

The VVAW meeting focusing on pet overpopulation started at 11:00 am at the Fredericksburg Colonial Inn in Fredericksburg on Sunday, 2/13/05.

Attendees:

Jeanette Allard  
Rita Altman  
Diana Artemis  
Sue Bell  
Linda Braun  
Lillian Clancy  
Sharon Cornett  
Peyton Coyner  
Lorraine Gentile  
Rose Given  
Catherine Harold  
Grace Holden  
Barbara Hutcherson  
Cindy Ingram  
Kim Kincheloe  
Virginia Kincheloe  
Eddy Kitchen  
Kimberly Kitchen  
Kay Kramer  
Cindy Leggett  
Anne Little  
Pam McAlwee  
Mollie McCurdy  
Donald Marro  
Margaret Marsh  
Kathy Martin  
Kristen Mehrhof  
Susan Patton  
Annie Pelfrey  
Donna Pinnix  
Jacquie Raymond  
Larry Raymond  
Meg Raymond  
Jessica Stovall  
Judy VanFossen  
Betty Weakland  
Pat Weakland  
Amy Zavadil

Introductions

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

## Agenda

1. Don Marro thanked all who were able to come to Richmond during the 2005 session, and those who didn't come but who contacted legislators on behalf of VVAW initiatives, and those who supported VVAW by coming to meetings. He added that VVAW has gotten on "the radar screen" of legislators with initiatives that will solve or mitigate the pet overpopulation problem
2. Don asked the group to comment on what has been done and what could be done better.
3. Sharon Cornett confirmed her belief that VVAW is on the radar screen on a statewide basis, that VVAW initiatives address the full range of problems, and provides a way to pay for that. She added that a new group, such as VVAW, shouldn't expect to get as much interest now as we can expect in the future.
4. Don noted that many would like to characterize VVAW as animal rights people who promote causes leading to the "slippery slope" to vegetarianism, etc.
5. Sue Bell described her encounter with a breeder who opposed the elimination of gas chambers. After a lengthy discussion, Sue was able to have the breeder see that what VVAW sought made sense, and that those advocating VVAW positions are not crazies.
6. Mollie McCurdy suggested a good way to approach the gas chamber issue is to inform people that gas chambers can be dangerous to humans, and have resulted in the death of a shelter worker in Tennessee.
7. Don added that this illustrates his contention that the leadership of a group may not reflect the thinking of its members. Our goal was to first reach out to the leadership of a group, and if unsuccessful, reach out to the membership to ensure that the members understand VVAW goals as a means to get the group as a whole to support.
8. Linda Braun feels VVAW should focus on humane education in the short term. Don described everyone's assumption that passing a humane ed bill would be "a no-brainer", and was very surprised that there was resistance to humane ed. Opponents cited schools not having enough time to teach what is already required, that it would detract from SOLs, that it is something that should be taught at home, and is, again, a step toward the "slippery slope".
9. It was suggested that working with the teacher's union to push a humane ed agenda might be tried. Don indicated VVAW had not done this because the bill's patron, Sen. Potts, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, was doing this.
10. Barb Hutcherson, a high school teacher herself, will work on the humane ed project.
11. Diana Artemis suggested working with law enforcement on the humane ed issue.

12. Kim Kincheloe suggested pushing the issue as a way to reduce violence and abuse generally in the future, saying animal cruelty so often leads to human cruelty and criminal behavior. Don noted that Sen. Edwards made the human-animal violence connection in speaking to the Senate Education Committee.

13. Pat Weakland suggested we take pride in the size of the meeting group today and compare it to the first meetings held in Delaplaine. He believes the legislative process we want is started now, even if it isn't yet successful, and legislators are taking notice of us. Pat specifically mentioned the comment made by Del. Amundson about the number of comments she received in support of elimination of gas chambers.

Pat also said he believes that VVAW needs to get to the appropriate subcommittees and committees; this is where the VVAW voice needs to be heard, as the subcommittee influences the full committee which influences the body as a whole.

Pat said he will contact Bob Kane, letting Kane know that not all hunters treat their dogs well, providing real evidence from his experience in the last several years.

14. Anne Little agreed with Pat regarding approaching subcommittees, saying that there is opportunity to talk longer about issues in subcommittees, so more can be accomplished.

Anne also suggested that there are a variety of groups with which VVAW could partner to get the word out. She specifically referred to wildlife groups as potentially collaborative.

However, Anne said, it may be that someone needs to be sued to really get the attention of the General Assembly. For instance, if there are animal sales being made locally and if sales tax is not being collected, this might be a way to enforce existing laws. She also said that by working with individual cities and counties, license rates could be changed.

15. Don then reviewed the VVAW bills briefly.

16. Pam McAlwee said there were too many bills being pushed, and preferred that VVAW focus on fewer bills.

17. Linda Braun felt the bills came across as PETA-like.

18. Cindy Ingram disagreed, saying having many bills is a good idea. And she voiced her support of having ads to promote the initiatives.

19. Jessica Stovall suggested that legislators be shown the "naked truth" via video about the use of gas chambers. She says such a strategy was successful in Massachusetts, and a billboard on Route 95 about gas chambers might "shock the masses into action".

20. Diana Artemis suggested a short PSA could be placed on local TV by VVAW members, focusing on gas chambers and funding of spay/neuter.
21. Someone wondered how to get hunters on the VVAW side “just a little”.
22. Cindy Ingram noted there are ethical hunters.
23. Don said again a group’s full membership needs to be approached in addition to the group’s leadership. He suggested that we might even work with the NRA.
24. Pat Weakland wondered if it would help to go to one’s local Board of Supervisors and ask for change in license fees.
25. Peyton Coyner said it would, but such a request would be even more effective if done through a group, as with the members of a humane society.
26. Anne Little asked that there be sample letters for all such a project posted on the website.
27. Rita Altman, who came from California 2 years ago, says she had no idea that Virginia had gas chambers, and feels a significant letters to the editor campaign would be good.
28. Judy VanFossen says she wants to know how “to go up the chain” and again asked that sample letters be provided.
29. Don indicated that sample position summaries will be available, and he also asked that any sending letters based on these should send copies to VVAW so that membership letters might be used as samples for others.
30. Margaret Marsh wants facts provided that could be used in sample letters. She specifically mentioned why raising licenses would be good, suggested that statistics about cruelty to animals and humans be available, and also asked if there would be a cover letter describing VVAW and the goals of the group.
31. Sue Bell asked what issues would be priorities and if then an action plan could be developed.
32. Eddy Kitchen suggested that legislators be presented with ideas that have been shown to work elsewhere, building a repertoire of success stories. He added that “going after their jobs” might help get legislators’ attention.
33. Catherine Harold suggested that VVAW would do well to become more formalized, saying that in so doing, it might be easier to get grants. She suggested that one use of grant money might be to hire a facilitator to work with the various groups involved in animal welfare.

34. Don described the body of VVAW initiatives as predicated upon a “no more holes to hide in” strategy, as the initiatives attacked all the problems (irresponsible owners, irresponsible breeders, and government/funding). Don said not all constituencies were approached and he would like to do so; he mentioned specifically adding county and municipal groups, NRA, and hunters. His focus, in talking with legislators, was always to promote an economic solution for the problem of killing “excess” animals, clearly distinguishing VVAW from animal rights concepts.

Don believes all the current VVAW initiatives should be pushed in 2005-2006.

35. Anne Little suggested working on the campaign of a legislator, even if you don’t agree with that person, and contribute. She mentioned that money equals access. She also encouraged that newspapers can provide good publicity.

36. Virginia Kincheloe suggested getting to know the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

37. Don suggested that VVAW and local groups schedule meetings to which are invited Board members or legislators to discuss animal welfare issues. It needn’t always be that VVAW people must go to them.

38. When asked how word can spread about VVAW’s efforts, Kay Kramer mentioned that she now heads a pet sitter group and each of her clients is a pet lover. She suggested there may be others that can produce a “ripple effect”.

39. Don discussed fundraising. He said there are several options:

- a. don’t collect funds as a group, but encourage individual members to contribute to local issues such as s/n and/or contribute to legislators or elected officials
- b. become a 501c3 or 501c4
- c. become a 501c3 and 501c4
- d. engage those who will make very large contributions for broadening s/n solutions

40. Jeanette Allard mentioned some IRS reporting issues, and others spoke of the positive impact having local “chapters” can have on raising money. She suggested that VVAW become a 501c(3) or (4) to obtain grants, and that the VVAW mission statement should be written broadly so to facilitate getting grants.

41. Don suggested that places where gas chambers still exist need to hear from individual VVAW members.

42. Glen Swain described the almost impossible job some animal control officers have, and that the animal control system is broken.

43. Don agreed and added that the State Vet program is broken, and so is the funding mechanism.

44. Pat Weakland asked whether there was anyplace in Virginia having a mandatory s/n program. Kim Kitchen described the Richmond program, but said lack of manpower has made enforcement very light.
45. Don mentioned that some places have significantly higher dog license fees than Virginia, noting Pima County, AZ, specifically. Not only are the fees higher, but there is high compliance. Linda Braun, formerly in AZ, feels that compliance may be due to pit bull maulings.
46. Donna Pinnix mentioned that compliance with the Richmond spay/neuter ordinance is hampered as so many do not know about the s/n requirement.
47. Peyton Coyner noted that Nelson County had virtually no compliance for purchase of dog licenses. However, putting a reminder in with property taxes has raised compliance, a program pushed by the humane society. Yet no one has been brought to court if they are found to be without a license for their pet.
48. Eddy Kitchen asked if the website could have information on license compliance.
49. Don suggested that we try to diversify our group to
  - a. ensure greater coverage cover the rural parts of the state with as many as support VVAW in urban areas
  - b. exhibit more diversity in terms of gender, age, and race
50. There will be a follow-up meeting, perhaps again in Fredericksburg, in about 30 days, to review a proposed plan/agenda, and to set up subcommittees to push and track the progress of each VVAW initiative.

The meeting adjourned at 1 pm.