

Ollie's Law Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes March 26, 2025 | 9 AM – 10:30 AM
Approved 8/8/2025

Advisory Committee Attendance

Mike Cahill

Louis Pacheco joined meeting at 9:08am

Jeni Mather

Kathy MacKenzie

Kevin Sullivan joined meeting at 9:57am

Mark Hogan

Carmen Rustenbeck

Dr. Erin Doyle joined meeting at 9:42am

Amy Baxter

Noelle Wilson

Francine Coughlin

Debra Cameron

Kara Holmquist

MDAR Attendees

Jessica Burgess

Joanna Shields

Winton Pitcoff

Sheri Gustafson

Public Attendees:

37 additional ZOOM attendees

This open meeting was held virtually over the ZOOM webinar platform.

Meeting ID: 831 5681 9645 Passcode: animal

I. AC Attendance Roll Call

Mathers started meeting at 9:02 AM by roll call.

MacKenzie-present, Hogan-present, Coughlin-present, Rustenbeck-present, Cahill-present, Cameron-present, Wilson-present, Burgess-present, Holmquist-present, Baxter-present.

Outside of the Committee four MDAR staff members were present: Jessica Burgess and Winton Pitcoff. Sheri Gustafson and Joanna Shields from MDAR handing notes and tech for the meeting.

II. Minutes Review for 3/12/25

Mathers asked for clarification about collars and IDs in the minutes and if they are required to be worn at boarding facilities? Cahill said that the minutes are correct that dog licensing

and rabies tags need to be worn at all times under the statutes, and that the statutes say both the owner and the keeper in the requirement.

Baxter motioned to accept the minutes from the AC meeting on 3/12/25 as written.

Rustenbeck seconds. Roll call: Cahill-yes, Mather-yes, MacKenzie-yes, Hogan-yes, Rustenbeck-yes, Baxter-yes, Wilson-yes, Coughlin-yes, Cameron-yes, Holmquist-yes, Pacheco-yes.

III. Remote Access Extension

Mathers requested information from Burgess about the remote access extension for open public meetings. Burgess stated that the extension has not been signed into effect yet, but she believes it will be.

IV. Ollie's Timeline/Regulation Development Approach

1. Discussion on Educational Content

Mathers started the conversation by stating that she feels that to be able to develop regulations the committee should learn about the pet care industry first. Mathers would like to discuss best practices and create topic buckets to be looked at.

Wilson agreed that it would be good to look at best practices to establish a baseline for regulation development.

Cahill stated that we can't regulate to best practices and that while they provide insight the committee will need to develop regulations on what they feel are the minimum standards of care.

Coughlin agreed that if topics were placed in categories it would help. Suggested started with safety matters first and looking at the biggest and broadest themes and the purpose behind the regulations.

Pacheco felt it may be helpful to walk through an intake, a daycare, or an overnight as if we were in a kennel. Then discuss the topics – ie number of dogs, sanitation requirements, etc.

a. Baseline Educational Materials

Rustenbeck says it was helpful to read through other states' laws and wants to focus on safety and staffing at facilities.

Cahill stated that in the shelter/rescue regulations, they require evidence that the facility has a current certificate of occupancy. That may serve as a simple way to ensure that the physical facility is safe. Other things to consider would be fire prevention, cleaning and disinfecting etc. Cahill pointed out that we still don't know the number of each type of kennel in MA.

Mathers brought up the idea of having Ollie's Law AC breakout workshops that are open to the public.

Burgess stated that training could be attended but only if the presenter is not a member of the AC and that you can create subcommittees but that those would probably make the open meetings more complicated.

Baxter suggested talking about staffing since it was listed on the agenda.

b. Exploration of Committee Interaction with Industry

Holmquist asked if it would be helpful to hear from the kennel owners about how their kennels are run.

c. Q & A on the Logistics of Operating a pet care business

Mathers talked in depth about how her boarding kennel operates. Key points: Evaluations are done for dogs. They won't register dogs until they are fully vaccinated. They keep dogs in groups and subsets with different levels of supervision depending on need. Adequate staffing ensures that the group is never unattended, there is always a facilitator.

Mathers brought up the topic of collars and tags and feels that even though it's a requirement in the legislation it should still be discussed as a safety matter. Overnight staffing should be addressed.

Pacheco spoke about his family business. Grooming kennel facility on the same property as his home. Some part-time help but the majority of work is done by Lou and his wife. They only keep about 12 dogs. They don't have veterinary facilities. They do additional monitoring with sensors and cameras. Feels the AC should look at requiring people to have a base level of certification.

Baxter stated what happened to Ollie and that it's important to look at what happened and how to prevent reoccurrences. Ollie was at a daycare in E. Longmeadow, that had a vet hospital next to the facility. Ollie was at the facility for 1 hour then she got a text that he had a cut. She arrived and he was in a pool of blood and couldn't move. The owner of the facility had left the location and a 17-year-old who had only worked at the facility for 3 weeks was alone. Ollie was outside unattended with 6 other dogs when he was mauled and the vet said the attack lasted for minutes. When noticed, the 17-year-old hosed dogs down, and was injured. Baxter believed that the kennel owner tried to cover up what happened and that it was a monetary issue that the owner did not take Ollie to the vet next door. Ollie's injuries eventually cost him his life.

Coughlin stated that behavior training and education are very important for staff and to look at these when establishing a baseline. "In-home" daycare will not be going away. Consumers should have a choice. What should a baseline be for a facility that only has one

person, what is the bare minimum? As numbers of staff grow, we can use a matrix to help determine how many dogs per staff.

Pacheco stated that daycare is very different from boarding in regards to staffing and supervision and both will need to be considered.

Mathers stated that she feels there should never be one person left alone to supervise and that facility owners have a responsibility to keep people safe.

Sullivan brought up the topic of enforcement and asked about how the regulations would be enforced, using the Rover system as an example.

Mathers stated that if the pet sitter had 4 dogs or less they wouldn't need a kennel license. Cahill corrected saying it doesn't matter how many dogs you have. If you are boarding a dog for a fee, you are required to have a kennel license since you fall under the definition of commercial boarding or training kennel. For a personal kennel, the number of dogs matters. For Commercial boarding or training kennels, there is no minimum number defined.

Cahill stated that currently there is a basic standard for adequate staffing – can they keep things sanitized and humane? When developing regulations there is an opportunity to require different requirements depending on facility size and what kind of facility.

V. Material Review

Cameron stated that reading through the legislation that was sent with the meeting announcement was helpful and asked for clarification on how to submit materials.

Burgess stated that material for the AC to review can be sent to Gustafson for distribution, but that anything authored or edited by members of the AC would need to be shared at the open meetings. All materials submitted do become public records.

The committee did not discuss these agenda items during the meeting.

1. Dog Licensing

2. Animal / Shelter Regulations

3. Pet Shop Regulations

4. Other State Regulations

a. Colorado

b. California

VI. Discussion Topics

1. AC Topic Poll Results

Burgess explained that even though the meeting was running long, the poll results must be shared in the open meeting or wait until the next one.

Gustafson presented a slide with the topic poll results. Gustafson stated that 12 of the 13 AC members completed the poll of ranking the topics listed in Ollie's law on a scale of 1-23. 1 being the most important. The topics rated the highest by average were supervision, proper education and training of staff, care requirements, provider and staff-to-animal ratios, use of best practices, group sizes, and operational safety standards. Several of those topics were also ranked high by how many times they received a top 5 ranking: proper education and training of staff, group sizes, supervision, care requirements, provider and staff-to-animal ratios, Use of best practices, and operational standards.

2. Staffing/ Adequate Supervision

The committee touched on this agenda item when discussing " Q & A on the Logistics of Operating a pet care business".

V. New Business

The committee did not discuss this agenda item during the meeting.

VI. Future Meeting Schedule

Mathers wants to rotate Wednesday and Tuesday meetings.

Cameron makes a motion to accept alternating meetings, Pacheco seconds.

The next meeting would be Tuesday, April 8th, at 9 AM.

At 10:42 AM Rustenbeck makes a motion to adjourn. Pacheco seconds. Roll taken, all in favor, the meeting adjourned.