

The VVAW meeting focusing on pet overpopulation started at 11:00 am at the Fredericksburg Colonial Inn in Fredericksburg on Sunday, 3/13/05.

Attendees:

Rita Altman/independent
Jean Boutchyard/Whiskers-N-Wags
Zack Burkett/independent
Pat Canning/independent
Lillian Clancy
Dolores Claud/Whiskers-N-Wags
Sharon Cornett/Richmond Animal League
Peyton Coyner/Nelson County SPCA
Barb Dietz/Animal Welfare League of Northern Neck
Ginny Foreman/independent
Lorraine Gentile/independent
Rose Given/independent
Pam Gould/Free Lance Star
Cindy Ingram/Casey's House
Tim Ingram/Casey's House
Shaun Kenney/candidate for District 54
Kim Kincheloe/S-N Clinic
Virginia Kincheloe/S-N Clinic
Melissa Klein/Humane Society of Fairfax County
Kay Kramer/ Critter Care
Marcia Landau/independent
Anne Little/independent
Mollie McCurdy/ independent
Donald Marro
Susan Patton/independent
Annie Pelfrey/ Operation Catnip & Central VA Collie Club
Glen Swain
William Tydings/Spotsylvania County Animal Control
Judy VanFossen/Richmond Animal League
Betty Weakland/independent
Pat Weakland/independent

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. The meeting started with the singing of “Happy Birthday” to Virginia Kincheloe. Virginia about blew out all the candles on the cake Mollie McCurdy baked for the event.

Happy Birthday again, Virginia, and thanks for your inspiration.

2. Don Marro distributed a letter from Senator Russell Potts commending VVAW for its work in the 2005 legislative session.

Don added that Sen. Potts is the Senator for him and Lillian Clancy, that Sen. Potts has declared that he is running for Governor, that Sen. Potts has Don’s personal endorsement, and that we are not seeking the endorsement of the group (VVAW) at this time.

3. A plan for 2005-2006 was distributed to everyone at the meeting. That plan is available here by going here:

<http://www.virginiavotersforanimalwelfare.com/2005-6Plan.pdf>

4. Susan Patton mentioned that she is considering a peaceful demonstration protesting the continued use of gas chambers in Chesterfield County. Those interested in helping should contact her.

Don Marro reviewed the attempt VVAW made to outlaw gas through the State Vet’s office. The State Vet did not support their elimination because of budget issues and inspections required, even with private funding of significance offered to aid the transition.

5. Mollie McCurdy reviewed the impact the News Virginian, her local paper in Waynesboro, is having. The Editor, Todd Foster, started the series with a picture of the Buckingham pound gas chamber when he learned that the Virginia General Assembly did not pass a law to eliminate gas chambers.

There have been many letters to the editor as a result, and Mollie has put them all in a scrapbook. Many writers are with VVAW. VVAW will try to work with Mr. Foster to see if the letters can be put on line.

Melissa Klein asked that an alert be sent out asking for more letters to that paper and suggested that a committee be formed to encourage letter-writing.

Don Marro said Mr. Foster adopted this issue and hopes he does not stop. He also encouraged everyone to write to their own local paper regarding gas chambers failing to be outlawed.

Peyton Coyner noted that the paper even had a guest columnist, Shari Barkley, who wrote about the issue.

6. Pat Weakland noted that the legality of hunting deer with dogs is a local option, and that generally in jurisdictions east of the Blue Ridge, there are no restrictions against hunting with dogs. As a result, he told of the increase in shelter dogs when the hunting season is over, many hunters feeling it is cheaper to abandon a dog and buy a new one next year rather than taking care of their dogs. Pat mentioned that hunting with dogs is not allowed in some state and federal parks near him.
7. Willie Tydings, an animal control officer in Spotsylvania County, talked about the tremendous representation hunt groups enjoy in Richmond. He mentioned the 400-600 dogs involved in field trials, that number being let out at the same time.

He talked of the death of Dorothy Sullivan and her dog, caused by pit bulls running freely. Ownership of the dogs is a critical concern in the case. He feels the state has “tied their hands” because there is no state funding for animal control, the only money coming is from the county. He says funding in Spotsylvania County is due to the constant harping of Virginia Kincheloe to the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors. He needs another animal control officer, but has no money to hire one.

Don said that there IS money, and the money is available in the form of license fees, but local jurisdictions generally have not raised the cost of licenses, and generally have not enforced the requirement for licenses. He provided several examples where increased cost for license increased compliance.

Willie continued that the state must take animal control seriously, and wants the state to consider deputizing those who are animal control officers.

With such a tragic death, Willie said the only good thing that may come of it is new legislation aimed at dangerous dogs, hoping that criminal penalties will be part of new law for those having dangerous dogs.

Don suggested that VVAW get involved in a Court Watch effort because of both the human and animal deaths involved.

Zack Burkett suggests that when the legal system isn't properly responsive to these kinds of issues, that letters to the editor be tried, understanding that judges do not like to see their names in the paper.

8. Sharon Cornett encouraged those describing VVAW to use the words “animal welfare” rather than “animal activists”.
9. Willie Tydings talked about the lost opportunity to work with his group, VACA (Virginia Animal Control Association) in the just-passed legislative session. He feels things could be accomplished if the groups could work together.

Don indicated that VVAW had tried to work with VACA, but ultimately the efforts were rebuffed.

Willie is disappointed that the elimination of gas chambers didn't get through. He's used gas in the past and described it as awful.

Kim Kincheloe said that Bobby Orrock, Chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee (and the person who represents Kim's district in the General Assembly), defended his blowing off the VVAW legislative initiatives because he said the localities were not looking for change. Kim says it is the job of VVAW to make localities want change.

Willie said that with VACA, VFHS, and VVAW working together, much could get done.

10. Don Marro mentioned that he and Lillian attended a session of the VFHS conference on 3/11/05 in which animal legislation in the 2005 session was reviewed. Don laughed and said he could have been the presenter, because what was discussed was what VVAW initiatives promoted, although VVAW was not mentioned.
11. Cindy Ingram voiced her anger that she and her family support financially s/n of cats, and Clarke County doesn't help. She wonders why they do not.
12. There was a short discussion of the changes that happen when s/n is required prior to adoption. Per Willie Tydings, compliance in Spotsylvania County went from 37% prior to pre-release adoption to 99% compliance currently as all animals leave sterile.

Marcia Landau said it took 3 years to get the funds from licenses turned over to s/n programs in her Orange County. When it was given to s/n, animal intake in the local pound went down 28% as a result. She had figures from several years ago which said that the jurisdiction that spends \$1 ultimately saves \$19 in animal control costs.

Melissa Klein says there is no penalty attached if someone doesn't get their animal s/n within 30 days of adoption. Willie said there is no enforcement of it in most places.

13. Don Marro hopes that VVAW will become the voice of those involved daily with animal welfare issues, particularly rescues, shelter staff and ACOs.
14. Willie Tydings said his job in animal control has as its primary concern public safety, and animals come second. He said that the pit bulls killed last week because of irresponsible owners, and the dogs pay for it with their lives. His has been one of the few shelters adopting out pits, but from now on, they won't adopt them but will rather kill them all.

Melissa Klein said the state needs to have a dangerous dog law.

Willie said that, in the wrong hands, a pit bull is a weapon.

Lillian Clancy asked whether Tydings would allow pits to go to rescue. Willie said not at this time, but added that things could change.

Kay Kramer said that humane education is necessary so children understand what's involved.

15. Don brought up the situation with HB 2003, a bill patroned by Allen Dudley. This bill started by allowing individuals to contribute from their Virginia income tax refund to Planned Pethood to dispense to existing s/n programs throughout the state.

Somehow, despite commitments of several delegates and senators, the bill was changed so that funds would be instead be funneled to VFHS to dispense.

Don wants everyone to send a letter, make a call, or send an email to Governor Warner asking him to veto the bill as written – with VFHS as the recipient. He further seeks to make a change in the bill asking that the funds be given to VVAW to distribute if the qualifier for getting the funding is that an organization be state-wide. In addition, it seems that having both Spay Virginia and VFHS get two sources of money appears to be out of line. Don has been in touch with the governor's office about this and encourages all to do the same.

To email Governor Warner, please fill out the Governor's email form here:

http://www.governor.virginia.gov/Contact/email_form.html

16. Willie wondered why elimination of gas chambers was opposed by some if it is not a question of funding. He noted that VACA will have a meeting in April, and he will encourage that group to work with VVAW, particularly on this issue.

Virginia Kincheloe suggested that each member of the Board of Supervisors in jurisdictions using gas be asked to come to the site and witness a gassing.

17. Don noted that the plan which was distributed at the meeting is a living document and can be changed.

He sees this as what needs to happen:

- a. local committees are needed
To do this, VVAW-ers need to reach out around the state and let people know what is happening and what VVAW goals are, asking them to join.

NOTE: to become an affiliate of VVAW, simply fill out our on-line form here:

<http://www.virginiavotersforanimalwelfare.com/Affiliate.htm>

Also, you can print out a form to hand out by downloading it from here:

<http://www.virginiavotersforanimalwelfare.com/AffiliationForm.pdf>

- b. collaborations are needed
To do this, Don says all groups having a stake in animal welfare – even Bob Kane – should be approached for collaboration.

Willie Tydings added that VVAW has accomplished a lot, and that the voice of VVAW has been heard. He mentioned that he will talk with Mike Quesenberry/VACA and encourage the VACA to work with VVAW.

- c. fund raising needed
Don said funds are needed to influence political contests, for s/n clinics around Virginia “to happen absolutely”, and to help defray costs of meetings.

Don’s goal is to have VVAW go out of business.

18. various topics near the end of the meeting:

- a. Cindy Ingram would like VVAW to have a written mission statement. She was asked to write one, and she agreed to do so.
- b. Glen Swain discussed the VVAW yahoo group. To join click on the link below:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VirginiaVotersForAnimalWelfare/join>
- c. Melissa Klein asked that a plan be written for the coming year.
- d. Anne Little said she sees the plan handed out as a 10-year plan. She agrees with having state-wide goals, but says there may need to be local goals which could be different. She also said to consider rather than having a local committee which covers but one jurisdiction, that a regional concept be considered. In her case, having Fredericksburg City, Spotsylvania County, and Stafford County work together might make good sense.
- e. Dolores Claud spoke about the possibility of addressing mini-pigs as a companion animal, a change that would need to be done legislatively.
- f. Ginny Foreman mentioned that there is nothing about feral cats in the plan,

Lillian Clancy said that there are companion animals in addition to dogs and cats, that cats are not specifically mentioned in the plan, but the plan is open to change, and that there will need to be consideration made for other companion animals such as birds, rabbits, ferrets in addition to adding any new animal to the category.
- g. Shawn Kenney addressed the group about his candidacy for Bobby Orrock’s seat.

- h. Don indicated he had petitions for Senator Potts for Governor; anyone interested in getting such a petition should see him.

The meeting was adjourned at 1pm.