be enough.

Catherine Harold suggested that, when applying for a license, that the owner certify under penalty of perjury that the information provided is correct, whether sterilization or income status. The important thing is that the owner certifies. This is similar to how certification of insurance coverage is handled by the DMV on the registration forms.

Don said legislation would propose that when license fees are raised in all jurisdictions, at that point 15% of funds from wealthier counties would be shared with less affluent counties.

Don suggested VVAW membership contact their Boards of Supervisors to support this as a way to stabilize the property tax rate, or reduce reliance on the general fund for animal programs.

Kim Kincheloe noted that licensing fees in her area, Spotsylvania, go directly to animal control.

Don said that with the earmarking of license fees, sales taxes on companion animal sales, business licenses for animal sales, should all go to s/n, rabies, animal control and better facilities.

14. Kim Kincheloe added that another category of help is needed: animals in public pounds are frequently not treated, and medicine that could help is frequently quite inexpensive. She would like to ensure that funding covers this problem as well.
15. Don Marro discussed the civil fines levied against Page County because of conditions at their public pound. Before fines of \$134,000 were levied, the county did not have the money, but after the fines, the county was able to pay over \$500,000 for a new facility. This should not happen because of a threat of fines, Don said, but should happen because of local funding sources, local advocacy, and the moral obligation to do what's right.
16. Annie Pelfrey wondered why animal control people were not at the meeting. She wonders about their professional group, and she wonders about their training. Don Marro said there have been some very good meetings that included animal control people who contributed significantly to the meetings. Don mentioned specifically Mike Quesenberry, the ACOs from Charlottesville, and meetings with Mark Kumpf who heads the Virginia Animal Control Association, a very good, professional animal control officer of long standing.

17. Kim Kincheloe wondered how someone in animal control progresses professionally.

Don said that animal control people in general have seen horrible things over the years. He mentioned that animal control people are not given the same protection state-wide as are law enforcement personnel, and this speaks volumes about how much help they need. VACA is pushing for change to address this, and we will support it if it becomes an initiative.

Lillian Clancy said that we will support any one who patrons such a bill.

18. Catherine Harold pondered how to position various initiatives with elected officials. She suggested that the full report be fleshed out with background information (state of the issue) under each initiative. The background and initiatives should be synthesized into talking points or points that can be easily made in letters to elected officials. Such a brief (1-2 pages) could also double as a handout to be left behind with the press or elected official.
19. Suzanne Wolstenholme asked that wording for a sample resolution one might ask their local county Board of Supervisors to pass be available on line. She noted that such a resolution might get press coverage, as there are always reporters at the Board of Supervisors meetings in Hanover.

#### GAS CHAMBERS

20. Don Marro discussed the recent meeting with Dr. Butts, the State Veterinarian. Don proposed at that meeting, that Dr. Butts declare gas chambers unacceptable.

Don has offered a fund of \$25,000 we will provide to defray transition costs from gas chambers to I/V euthanasia should places using gas need help. The fund is to be named for the dog of Dr. Cardin, the Deputy State Vet, which is a gas chamber survivor. In jurisdictions where economic excuses would otherwise be used to avoid making the change, the fund overcomes those arguments.

21. Catherine Harold inquired whether there are any published policies additional to the regulations for euthanasia in Virginia, as she has not seen them on the VDACS web site. Material not on the VDACS website will be sent to her.
22. Don noted a liability issue to employees for incorrect use and malfunctioning chambers as another reason to eliminate such chambers.

In addition, it is more humane if I/V euthanasia is the standard.

23. Catherine Harold said lack of training or unavailability of training may be raised as reason for not eliminating gas chambers. This point was raised at one of the first meetings in

Delaplane. From various websites, she says it does not appear that I/V training is available in Virginia. She would like to know what kind of training is offered for doing I/V euthanasia.

24. Don mentioned the experience of Mollie McCurdy (see Harrisonburg meeting minutes of 11/27/04) in seeing ferals efficiently and humanely euthanized by technicians that had appropriate training, so training is available and effective.
25. Virginia Kincheloe described shooting of dogs as a culturally accepted method of euthanasia not too long ago.
26. Don mentioned the change that happened in Page County because of public outcry over methods of euthanasia there. He continued that if a jurisdiction has money, quality people could be recruited, trained, and retained. Such appears to be the case at the Page facility now.
27. Suzanne Wolstenholme said that the attitude that a facility exhibits is a reflection of attitudes from the top.
28. Kim Kincheloe voiced her interest in having Nathan Winograd, described by her as “wonderful”, brought to Virginia for a presentation which would be especially useful for those in animal control. Cynthia Mantalos (see Charlottesville meeting minutes of 10/3/04) also wants something similar to happen. It was suggested that Cynthia and Kim work on this together.

Don said that the kinds of things Winograd can offer are long-term mind set changes.

#### HUMANE EDUCATION

29. Don anticipates there will be a humane education bill that will have responsible ownership as its focus.
30. Annie Pelfrey wondered if veterinarians need to belong to VVMA.
31. Kim Kincheloe said, with disbelief, that some vets are still saying that having at least one litter is a healthy practice.
32. Don said there is also a widely held belief that s/n diminishes the skill and interest of hunting dogs though others say there is no such effect. Don said, regardless of cultural imperatives, vets should not promote litters and not counsel against s/n. With humane education, the need to be mindful of the cultural setting in which the vet finds himself will diminish.
33. Virginia Kincheloe said that if a hunting dog is sterile, that dog is more likely to keep its mind on hunting and “not on the girl next door”.

34. Catherine Harold indicated that how such an initiative would be funded could become an issue as well as just providing the education in schools with respect to other competing interests. Such an initiative could run into the same kind of resistance as was found in providing environmental education, and resistance might also come from hunting organizations who would oppose more humane care of animals, Catherine continued.

Don said money for humane instruction would be project and program oriented and require little if any funding. If it does require funding, it would come from the education budget.

Catherine Harold said supporting VVMA initiative could go a long way in cultivating a relationship/dialogue with them.

35. Maureen Hill-Hauch described a program in which some of her members go to the schools with their dogs to talk about responsible dog ownership. She describes it as a program rather than part of the schools' curriculum. Her group's programs are up and running in Maryland, New York, and Manassas in Virginia. She also said that there are other programs and materials that are being used by AKC, ASPCA, and other organizations. Her intent is to grow the program in Virginia.

Don voiced his support of such a program saying that children can be missionaries to their parents. He offered to put Maureen in touch with the humane education bill's patron. He indicated that this helps teach morality to Virginia's children.

36. Kim Kincheloe said that none involved with Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare think this work will be easy or will be all downhill.

Don agreed, saying there will be opposition, and this is why we need supporters to be vocal and in contact with their elected officials.

#### RELEASING AGENCY DEFINITION CHANGE and MICRO-CHIPPING

37. Don said VVAW believes in responsible ownership, responsible government, and responsible breeding.

He described a recent meeting with Marge McClung who heads the Virginia Federation of Breeders, calling the meeting "wonderful". Don said he understood that Marge is appalled by backyard breeders and uncaring for-profit breeders.

He discussed bringing such breeders under the ethical influence of Marge's group, as a means to alter their practices and get them to follow the code of ethics of Marge's organization, which should be the standards for all.

38. Don said legislation is to be proposed which will change the definition of a releasing agency and add pet shops and casual, for-profit backyard breeders to the definition of releasing agencies. Current releasing agencies are rescues, humane societies, and public or private shelters.

Presently releasing agencies require released animals be s/n.

Marge McClung has been asked to spearhead or support this initiative in which companion animals from pet shops and backyard breeders could be bred if the buyer agrees to join the breeder federation.

Don said there is an effort to craft a definition of irresponsible breeders and he asked for additional suggestions from Maureen Hill-Hauch and from any person involved with VVAW.

39. Maureen Hill-Hauch indicated her membership in Marge's federation, and described it as the umbrella for all Virginia kennel clubs. The code of ethics of the group and membership in the group are not taken lightly, she said.

In describing irresponsible breeders, she described most of them as people who live off their dogs, breeding litter after litter.

She described the differences between AKC and UKC registration, and their requirements for registration of litters.

She noted the UKC is as large as AKC, and that there are additional registries as well. She also stated that many new registries have popped up over the years that have very low standards for registration, and many will register dogs that the other major registries will not.

She is not sure how to define irresponsible breeders. Most responsible breeders do not advertise in the Washington Post. Generally, responsible breeders who do advertise, will advertise in Dog World or other trade magazines, or on some of the Internet sites that reach responsible breeders. In addition, responsible breeders rarely make a profit on a litter because they health test, provide good vet care, etc.

She is confident that backyard breeders know who they are.

40. Kim Kincheloe asked whether the phrase "for profit" needs to be part of the definition. She said her goal is to have no irresponsible breeding, although she realizes that is not possible immediately.
41. Don voiced his hope that Maureen Hill-Hauch and Marge McClung will lead the charge and drive out irresponsible breeders, and has asked Marge to help carry this initiative.

He also feels the “for profit” phrase is an important one to keep in the definition.

42. Cindy Leggett said in her opinion, CKC is the worst registry.
43. Maureen Hill-Hauch said the American Dog Owners Association would not support any legislation that discriminates against responsible breeders.
44. Kim Kincheloe said there would be breeding, but wants it regulated by responsible groups.
45. Maureen Hill-Hauch said she believes that ethics cannot be taught, but responsibility can be.
46. Don described requiring all releasing agencies to s/n their animals prior to release except those to be bred from breeders or pet stores by people promising to join the Virginia Federation of Dog Breeders.
47. Don would prefer that legislation also require releasing agencies to identify the animals released by the use of microchips. This would help with enforcing the moral or legal obligations of owners who may not be responsible.

Chipping can also provide the answer to reuniting a pet with its owner.

48. The chipping study currently being written will soon be available on the website.
49. Don said currently there is no patron for the releasing agency definition change, or for mandatory chipping by the releasing agency, nor for mandatory s/n prior to release, but hopes Marge McClung will agree to find one.
50. Maureen Hill-Hauch pointed out the differences between AKC and UKC. She stated that the UKC is a leader in its DNA program, but the UKC has a policy of giving full registration to dogs that have limited registration through AKC.

#### IN CLOSING

51. Kim Kincheloe asked that there be a way to have dialogue with others involved with VVAW, and asked how email addresses could be shared.

It was suggested that in the next general email, that people be asked to allow their name and email be publicly available for such dialogue.

It was also mentioned that there has been some suggestion about establishing a group to discuss various issues as a subset of VVAW.

52. Annie Pelfrey stated that early s/n is a concern for some who have “giant” breeds, but a medical exemption could allay the fears of the owner.

Maureen Hill-Hauch voiced her support for early s/n if recommended by a vet, but Annie said she understands there are still medical questions about the practice.

Maureen said she would defer to the opinion of the participating vet in any such decision.

53. Don described his visit to Kentucky to meet with Dr. McDonald. He asked that Kim Kincheloe participate in evaluation of Dr. McDonald’s program, helping to decide how best to work with it in Virginia. Kim agreed to participate.

54. Maureen Hill-Hauch said she attended an AKC seminar where they proposed every September 17<sup>th</sup> to be responsible dog ownership day. She will seek a resolution so that Virginia will be the first state to enact a resolution.

Don suggested Maureen seek the endorsement of Marge McClung for that special day.

55. Catherine Harold suggested revisiting the concept of a tax on pet food, saying that there are some products with special taxes on them that fund other programs. She feels there may be something to be learned from such other programs, and feels that a small tax would probably barely be noticed.

Don mentioned that Dr. Escobar of the VVMA suggested the food tax. Don does not want to focus on tax changes if Dr. Escobar will. Don will ask Dr. Escobar if he wants to pursue it.

Kim Kincheloe would be in favor of a tax on pet food, saying it would be an easy pill to swallow.

Don again voiced his support of the concept, but noted his reluctance for VVAW, an untried group and new to Richmond, to push for a tax, preferring that the VVMA be the change agent.

Catherine Harold said it could soften things and support dialogue.

56. Maureen Hill-Hauch asked about the tax check off plan.

Don said that funds from the animal friendly license plate sales, a different program, are not carefully monitored.

The tax refund check off will go into effect on refunds coming from 2004 income tax that is yet to be filed. There is little information about some of the designated recipients of tax refunds including the Spay/Neuter Fund.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 pm.