Minutes from the Stakeholder Group established pursuant to a *Resolve, To Study the Impacts of Consumer Fireworks Use*, Chapter135, approved March 29, 2022.

The Stakeholder group convened at 10:00 AM on Friday October 21st.

In attendance:

Rachael Fiske, State Veterinarian, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Vicki Schmidt, Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters

Robby Gross, Chief Forest Ranger, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Julie Ann Smith, Maine Farm Bureau

Dan Peart, Phantom Fireworks

Matthew Randall, Inspector Supervisor, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Joseph E. Thomas, Maine State Fire Marshal

Fire Marshal Thomas asked: What are the impacts of consumer fireworks use in general and on livestock?

Rachael Fiske, State Veterinarian, stated that she was aware and had heard of animal owners complaining of fireworks upsetting their animals but that most of the detail was anecdotal. She went on to say that it’s difficult to quantify and really no process isin place to address this specific issue and that there have been studies in Europe focused on the negative impact of fireworks on animals.

Julie Ann Smith of the Maine Farm Bureau stated that farmers are dealing with the problem internally. They’re dealing with fences being torn down and production from cows being diminished due to fireworks. She said dogs are also quite distressed.

Robby Gross, Chief Forest Ranger for Maine said there was very little documentation on the impact fireworks are having on animals.

Matt Randall, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry stated that calls related to fireworks had declined and the focus has now shifted to the towns. He went on to state that he believes an educational approach would be the best solution and that to study the issue carefully would require funding.

The group believes there are costs associated with negative impacts on animals of consumer fireworks. The group also concurred that local and county are usually the officials responding to the issue as opposed to state level officials. There was also consensus in that an examination of thenature and characteristics of local ordinances might help.

Dan Peart of Phantom Fireworks drew the groups attention to a law recently passed in Pennsylvania prohibiting the use of fireworks within 150 feet of animal housing facility and that those using fireworks much notify in writing the owners of such facilities at least 72 hours in advance. He went on to state that enforcing laws of this nature is difficult.

Vicki Schmidt of the Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters and horse owner stated that fireworks are a problem for animals. The fireworks distress them in numerous ways. She added that she has information on the problem that she would share a later time.

The Stakeholder group adjourned at approximately 11:00 AM.

The Maine Fire Marshal’s Office is examining the Pennsylvania law and an ordinance the City of Calais has passed that addresses the issue of the negative impact of fireworks on animals. The ordinance prohibits the use of consumer fireworks in any livestock zone which is defined in the ordinance as being any area within 1,500 feet of a facility where livestock is being raised or boarded.

The Maine State Fire Marshal’s Office has received several complaints via e-mail from Maine citizens stating that, among other things that:

“I have never in my life experienced fireworks in the proximity or at the scale as I have living here…I assumed that fireworks [would be used during the] 4th of July and maybe there other major holidays.. I could not have been more wrong.”

“My livestock is frantic with the noise and it is difficult to settle them down… especially when the display is within 500 feet of our barn……”

“While it is a privilege to own such animals, for a lot of us it is our livelihood, a way people make a living and these animals are literally everything to us. The danger of our barns catching on fire with our animals and hay in it is terrifying, all for people to set off these fireworks with no rules, regulations or care for others around them.”

“My horses are very sane for the most part. Two are retired race horses who have heard fireworks many times. However, Having them fired off right next to my property is insane! They don’t eat, they run around and can’t settle for hours.”

“Help our horses please, however you can. Prevent risk of fires at farms, and prevent fear and harm

to these magnificent, sensitive flight animals, our horses. Animals deserve to be safe, be free from

fear, and to be secure.”