

A meeting of the Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare regarding the 2006 legislative agenda was held at the Community Center in McLean on Saturday, 5/7/05.

At 10:10 am, the gas chamber committee met.

Attendees:

Rita Altman  
Lillian Clancy  
Cindy Ingram  
Tim Ingram  
Don Marro  
Susan Patton

The minutes from that meeting are below.

At 11:10 am, the regular meeting of VVAW started.

Attendees:

Rita Altman  
Dawn Burnett  
Lillian Clancy  
David Gaines  
Gary Gepford  
Patricia Haddock  
Cindy Ingram  
Tim Ingram  
Rosalie Lesser  
Gary Loewenthal  
Don Marro  
Gwynne Mason  
Susan Patton  
Glen Swain

There was no round of introducing themselves by the attendees. The affiliations and interests of attendees were made known more by the comments they made.

Agenda      Gas Chamber Elimination Committee

1. Susan Patton reported that the gas chamber elimination committee has already met.
2. Glen Swain noted that pushing local Boards of Supervisors to eliminate gas is important, as is the input of animal control people. He feels that building awareness is critical.
3. Susan Patton noted that it was in Floyd County that the local Board of Supervisors was particularly important in the elimination of gas.
4. Don Marro said he and Lillian Clancy will meet with Bill Murray, the Deputy Director for Policy for Gov. Warner at 112:45 on 5/16/05, and that meeting will be followed at 1:00 pm that same day with a meeting with the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture.

Susan Patton will also attend the meeting.

Don said the purpose of the meeting is to secure a directive from the State Vet to mandate elimination of gas chambers in exchange for financial assistance.

5. Don continued that he and Lillian will be meeting with Melissa Rose and Rebecca Manners, attorneys with Swidler Berlin LLP in Washington, this coming week to become a 501c3, c4, and a 527PAC. Once set up, VVAW will be able to solicit contributions and use them as appropriate for the VVAW operating mission.

This meeting was set up by Sandra Echeverry, a VVAW member at Swidler Berlin, who arranged this pro bono work for VVAW. Thank you so much, Sandy.

6. Don mentioned that the elimination of gas chambers might be attractive to Gov. Warner as an example of a public-private partnership to solve animal welfare problems.
7. Don noted that we have not had a response to our inquiries about pound inspections, and it may be necessary to use remedies under FOIA to get such information.
8. Glen Swain cautioned that Sec. Watson has many responsibilities and is "spread thin".

Don responded by saying all the dangerous dog issues may make the Secretary of Agriculture more sensitive to companion animal issues.

9. Susan Patton said that since there is at present no directive eliminating gas chambers, the committee will work as though they need to cause that elimination.
10. Susan made suggestions about what to do:
  - a. get the name of the paper for each jurisdiction still using gas

- b. deal with a reporter from each paper along with the editor
  - c. send each reporter a copy of the book Miracle Dog by Randy Grimm.
  - d. approach the Board of Supervisors in each jurisdiction still using gas and ask for an opportunity to address that group
11. Don added to the plan:
- a. contact each jurisdiction using gas
  - b. decide on the approach; he suggested “if Floyd and Pulaski counties can do it, so can you”
  - c. include the positive reaction of ACOs where change has been implemented
  - d. provide statistics for the jurisdiction – how many dogs and cats were actually killed by gas in the last report available (2003)
  - e. indicate there are private funds available to help with the transition (if/where necessary)
  - f. indicate there may be additional funds available from such groups as VFHS
  - g. indicate in the letter that VVAW is willing to come and address their group about the problem, including
    - comparable costs of euthanasia
    - public safety and public health considerations
    - moral/ethical aspects of using gas to kill
    - a prod to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - h. address such a letter to
    - the state delegates and senators representing those jurisdictions
    - the County Board of Supervisors
    - the County Board of Education
12. Glen Swain noted that the Humane Society in Pulaski County was helpful in the transition from gas. He cautioned against interposing an outside effort against any local effort

now underway if the jurisdiction is already on track. He asked that humane societies/SPCAs in the jurisdictions be canvassed to determine if they are helping, and determine if their help will produce an effective result.

13. Don said the role of VVAW is to be a change agent. He asked that the contact people in such local groups be identified, and an offer made to collaborate with them, but having the transition “eventually” is not soon enough.
14. Several comments were made about avoiding any mention of PETA, saying that any association with PETA may result in VVAW being seen as animal rights, not animal welfare, organization.
15. Don suggested, once drawn, the letter be circulated on a courtesy basis to HSUS, VFHS, PETA, and so forth, so they are aware in an official way about what VVAW is doing. In so doing, we seek their collaboration on gas elimination.
16. It was stated that the VVAW goal is to eliminate gas chambers by the end of 2005.
17. A discussion followed about using billboards to sensitize people to the problem. It was decided that these things need to be learned:
  - a. cost of a billboard; look at the rate for a month; don’t let the message get old; “shock and awe”
  - b. regulations regarding billboards
  - c. identify firms that do billboards and see if they will do pro bono
  - d. what space other than conventional billboards exists?
    - on buses?
    - on highway overpasses?
    - on signs on the drive up to a facility that gasses?
    - local service announcements in movies
    - little signs in private yards
18. Don will provide the contact information for Cedric Giese so that what art is already camera-ready can be seen.

Don continued, suggesting that Giese’s advertising agency be asked what they can do in getting the word out; for instance, could something go out with every Domino’s pizza that is delivered? as hand outs at McDonald’s?

19. Other suggestions then started being voiced, both for gas chamber elimination, and for promoting VVAW:
  - a. booths at county fairs

- b. in bank lobbies
  - c. find high traffic areas
  - d. local radio shows and PSAs
20. Cindy Ingram suggested that the counties involved in gassing be divided up among the committee members.
21. A general plea for people in the south and western part of Virginia to be involved in the elimination of gas chambers was voiced several times.

---

At about this point in the meeting, people coming to attend the regular VVAW meeting which was to begin at 11 am, started arriving. The minutes below cover the rest of the meeting, some of it discussing gas chambers.

22. Don asked that the plan about gas chambers be readied and sent to him ASAP.
23. Don asked how we can increase meeting headcount. Fairfax is a populated area but there is insufficient in-person attendance for meaningful local pressure on the Board of Supervisors.
24. Patricia Haddock said she wants a lot of pressure in general to eliminate gas.
25. Rosalie Lesser said she will donate \$10,000 to help with the transition to gas, and she will also contact Delegate Albo, seeking his support again this year on eliminating gas, noting that she had been his teacher in elementary school.
26. Rosalie continued that she is concerned that, when gas is eliminated, that EBI is done humanely, and that those doing EBI are properly trained.

Don responded by saying one cannot use drugs without proper training. People need to be available to do this who are trained. He said that not all vets are behind elimination of gas. He feels the shelter community and vet techs will benefit by using EBI.

Gwynne Mason said we need to know that those doing EBI are qualified.

David Gaines said that state law requires those using EBI to be trained.

Don said the truth of it is we will never know 100% that EBI is always being done humanely.

When someone asked what there needs to be in terms of space or a room to do EBI, David Gaines pointed to the table top where he sat, saying this space (about 3' X 5') was sufficient space along with a little kit for supplies.

27. Patricia Haddock said she'd like to see, if gas is eliminated, that Virginia work toward becoming no-kill, feeling that replacing gas with a "nicer" killing is not her goal. She wants to end killing.

Don said that VVAW has 3 goals: responsible government, responsible ownership, and responsible breeding. VVAW is not a no-kill group.

David Gaines says that no one wants to kill, but there is finite space for animals in shelters. He said that in the Fairfax facility, as long as there is space, the animals live. In rural situations, they are often working with their backs to the wall.

28. Don made it clear that moving away from gas is NOT an unfunded mandate; private funds are available as needed.

Gwynne Mason feels there needs to be publicity to demonstrate that this is not an unfunded mandate.

29. Gary Loewenthal said a goal should be the change of attitude. If EBI is done wrong, it will more likely be the result of irresponsibility rather than from non-training. He also said all should anticipate objections to such change.

30. Cindy Ingram suggested focusing on Chesterfield since it is so close to Richmond.

31. David Gaines said he would prefer a 2-step process in euthanizing, including a sedation step prior to injection of the lethal drug.

32. Patricia Haddock suggested groups such a Girl Scouts could be helpful in getting the word out.

Several others suggested various government officials who might help.

Don said this is not a Republican or Democrat problem, but is more the House Ag. Subcommittee problem. Further, there needs to be a persuasion of those who represent the south and southwest parts of Virginia.

33. Gary Loewenthal questioned whether the position of state representatives reflects the positions of those they represent.

Don says they do not. There are special interest groups that influence representatives disproportionately. He noted that Shaun Kenney (a rival of Bobby Orrock) has been ostra-

cized by his own party because of attending a VVAW meeting and espousing some VVAW goals.

34. While VVAW will raise 501c3, c4, and PAC money, Don says that having lots of people in VVAW is more critical than cash.
35. Gary Loewenthal asked, if one can't be on the "A Team" (Susan Patton et al) for the gas issue, what can one do?

Don suggested these options:

- a. contribute money
  - b. promote VVAW initiatives locally
  - c. promote VVAW initiatives with your General Assembly representatives
  - d. come to Richmond in 2006
36. Susan Patton asked that all submit any ideas about the elimination of gas chambers.

Susan's email: [beaglefun@virginiavotersforanimalwelfare.com](mailto:beaglefun@virginiavotersforanimalwelfare.com)

37. David Gaines suggested using the "activist tool box".
38. Gwynne Mason suggested contacting other states that have outlawed gas to learn from them. She also noted that she has spoken with HSUS and feels they are willing to help VVAW.

Susan Patton asked Gwynne to research her notes from last year what can be done with other groups.

39. David Gaines said that Bob Kane/HDOA will not accept Gaines's emails. He says that Kane feels that all at VVAW are like Gaines.

David suggested making sure that VVAW is not painted with an animal rights agenda but that its focus on animal welfare, using economic and responsibility arguments, be stressed. Intervention is in order.

He also suggested creating a "tool box" that, when a group is attacked using inflammatory words, the tool box provide 5-6 ways to debunk that allegation.

40. Don suggested that there need to be new faces in Richmond. The established organizations that have been in Richmond for years (VFDC&B, VFHS, VVMA, etc.) are those to whom delegates and senators turn for input. Don said that legislators do not come to VVAW for advice, but go to these other organizations.

Don seeks to displace those establishment institutions by having many voices act to influence legislators in a different direction, short-circuiting, then displacing, and then replacing the status quo organizations with VVAW.

41. Don says the VVAW strategy is to let our deeds and actions speak for us, either with a large VVAW group of activists, or with lobbyists, and ideally both.
42. Gary Loewenthal suggested that VVAW not try to spend all its time with those who think as VVAW does. Work on issues with those who have differing viewpoints. What VVAW espouses is a pretty easy sell, he said. He reiterated that the opinion of legislators doesn't seem to reflect those of their constituents.
43. Gary Gepford of Herndon High School spoke of his Students Against Global Abuse. He described his students as incredibly interested and willing to help, and said the parents of some of these students are likewise committed to making change.

Gary has been trying to get spay/neuter posters which his group will distribute and display.

44. Don encouraged Gary to "beat the drum" for humane education, and said VVAW will help with Gary's students.
45. Gary Gepford said that Delegate Plum and Senator Howell, after many years, finally got a "green" education bill passed. However, two years after its passage, it is still not implemented and only recently are the schools even talking about doing something.
47. Don reviewed quickly the initiatives from 2005 as the basis for 2006 initiatives.
48. Rosalie Lesser discussed the discontinuation of an art program in which she is involved, and asked that federal reps be contacted to re-instate it.

It was suggested that this might be a topic for an Open Line Friday message.

49. Don asked that Rosalie Lesser try to get the ear of those reporters with whom she is in regular contact regarding VVAW, especially Richard Cohen.
50. Patricia Haddock said she favors making one county a focal point for elimination of gas.

Don says he wants to program to be wider so as not to put all our eggs in one basket.

51. Glen Swain asked why there should be large counties with but one animal control officer who is responsible for housing, feeding, cleaning, catching, killing animals, wondering how any one person can be charged with so many things.

Gary Gepford said there simply are not enough ACOs.

Don said that the problem is lack of enforcement of the dog license laws. Don said the penalty for failure to license was \$500.

NOTE: After the meeting it was confirmed that the penalty for no dealer permit is \$500, but the penalty for not holding a valid dog license is \$150.

52. The group, expressing considerable interest in communicating with each other after the meeting, allowed their names and emails to be shared with each person who was at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10.