

Ollie's Law Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes March 12, 2025 | 10:00 AM – 12:00
Minutes approved and posted on 3/26/2025.

Advisory Committee Attendance

Mike Cahill
Louis Pacheco
Jeni Mather
Kathy MacKenzie
Kevin Sullivan
Mark Hogan
Carmen Rustenbeck
Dr. Erin Doyle
Amy Baxter
Noelle Wilson
Francine Coughlin
Debra Cameron
Kara Holmquist

MDAR Attendees

Jessica Burgess
Ashley Randle
Winton Pitcoff
Sheri Gustafson

Public Attendees:

69 additional ZOOM attendees

This open meeting was held virtually over the ZOOM platform. Meeting ID: 6176261740

I. Introductions

The 13 members of the Commissioner appointed Ollie's Law Advisory Committee were introduced. Michael Cahill, the MDAR representative on the AC, started the meeting at 10:03 with introductions.

Louis Pacheco introduced himself as the family kennel participant and is the AC representative for boarding and training kennels under 50 dogs. Jeni Mather introduced herself as the AC representative for boarding and training kennels for over 50 dogs. Kathy MacKenzie introduced herself and is the AC representative for an ACO serving a municipality with less than 5 daycare facilities. Kevin Sullivan introduced himself and is the AC representative for an ACO Serving a municipality with more than 5 daycare facilities. Mark Hogan introduced himself and is the AC representative from a licensing authority. Carmen Rustenbeck introduced and is the AC representative from an organization representing kennels, Amy Baxter introduced herself and is the AC representative of the public with an interest in the well-being of dogs. Dr. Erin Doyle introduced herself and is the AC representative veterinarian. Noelle Wilson introduced herself and is the AC representative dog owner who uses the services of a boarding kennel. Francine Coughlin introduced herself and is the AC representative who is a certified animal behaviorist. Debra Cameron introduced herself and is the AC representative with over 5 years of experience training people on dog behavior. Kara Holmquist introduced herself and is the AC representative from a shelter/rescue organization.

Outside of the Committee two MDAR staff members were introduced: Jessica Burgess who is deputy counsel for MDAR and Sheri Gustafson from MDAR handling notes and tech for the meeting.

Burgess spoke to the AC about Open Meeting Laws (OPL) and procedures. She stated that all ACs will be asked to read through an OPL document and will need to sign an OPL certificate of Receipt Form. These documents will be emailed out to the AC after the meeting for review.

Burgess stressed that for the AC to discuss kennel regulations and matters it must be done in an open meeting. OPL states that all open meetings must be publicly posted at least 48 hours before the meeting (excluding weekends and holidays) and that a quorum must be present. Since Ollie's Law's AC is a 13-member public body, at least 7 members must be present for any open meeting deliberation.

Burgess discussed that the AC is currently allowed to meet remotely due to a suspension of the requirements of a quorum being physically present. That suspension is set to expire on March 31, 2025. If no additional extension is granted then all open meetings will need to be held in person.

Burgess asked the AC to refrain from submitting questions to other AC members outside of public meetings and if questions need to be asked, they should be submitted to an MDAR staff member who will serve as the administrator for the group.

Burgess mentioned that the public gets to attend open meetings to observe but they are not able to participate in the open meeting without permission.

Holmquist asked if there would be opportunities for the public to speak at hearings if they can not participate in the open meeting. Burgess confirmed.

Burgess stated that during the public meeting, any decisions must be voted on by a roll call facilitated by the Chair.

II. AC Committee Mission

Cahill discussed the Ollie's AC Mission. The AC must create regulations for Commercial boarding and training kennels. Cahill stressed that the regulations created cannot change the MGLs. Amendments to the MGLs require a legislative change. Cahill stated that when creating regulations the committee may consider topics such as administrative, animal safety, animal supervision/staffing, employee safety/training, etc. A full list of topics can be found in Ollie's Law. Cahill stated that the topics are all ones the AC may consider and not ones the AC must consider.

III. Ollie's Law Deadlines

Cahill discussed the Ollie's Law deadlines. The first deadline for the AC was to be formed and the AC needed to meet by March 19th. They have met the first deadline. Regulations must be completed by June 2026, 18 months after Ollie's Law went into effect.

IV. Elect A Chair

Burgess stated the procedure for the AC to elect a Chair and stated that the Chair does not need to be from MDAR. Coughlin motioned to appoint Jeni Mather the Chair. Cameron seconded the motion.

Holmquist asked to confirm Mather's interest in becoming Chair. Mather confirmed interest and spoke about how she felt developing Ollie's regulations are important for safety standards in the kennel industry. Cahill supported Mather's nomination for Chair.

A roll call was completed to appoint Mathers as AC Chair: Pacheco-yes, MacKenzie-yes, Sullivan-yes, Hogan-yes, Rustenbeck-yes, Doyle-yes, Baxter-yes, Wilson-yes, Coughlin-yes, Cameron-yes, Holmquist-yes, Cahill-yes. Jeni Mathers is appointed Chair.

Mathers decides to move to the agenda item meeting schedule, next.

V. List of Discussion Topics

Mathers started the discussion on topics for the AC to explore. Mathers asked for clarification on rabies and licensing tags and what is required. Cahill said wearing rabies and an ID tag has always been a requirement. Any exemption to wearing tags would require a legislative change and it is not something that can be done by the AC when making regulations. Cahill stated that collars are tags are enforced on a municipal level and while it is primarily the owner's responsibility to ensure that tags are being worn, the laws do mention the keeper as well.

Hogan added that when issuing dog licenses a rabies certificate must be verified, and the law states that license tags should be worn at all times. If an owner loses a tag the municipality is required to replace it. Doyle asked the AC to review the shelter/rescue regulations. Cahill suggested reviewing the pet shop regulations as well.

Kara asked if a poll could be done to determine topics of discussion.

Baxter brought up kennel staffing as a topic for the next AC meeting. Sullivan asked about staff-to-animal ratios. Cahill asked the AC to not focus on ratios instead be careful to look at staff qualifications and not just the quantity of staff needed to ensure adequate supervision.

Hogan asked for staffing to be added to the next agenda as a discussion item.

VI. Future Meeting Schedule

Mathers leads the discussion to determine AC meeting frequency. Proposes by-weekly meetings on Wednesdays. Baxter asks for day-of-the-week variations.

Burgess asks the Committee to remember that an OPL extension allowing remote participation has not been confirmed and to keep that in mind when scheduling meetings beyond March 31, 2025.

The AC collectively confirmed to set the next AC meeting for Wednesday, March 26th at 9 AM remotely. They will then continue by-weekly meetings after on Wednesdays at 9 AM if a remote participation extension is granted.

The meeting adjourned by unanimous AC roll call at 11:50 AM.

A roll call was completed to adjourn: Pacheco-yes, MacKenzie-yes, Sullivan-yes, Hogan-yes, Rustenbeck-yes, Doyle-yes, Baxter-yes, Wilson-yes, Coughlin-yes, Cameron-yes, Holmquist-yes, Cahill-yes. Mathers-yes.