

The VVAW meeting focusing on pet overpopulation started at 11:00 am at the Albemarle/Charlottesville SPCA in Charlottesville on Sunday, 4/3/05.

Attendees:

Becky Barlow/Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA
Bevin Cetta/Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA
Lillian Clancy/VVAW
Peyton Coyner/Nelson County SPCA
Kaye French/Richmond Animal League
Kim Kincheloe/Lionhearts Spay/Neuter Clinic
Virginia Kincheloe/Lionhearts Spay/Neuter Clinic
Susanne Kogut/Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA
Cynthia Mantalos/Paws to Adopt
Don Marro/VVAW
Beth McPhee/Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA
Susan Patton/independent
Karin Straley/Animal Connections
Glen Swain/VVAW

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 discussed the VVAW goal of building a statewide organization with local or regional chapters.

He added that there needed to be agreement on the package of legislative initiatives to be pursued not only at the state level with members of the General Assembly, but also to be pursued with local officials of local jurisdictions.

2. Kaye French said she wants to learn as much as possible about what VVAW is doing so that she can contribute.

3. Peyton Coyner feels VVAW has taken good first steps and did that by working from the top down. He feels that working from the ground up will be as important as legislators expressed the need to hear from local levels about required legislation.

Peyton added that he finds it difficult to get people to attend meetings, saying that volunteers are already fully committed, and his group has no paid staff.

When asked if there might be a regional grouping that would include his area, Peyton thought that Nelson County might combine with Charlottesville/Albemarle, and also extend as far west as Waynesboro.

4. Kim Kincheloe echoed Peyton, saying that Willie Tydings, a Spotsylvania ACO, was very pressed for time and unable to come to this VVAW meeting.

5. Don Marro said that VVAW might be a group with a large membership but only with some 5% or fewer of the members doing the work if that made most sense.

6. Cynthia Mantalos suggested that Wintergreen, a community in Nelson County, might be a good place to look for people for VVAW. She described the residents as generally having progressive ideas, and described the community as energetic. She shared two periodicals, one from Nelson and the other from Charlottesville, which could provide a means for reaching people in the area regarding VVAW.

7. Peyton Coyner indicated the Nelson County SPCA depends on the Wintergreen community for much of the funding of their activities. He described their annual fund raiser, this year to be held on 5/14/05 for \$175 per couple. Peyton says it always sells out, and his group is able to make \$60-70K for the animals in a single evening.

8. Don asked that Peyton head up a group to mirror the new group formed by Pat Weakland in the Northern Neck.

9. Peyton said he finds the VVAW website very good and useful.

Glen Swain, who is responsible for the site, asked what else would Peyton or others want on the site; he will be happy to try to accommodate.

10. Cynthia Mantalos wondered if a brochure promoting VVAW might not be available at the event Peyton described in May.
11. Beth McPhee would like to see legislation for population control, wants more s/n, and wants license fee increases.
12. Don Marro set out the “logic of the initiatives”, saying money is needed first, followed by funding of s/n and focusing on responsible breeding, and fewer owner giveups from more responsible owners.

He observed that the overwhelming number of Virginia’s legislators are male, but that VVAW is predominantly female. Don asked that we do what we can to diversify the group by gender, by age, and by ethnicity.

He also wants the group to be more reflective of the constituents of the animal welfare community, hoping that more who are ACOs, shelter staff, and veterinarians participate. Within those groups, VVAW seeks not only those in leadership roles, but also at the grass roots.

13. Cynthia Mantalos asked how meetings are being publicized.

Glen Swain indicated that meetings are being noticed in various papers under community events.

Cynthia suggested that more effort be expended to getting the VVAW story out via various free publications. She feels there are many volunteers available who are not being reached.

14. Beth McPhee would like to have a simple pamphlet that could easily be handed out.

Cynthia Mantalos offered to work on such a pamphlet to be made available at places where people are likely to care about animals.

Because the Board of VACA (Virginia Animal Control Association) will be meeting at the Charlottesville/Albemarle SPCA in 2 weeks, Beth asked if something could be ready for that.

15. Susanne Kogut wondered if legislation will fix the existing problems, and would like to find a way to include the veterinary community, particularly those involved in shelter medicine.

She was told that there has been a request to reach shelter vets in Virginia through their national association, but VVAW has not been able to get a list of shelter vets in the state. Susanne was asked to forward such information if she has it.

Susanne continued that it takes time to change attitudes, and she fears that if efforts are too broad and too scattered, nothing will be accomplished.

16. Responding to Susanne about legislation, Don Marro asked whether the group felt that anything could be accomplished without money; all agreed that funding is the foundation.

Don noted that Newport News had asked for an increase in the charge for dog/cat licenses that mirrored the VVAW effort, and so funding change is not without local support.

He added that both the Virginia Municipal League, an association of municipalities in Virginia, and the Virginia Association of Counties became very interested in funding from both licensing and dealer permits once the issue was raised.

17. Beth McPhee said that state requires that adopted animals be sterile within 30 days of adoption, yet provides no funds to see that law enforced.
18. Kim Kincheloe says there will be no sudden change, even when legislation is passed, but change needs to start. She indicated that her locality, Spotsylvania County, is wrestling after the fact with the mauling death of Dorothy Sullivan and how to prosecute it.
19. Don Marro stated his belief that legislation is a surrogate for common sense, an illustration of what is common sense, and a penalty for not using common sense.
20. Susanne Kogut indicated, if she was to go to the local Board of Supervisors, she would want to go with a focus on one issue, not a group of issues.

Don said if you can do only one thing, then advocate for money.

21. Susanne Kogut wants to have meetings which offer a reason to attend. She wonders what topic at a meeting would be one that would attract vets, for instance.

Don said there are enough initiatives of broad interest that should attract many different participants, notwithstanding their individual preference.

22. Glen Swain said that ACOs say that people resist paying \$2 for a license, then how will they afford to keep the companion animal properly fed, housed, and cared for medically.
23. Don said there needs to be change in the cultural fabric of the community.
24. Beth McPhee says she sees it differently, feeling her program is successful if fewer animals come in to her SPCA.

25. Karin Straley said it goes back to money, that those who are involved often want to be paid for their involvement.

Don said the humane ed initiative failed because teachers are described as overworked, and that legislators said the program would have cost money.

26. Susan Patton brought up the dog atrocity in Scott County a few days earlier and wondered if there was any tie to Chesterfield County where it appears many dogs have recently been euthanized.

27. Don Marro asked if attendance by ACOs at VVAW meetings could be encouraged by giving ACOs continuing education credit for such attendance.

Karin Straley said that ACOs who attended the recent VFHS convention got credit and liked the day off from their regular work.

Don suggested that perhaps having a variety of guest speakers including ACOs could be attractive in building attendance.

28. Cynthia Mantalos will discuss her “Shelter Animals Dream of Home” project with Margaret Marsh, who heads the humane ed initiative for VVAW now. Cynthia’s project was started in Spring, 2004, with 4 schools. It asked students to paint what a shelter animal dreams of while waiting for a home. The result was 330 paintings with accompanying stories which were publicly displayed. When arrangements were attempted to bring at least some of the art to the General Assembly’s 2005 session, Albemarle County rejected the plan, saying that each parent needed to be individually contacted for permission to so display the art.

Don noted that Albemarle County declined to cooperate for fear a person viewing the art might stalk the young artists, even though only their first names were to be used in the display. The issue caused an impasse, even when Cynthia offered to remove the names of students completely.

Don said VVAW will try to do this again for said such a program clearly shows that children hear and acknowledge what humane education means early in their development.

Cynthia added that the program didn’t only reach the children, and spoke of adults crying at the art displayed, and the wonderful increase in adoptions from the shelter which followed.

31. Becky Barlow, a former teacher, said she would not favor a state-wide push on humane education, but preferred doing it at the local level, school by school.
32. Don asked Cynthia Mantalos to write a 3-paragraph description of her program.

33. Don then asked about going to VDOT and asking them to help publicize companion animal activities with signs announcing shelter or rescue groups and adoption events.

34. Susan Patton spoke about heading up the VVAW initiative to eliminate gas chambers.

Hers is a work group of 3, and Susan would like more to join her effort.

S She discussed the book Miracle Dog which is the story of a dog who survived the gas chamber. She hopes to be able to get the author, Randy Grim, to come to Virginia with his dog to publicize the effort to eliminate gas.

Susan's committee will meet next weekend in Fredericksburg.

35. Beth McPhee and Susanne Kogut described the stress on workers who must euthanize dogs. This is frequently so even if the dog is pre-sedated.

Don reviewed what VVAW has attempted regarding outlawing use of gas. He noted that we have recently written to the State Vet asking for information regarding inspection of facilities having gas chamber. The State Vet has not responded.

Don noted that becoming compliant is far more expensive than transitioning to I/V euthanasia, and most, if not all gas chambers in Virginia, are not compliant.

36. Kim Kincheloe discussed the VVAW initiative she is heading in changing the definition of releasing agencies.

Kim says she intends to make a change in breeding practices by back yard breeders in Virginia if it is the last thing she does.

She also mentioned the American Dog Owners Association and their resistance to regulation of even back-yard breeders, and wondered how many have read the ADOA website which Kim described as information on how to "thwart" the authorities.

37. Beth McPhee said there is a local breeder who routinely turns in her "extra stock" to the SPCA.

Beth says their SPCA frequently has purebreds seeking homes.

38. Kim Kincheloe wondered why a breeder wouldn't relish the opportunity to have puppies they sell be sterile as a way to reduce competition and increase their business.

39. Susanne Kogut said she will work with Kim Kincheloe on her initiative.

Susanne noted that some animal welfare groups oppose any kind of breeding, unlike VVAW.

Don Marro said that VVAW has never “slammed” breeders and has gone to great lengths to accommodate responsible breeders.

40. Glen Swain asked what registry might exist which cares about the animals registered, rather than having a registry as a cash cow. He wondered how a registry with full and honest information might be possible to establish.

Don responded by saying there are ways to ensure what is represented is utterly reliable in much the same way as a home appraisal is for lending purposes.

41. Susan Patton encouraged all to join the VVAW discussion group.
42. Cynthia Mantalos needs some text and a logo to get the VVAW brochure done.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 pm.