

Hearts and Paws Comfort Dogs- All Member Meeting



Date: March 16, 2026

Place: Zoom

Time: 6:30-7:45P

Present: Amy Usowski (Presiding), Josie Soraghan, John McCaffrey, John Severin, Donna Martin, Candy Van Sciver, Susan Harrington, Wes Blair, Rebecca Blair, Bonnie Chiantera, Mary Hastings, MB Maughan, Nancy Johnson, Rose Fiore, Jenn Foley.

Secretary: Rebecca Blair

1. **Welcome and Introductions-** Amy welcomed everyone on Zoom and explained that the meeting was changed because of the storm that had abated. She introduced John McCaffrey who had just completed orientation and thanked Rebecca. John is a Rotarian and has had dogs in the past.
2. **Update on February Board Meeting and New 2026 Handbook-** Amy shared that the Board meeting in February was a success, and two new Board members were added: **Amy Groden**, who worked with Adrianna on the recent Paw Prints newsletter. All commented that the newsletter was very well done! There was applause as Amy commented that **Donna Martin**, Web Master, joined the Board as well. Amy commented that although the HPCD finances are "ok" and stable, there was discussion and agreement to hold an annual fundraising event for HPCD. This is a new concept but since the organization has grown so much it will be important to raise some funds to support our ongoing expenses.
3. Amy asked Rebecca to review the revised HPCD Handbook, which is now on the website on the members page under "documents." She encouraged all to briefly review and stated that this Handbook will be produced in hard copy for all new orientees. Rebecca shared others changes to the Handbook with included:
 - Requirements for all members to participate in at least one visit per month and participate in at least two public events a year.
 - A new and detailed description of the difference between comfort dogs, therapy dogs, service dogs, emotional support dogs etc. is explained.
 - A paragraph was written further explaining that visiting teams must meet outside before a visit and gain consensus for about treat giving.
 - She shared that a class has been designed for all those willing to be Spotters. This is a new session, designed as a result that some spotters may not

appreciate the vast importance of this role. Matt and Rebecca will teach the class.

-The Award Dinner held in 2025 was so well received and will be held on an annual basis.

-The trainer list is now posted in the handbook as well as in the newsletters.

-it is recognized that an administrative gap has existed in reference to the ability to document safety and other unusual occurrences that may occur during a visit. This document adapted from the national animal safety visitation group, is very straight forward. It is available on the website. Once documented by the Spotter or another member it will be sent to the Regional Coordinator for any action deemed necessary. Members agreed this was a clever idea and examples were shared.

4. **Matt's Moment:** Amy said that Matt's upcoming Moment will be held at the next meeting, third Monday of April at the Dennis Memorial Library and will be an All-Member meeting because of the Zoom meeting replacing the normal Member meeting.
5. **Amy asked how existing visits are going.** Multiple attending members spoke.
 - Jeff** commented that he has been interviewing counselors and teachers at the Falmouth schools about how things are going and engaging stories they have about student engagement in the visits. Jeff shared that there is a new visit location in Mashpee and Sandwich "Living Independently Forever" created for adults with various challenges. This is a large location and could have 4-5 dog teams. He also described the success of the Laurentide location with consistent visits.
 - Amy** commented that the Mid and Lower Cape visits are also going well.
 - Bonnie** shared that the Margarite Small Elementary School visits are going very well. She shared a story about Graci and Millie and the thank-you note that was then received. Bonnie also shared a wonderful story about a visit at Ezra Baker where a non-verbal boy actually made a comment after playing with the dogs "Dog...Wolff" and the teachers cried!
 - It's been challenging with the Mall's Alzheimer's group due to a scheduling challenge. **Amy** is working on that. It has also been a challenge with the Veterans' groups. **John** has agreed to work with these locations as the Rotary also collaborates with the Vets. Evenings would be better.
 - Roch Harbor visits are going "really well" commented **Josie**. Even though these visits are only 30 minutes, they are well appreciated.
 - Anne was on vacation and **Amy** commented that the Outer Cape AIM visits are going well- small groups, but the dogs spend time with each participant.
6. **Upcoming Events for March, April and May-** discussed by Jeff and Amy
 - The Hyannis Home, Garden and Lifestyle show** is a fabulous event, said Jeff. Three shifts are available for **this coming Saturday**. We are there all day and there is plenty of room for members and dogs. Please sign up on the website.

-Other upcoming events include Highland Hall, Brewster Wellness Fair, Bow Wow Bash and Care for Our Troops (Memorial Day weekend). More information will be forthcoming.

7. Open Discussion- nothing else

8. Adjourn- 7:45

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca