

**EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP
DEER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 31, 2007**

The East Goshen Township Deer Management Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, January 31, 2007 at 7 PM at the East Goshen Township Building. In attendance were: Chair, Jim McRee, and members Steven DiAntonio, Matt Keating, Maria O'Hara, Ellen Sinclair, Susan Vanasse, Walter Wujcik, and Albert Zuccarello. Also in attendance were Mark Gordon (Zoning Officer), Capt. Guy Rosato (Police Liaison), Jack Yahraes (Municipal Authority), and Don McConathy (Board of Supervisors). Allen Stricker, Bob Hudson, Bob Knight & Don Eastburn, members of the Cutting Edge Conservation Group were also present.

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairman Jim McRee called the meeting to order at 7 PM and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

The members of the new committee introduced themselves and stated their interest in the deer program:

- Jim McRee is a member of the Planning Commission, does not hunt and has gardening concerns.
- Sue Vanasse has lived in Grand Oak for the past 15 years and is concerned for the children and Lyme disease.
- Ellen Sinclair is relatively new to the township, moving to Rockland Village 3 1/2 years ago and has been following the deer management issue for the past couple of years.
- Capt. Guy Rosato has patrolled the area for the past 19 years and lives in Westtown Twp.
- Mark Gordon is the Twp. Zoning Officer and will act as the staff liaison for the commission. He lives in West Whiteland Twp. and is an avid hunter.
- Steve DiAntonio lives on Reservoir Road and is an avid bow hunter. His goal is to educate on behalf of the hunters and design an effective management program.
- Walter Wujcik is a member of the Conservancy Board. He has lived here for 20+ years and has seen an increase in the deer population over that time.
- Matt Keating has lived in Mill Creek since 1993 and does not hunt.
- Al Zuccarello lives in Hershey's Mill. He has lived in the county for 30 years, is a former hunter and has had three close encounters with deer. He has had Lyme disease and believes there is a need to recognize the growing deer problem.

3. MEETING PROTOCOL & PROCEDURES:

Jim explained that prior to their meetings, members would receive a packet including the minutes from the previous meeting. During their meeting, the commission would discuss the topic on the agenda for that night, followed by public comments. The commission would make any necessary motions, which need to be seconded, followed by public comment before voting on them. Meetings will last approximately two hours.

4. CHARTER

Jim stated that the general approach of the commission is to have no preconceived notions and that they need to establish the number of deer per square acre. The township is expecting a quote from AIT Air Scan. They have one verbal quote of \$20,000 for an aerial and infrared survey of the

number of deer in the township (reference the Ridley Creek Survey in the packet). This will include a 1000 foot buffer area beyond the township boundaries. Mark said Greg Stockton will do the aerial survey and the price includes several fly-overs and a full report. February is a good time of year to get a count of the base population as there is less movement (Nov-Dec) and no foliage (summer months). The BOS has committed to funding the aerial survey. "Hot spots" in the East and South (Westtown School, Gray's Estate, Clocktower and Grand Oak) will be a focus. Steve can get the numbers from the Westtown School Management Program.

The commission will need to flush out the deer concerns, such as safety, health and landscape issues, and then establish a reasonable approach to solving the problem, such as hunting, contraception or capture & release, while keeping costs in mind. Jim would like to delegate research to members. The commission's goal is to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors by June. Assuming there is a problem, they would implement a 10-year target plan to control the deer population, which may include another deer count in 3-5 years to check the progress.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Don Eastburn – suggested that the commission consider input from a game commission biologist and cautioned that even though the township has political boundaries, deer migrate and transgress through the township all the time and this survey will only give a "snapshot" of what the population is at one given time. Jim recognized the dilemma and said they approached neighboring townships but there was no interest in collaborating. Joe McConathy said other townships were only asked about participating in the aerial survey. East Bradford started a selective hunting program last year and could possibly share some information. It would also be a good idea to contact the West Chester Area Council of Governments, which includes 8 surrounding municipalities with the exception of Willistown. Matt pointed out that Penn State University did an extensive project for the state to determine their deer count in '96-97, and may have some data they could use. Al believes this is clearly a regional issue.

Bruce Foreacre – suggested baiting deer to draw them into public land. If they choose hunting as a solution, Jim said that would need to be a consideration. Bruce is an avid hunter and archery hunter. He is a member of the W. Caln Sportsman Club and works at Hershey's Mill. He said certification of archery hunters could help to make residents feel safe.

Sue said contraception was used in NJ and was found to only cut the population by 1/3 – not an overly effective solution, as it is said to wear off after a few years.

Allen Stricker, Bob Hudson, Bob Knight & Don Eastburn, members of the Cutting Edge Conservation Group – were involved in the Westtown School Mgt. Program. If East Goshen goes with a hunting program, they urged them to consider perception. Archery allows them to go into smaller areas with greater discretion; several organized groups should control it. The effective range of a crossbow is 30 yards. Jim said after they establish their mission, a hunting presentation at a future meeting would be appropriate.

Capt. Guy Rosato – said there have been no "reported" motor vehicle accidents in the last two months. He will check for Oct-Nov. A police report is not necessary for insurance purposes. Mark will get the number of animal pick-ups from the Game Commission. Guy will also look up the number of "illegal" firearm discharges for East Goshen for Oct-Jan.

5. DEER TARGET POPULATION:

The deer count from the survey will not be available until the end of Feb.-March. The PA Game Commission recommends that the number of deer in an urban / suburban environment should be 5 /sq. wooded mile. Which in our case would be about 20 deer. In a rural environment the number of deer should be 20 deer / wooded sq. mile, which in our case would be approx. 80 deer. The deeded township open space will not change in future years. Jim said they could use the game commission guidelines to help define their target numbers and set reasonable goals.

Al said the commission should explore what the benefits vs. detriments of the deer are. The deer are destroying the habitat for themselves and other animals. Mark said the “browsing effect” (vegetation below 5 feet) is visibly being destroyed. Jim reminded the commission that they are incumbent to “prove” the problem. Given their time constraints, quantitative studies are the only available evidence at this time of year. Once they establish the numbers, they need to explore accident-related cases and Lyme disease. Sue suggested contacting the CDC for Lyme disease numbers. Bruce said Senator Dinniman has said that Lyme disease is reaching epidemic levels and that Chester County is a leading area in the nation. The white tail deer is the number one carrier of the disease.

Despite apparent overwhelming evidence just tonight, Ellen pointed out that last year residents were concerned about how hunting was being controlled. Joyce Tilli (Bow tree) agreed that she was concerned about when and how the hunting was done last year and did not feel informed about who was doing it. It was agreed that last year’s program was well set out but because of preconceptions by the public, it was not well received. Joyce Tilli wants letters sent to all residents not a select group. Mark said all notices were and will be posted in the newsletter.

Bob Knight said hunting is probably the most cost effective means to manage the deer population and distributed a report by the Cutting Edge Conservation Group to members of the commission. Bob Hudson said they are fully insured, do background checks and all hunters are licensed and/or certified. All information is made public. Don Eastburn said the average birth is 2 fawns but recent finding are reporting 3 fawns. Bruce Foreacre said certified archery programs have been running in county parks for years and there have never been any serious injuries/deaths from archery in PA.

6. MEETING SCHEDULE:

- February 9th – newsletter deadline. An article will be submitted introducing the committee to the residents, outlining their charter and meeting dates.
- Tuesday, February 13th – Suburban Deer Management Seminar (all members should try to attend). The seminar information can be added to the website and send to the Daily Local News for public information.
- Wednesday, February 21st – next regular meeting; assign research topics.
- Monday, March 19th – deer count expected; discuss hunting and other options.
- Monday, April 16th – discuss hunting and other options as necessary.
- Monday, May 21st – discuss recommendations; submit 2nd article for the July newsletter that includes some hard data.
- Monday, June 18th – last meeting.
- Tuesday, June 19th – present recommendation to the BOS.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jack Yahraes (MA) – said the “Save the Open Space” committee from a few years ago faced a lot of opposition and although it may seem overwhelming, he encouraged members of the commission to work through it towards beneficial results.

Don McConathy (BOS) – got a report from a similar program that was developed in southern Connecticut last fall and gave it to Mark. He also suggested getting someone to help with a professional public relations campaign. Maria said she felt informing residents via the newsletter and website was sufficient. It was agreed that even after the research is done, emotions are going to effect the discussions. Ultimately it will be the BOS’s responsibility to protect the health and welfare of the public, while recognizing legitimate concerns and continuing to stress education and communication.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Walt made a motion to adjourn. Matt seconded the motion. There was no further discussion or public comment. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Tracie Hill
Recording Secretary