

file: mtg minutes 4-16-05 Richmond in study plan/mtg min

A meeting of the Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare regarding pet overpopulation started at 11:00 am at the Colony Club in Richmond on Saturday, 4/16/05. Once again, Suzanne Wolstenholme offered her facilities to the group, and once again we said yes. Thank you so much, Suzanne.

Attendees:

Amber Brister/CARE
Lillian Clancy/VVAW
Kaye French/independent
Eileen Holst-Grubbe/Richmond Animal Care & Control
Jody Jones/Richmond Animal Care & Control
Kim Kincheloe/Lionhearts Spay/Neuter Clinic
Virginia Kincheloe/Lionhearts Spay/Neuter Clinic
Don Marro/VVAW
Susan Patton/independent
Annie Pelfrey/Operation Catnip
Julie Serfass/Hanover Humane Society
Judy VanFossen/independent
Suzanne Wolstenholme/Hanover Humane Society

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. Several asked about bringing in various constituencies to make VVAW more powerful.
2. Julie Serfass said one of her first pieces of business as Executive Director of Hanover Humane was to build good relations with animal control, and so she has continued to meet with and work with Kevin Kilgore who heads animal control in Hanover County. She describes their working relationship as a partnership, and one that is very helpful as they have determined that 80% of their pet population is not sterile based on the dogs licensed and the kinds of strays. This has resulted in the initiation of a s/n program 6 months ago called "SNIP".

3. Suzanne Wolstenholme mentioned that Frank Hargrove told her about an effort to work with the Joint Audit Legislative & Review Committee.

She also said that Hargrove will be seeking re-election.

Don Marro added that we will want to work with him again.

4. Several wanted to discuss the recent events at the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors meeting. Don Marro said that meeting demonstrated how powerless people if they do not control the agenda and the microphone. Only when those in control endorse the VVAW view point might it be different.
5. Susan Patton wondered what grounds existed to do something about that meeting. Don suggested that, if one had standing in the county, an injunction might obtain to prevent people being ejected without good cause from the Board of Supervisor meetings. He described what happened as both demoralizing and marginalizing.
6. Amber Brister said the testimony of Eileen McAfee was derided.
7. Don Marro said that someone with standing in the county could also seek a writ of mandamus regarding State Vet gas chamber inspections and civil penalties could be requested if appropriate. To do so, Don said either one needs money or one needs a volunteer attorney and someone with standing to initiate the action.
8. Julie Serfass said the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors reported that there were investigations of the charges, and with that said, the credibility of those who testified in opposition was adversely impacted.
9. Anne Pelfrey said that there are those in the Chesterfield management who do not understand what I/V euthanasia is, and believe it is dogs lying down with slow drips into their veins.

10. Several asked if the State Vet was in attendance. Don asked back: what difference would it make if he was?
11. Catherine Harold wondered if VDACS (Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – the department of which the State Vet is part) has an oversight board that meets regularly where the Chesterfield situation could be addressed. She hoped there is a formal appeal process.
12. Don said there is both an official and an unofficial process. He said that Eileen McAfee has worked for years to get VDACS to act. Possibly VVAW acting through an unofficial processes can help. Don mentioned in illustrating the unofficial process:
 - there is a meeting with Gov. Warner’s deputy, Bill Murray, next week, and the focus will be elimination of gas chambers
 - he observed that it is his personal choice that Russ Potts becomes Virginia’s next governor since he has the most sympathetic animal welfare agenda
 - he expects VVAW will organize as a C3, C4 and PAC and work to remove Bobby Orrock as Chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee and others whose views on companion animals are anachronistic
13. Amber Brister asked if either Republican or Democrat candidate would be an alternative to Sen. Potts as Governor. Don indicated that Kaine does not seem to be animal-friendly, and Kilgore appears firmly committed to concepts typical more of the 19th century.
14. Jody Jones said an important issue in Richmond is the Commonwealth Attorney election, and she spoke highly of Michelle Welch as an animal abuse prosecutor seeking the Commonwealth’s Attorney office in Richmond. Michelle Welch is not only good on animal abuse but expert Jody said, but is also big on criminal prosecution, and in drug cases. She noted a very gratifying conviction on a dog fighting case.
15. Amber Brister would like to pursue legislation that demonstrates the relationship between animal abuse and people abuse. Jody Jones suggested that Amber see some of the HSUS programs in this regard.
16. Don indicated that large groups such as VFHS, HSUS, and ASPCA are not pushing legislation. With no additional funding forthcoming from such institutional efforts to legislate better funding, there will be no additional money for enforcement unless another group works for change. Don characterizes large groups as too focused on building relationships long term, not on short term change.
17. Don noted that VACA does not represent all of those doing animal control work in Virginia, and he hopes there are some in animal control who will work with VVAW.
18. Julie Serfass said HSUS does get involved in legislation, pointing to an effort in Louisiana to outlaw pit bull fighting there.

19. Don said licensing is necessary, and Suzanne Wolstenholme indicated that fines from not having licenses should be allocated for animal issues, not put into the general fund.

20. Annie Pelfrey asked what the VFHS does.

Julie Serfass responded, saying that one big legislative issue VFHS worked on was SB260, and that she worked with Teresa Dockery on it. However, because of differences among animal groups, not everything was successful, she said.

Don said the phrase “Peace in the valley” is a phrase used fondly by legislators to describe a state of affairs where all agree and the legislators can move thru items quickly in order to get to major issues such a budgets.

21. Annie Pelfrey says there are so many animal lovers who do not want to hear what is really going on and exist in a world of denial.

Don says there can still be some good that comes from those who won’t engage, getting them to contribute money to animal causes, and getting those who DO listen to become advocates to get something done.

22. Both Amber Brister and Jody Jones suggested working with VACA.

Don suggested that Teresa Dockery should not be foreclosed as a source of support, and perhaps should be approached by other VVAW members.

23. Julie Serfass said it would be good to work with Teresa Dockery.

24. Kim Kincheloe said that the legislative world is “stagnant” until there is a death. She referred to the death of Dorothy Sullivan last month in Spotsylvania County, and the death very recently of a youngster in Orange County who was killed by a chained dog.

25. Jody Jones feels appropriate legislation is needed. Amber Brister agreed, saying there should be legislation regarding chaining.

26. A brief discussion about the need for legislation to be enforceable followed. Don said the VVAW legislative package was all enforceable.

27. Julie Serfass asked if VVAW legislative items had ever been tried in other states. Told they all had been, she suggested finding out how other states got such legislation passed and use their model.

28. Susan Patton wasn’t sure that looking to other states for a model was necessarily the best way to do it as cultural issues and educational level impact passage.

29. Julie Serfass asked if HSUS was asked to help.
30. Kim Kincheloe asked Julie Serfass and Jody Jones to become involved with her and try to get Teresa Dockery involved.
31. Kim Kincheloe spoke of the website of ADOA (American Dog Owners of America) and what she found shocking about the advice there to block enforcement of dealer ordinances.
32. Lillian Clancy said the immediate focus needs to be with County Boards of Supervisors around the state.

Don said the problem is getting priority, and illustrated this with the news about the large number of fugitives and large number of meth labs, and how government has difficulty controlling things so blatant.

33. Lillian Clancy distributed a draft version of ideas about how to enlist the help of local Boards of Supervisors, and those who want it revised should make suggestions.
34. Jody Jones asked about the size of VVAW, and Don said it needs to grow. He asked that as many join as possible, and that each bring in new people.
35. Julie Serfass says the by-laws of the Hanover Humane Society prevent their group from becoming involved in political lobbying.

Don said the preference is to have humane societies and SPCAs members involved more than group endorsements.

36. Lillian Clancy passed around a mock-up of a VVAW brochure that was originally designed by Dawn and John Morris of Harrisonburg.

Don said it was wonderful that the Morrises took it upon themselves to do the brochure, and also commended Pat and Betty Weakland for getting the ball rolling by establishing a VVAW group in the Northern Neck. More of this needs to be done.

37. Content of the brochure was discussed and suggestions made.

It was decided that there will be some text changes and that at least one version of the brochure will be available to those who want to distribute it.

In each version, there will be a place for someone to indicate their name and contact information as the local VVAW representative.

38. Discussion ensued about the cost of animal control, and Jody Jones indicated that for the City of Richmond, the cost was some \$87.50/day per dog for each dog kept at their facility.

Don said when factoring in the building cost, it is well over \$110 per dog per day in the state.

39. The Chesterfield County situation was brought up again, discussing Chesterfield's resistance to eliminating the gas chamber there. It was the (incorrect) contention of Chesterfield, Lillian Clancy said, that dogs euthanized by I/V would, when put in the landfill, contaminate the ground water.

Don indicated that EPA guidelines permit landfill disposal by double-bagging of dogs after I/V euthanasia.

Catherine Harold, involved professionally in environmental issues, said there is absolutely no ground water problem given landfill-lining requirements.

40. The brochure was discussed further.

Both Amber Brister and Judy Van Fossen asked for brochures to distribute, and both said their name would be used as the contact person for brochures they distribute.

Jody Jones suggested the story of the abandoned puppy was likely to be offensive to ACOs who truly dislike having to euthanize.

Julie Serfass agreed, saying there should be a preference for animals to be turned into the pound, even if they are euthanized, rather than abandoning the animals in a ditch.

41. Julie Serfass said it is possible to get a list of those who have purchased animal friendly license plates, and such names might be in some cases new to VVAW.

42. Don Marro pushed for growing VVAW membership saying there should be ACOs and vets and vet techs involved, but also lay people are needed to make change.

43. Amber Brister said Virginia Tech has a list of vets with current addresses on line.

44. Kim Kincheloe said it is too bad that more people do not know about the various pounds, and do not know that there are good animals available there.

Don said pound animals are not damaged goods, and the word needs to get out.

Amber said she is part of the weekly television segment which promotes adoption.

Annie Pelfrey said that more educated people adopt from the pound, and that a different kind of person tends to buy from a pet store.

Julie Serfass, who is a dog trainer in addition to her Executive Director duties with the Hanover Humane Society, said that fully 30% of the dogs she is training come from places such as Pauley's Pups.

45. Amber Brister asked that a list of those who are heading various initiatives be made available, along with the contact information for those people.

46. Action items:

Kim Kincheloe will work with Julie Serfass to see how to coordinate with VFHS.

Jody Jones will edit the copy of the brochure passed around during the meeting.

Judy VanFossen will be in touch with Margaret Marsh to help on the humane education initiative.

47. Don said, in closing, need:

- grassroots effort/work
- recruiting to grow VVAW
- push on funding for animal welfare (higher license fee caps and dealer permits)
- develop local political contacts
- get the brochure done

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 pm.