

Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners

March 26, 2020

The meeting was held by conference call in keeping with the Governor's Executive Order to maintain social distancing as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Minutes of the Joint Open Meeting

Board Members: Dr. Elizabeth Callahan, President; Dr. Heather Hendler, Vice President; Dr. Christine Calvert, Ms. Lynne Chaput, Dr. Karena Joung, Ms. Patricia Quimby, Dr. Peter Radue. **Staff Participating:** Executive Director Vanessa Orlando, Assistant Attorney General Cynthia Spirt, Assistant Director Susan Husk, and Inspectors Pegeen Morgan and Ellen James.

Ms. Orlando noted that the meeting was being conducted telephonically due to the current public health crisis involving COVID-19 and in accordance with the Governor's declaration of a State of Emergency and the issued Executive Orders, which prohibits any gathering of more than 10 people, among other things.

Approval of the Minutes. In a motion by Ms. Chaput, seconded by Dr. Joung, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2020 Joint Board Meetings.

Executive Orders and Ramifications of Cornea Virus Measures.

Several issues and a long discussion ensued about the impacts of the COVID-19 State of Emergency and its impact on veterinary practices. As a result the following motions were made:

- In a motion by Dr. Hendler, seconded by Dr. Joung, the Board voted unanimously to allow RVTs whose licenses expire on June 30, 2020 to complete all their required CEs online this year only.
- Although many practices have already voluntarily scaled back on their procedures and operations, the Board discussed whether to recommend that the Governor prohibit non-essential procedures in order to enforce social distancing requirements and reduce use of PPEs. After some discussion, the Board directed staff to write up its recommendation to stop all nonessential procedures and, once approved, include it in its interpretation of professional conduct regulations. Nathan Boan, who runs the state Spay and Neuter Grants Program, participated in the conversation.
- The Board also considered the use of telehealth and telemedicine in relation to the VCPR which requires a physical exam. Board members noted that it was below the standard of care to diagnose, treat or prescribe for an animal that a veterinarian has not examined; however, given the current pandemic there could be a situation in which it makes sense, such as a pet owner who has COVID-19 and can't leave the house. The Board did not want to relax the regulation but did want to take the pandemic into account; however, the pandemic would not relieve the veterinarian of liability should the use of telehealth lead to an avoidable bad outcome. Board members directed staff to include its interpretation in a written recommendation.
- In normal times, applicants for a veterinary license have to order official college transcripts to be sent directly to the office; however, most institutions are teleworking and do not have access to hard copies. Ms. Orlando asked the Board if they had any objections to accepting transcripts by email provided they came from an official email address and staff calls to confirm that they were official, with a hard copy to follow six months after the State of Emergency is lifted. The Board had no objections.

Veterinary License Applications

In a motion by Dr. Hendler, seconded by Ms. Quimby, the Board voted unanimously to approve veterinary license applications for Drs Ann Rashmir, Audrey Weaver, Cerie Couture, Sarah Dowling, and Sarah Luciano.

Sanitation Reports. Inspectors Husk, Morgan and James reported on inspections they completed since the February meeting. In a motion by Dr. Callahan, seconded by Dr. Joung, the Board voted unanimously to accept the Sanitation Reports as presented.

CE Approval Request Reviews.

Board members reviewed submissions for CE requests. In a motion by Dr. Joung, seconded by Dr. Callahan, the Board voted to approve all submission but to restrict submission #287 for RVTs, not veterinarians. It was noted that Dr. Radue's connection to the call had dropped and he did not vote on the motion. All others approved.

Announcements and Other Business

- Reauthorization and Cease and Desist Legislation. Ms. Orlando reported that both bills passed during the abbreviated General Assembly session.
- MVMA Leadership Changes. Ms. Orlando reported that the MVMA Executive Director was leaving at the end of the month and the Pennsylvania VMA was taking over administering for the next three month. As a result, the Mentoring Program the Board wanted to discuss with MVMA is on hold for the time being.