

**EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP
DEER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MAY 21, 2007**

The East Goshen Township Deer Management Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, May 21, 2007 at 7pm at the East Goshen Township Building. In attendance were: Chair, Jim McRee, and members Steven DiAntonio, Matt Keating, Ellen Sinclair, Susan Vanasse, Maria O'Hara, Walter Wujcik, Bob Huebner and Albert Zuccarello. Also in attendance were Mark Gordon (Zoning Officer), Don McConathy (Board of Supervisors) and Jack Yahraes (Municipal Authority).

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Al moved that the minutes of April 30, 2007 be approved as corrected. Matt seconded the motion. No further public comment or discussion was heard.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Jim stated that the BOS are looking for an update by June as well as anything that can be implemented by this fall. They originally expected to conclude the DMC by June but since it will continue they need to set a schedule for how much time is needed for more studies. Members need to decide if they can commit to more time, and a Vice-Chair was never chosen so they need to elect one. The Vice-Chair assists the Chair and may also report to the BOS 1x per month as needed. Al asked how long the committee would continue and Jim stated that there is an indefinite aspect to the DMC but he would think by the end of the year they should be generally complete.

Jim said they would firm up their recommendations at their next meeting on June 4th, and finalize things on the 18th before their presentation to the BOS on June 19th. Jim asked Mark to book Monday, July 16th, August 20th and September 17th for the DMC.

Jim had a good discussion with the BOS about their survey request and they feel it needs to be more specific to be effective. They are also concerned about cost (printing and postage) and the rate of return. But Ellen said the problem started with 60 residents and they need to go back to the whole and find out how they feel. It would be more informational than statistical but allow them to express concerns. Bob said it would help to establish the perception of the problem. Summer is a bad time of year because people are away and he suggested having it dropped-off rather than mailed-in. Mark agreed that it could help support their case (one way or another) and help in the action development stage. Mark said a survey was conducted for Applebrook Park; with a 70% positive reply, it was huge factor in that purchase decision. Walter said it could also identify geographic pockets where there are problems. Don asked them to provide the BOS with a sample so they could better understand what they are looking for and they can reconsider for the fall newsletter.

The township received an unsolicited deer management proposal from a company unaffiliated with QDMA. Members can review it for reference.

4. PRESENTATION

David Cantor, founder & executive director of Responsible Policies for Animals, Inc. thanked Jim for the introduction and prefaced his presentation by stating that his comments would represent a wide range of comments based on his years of experience with deer hunting programs. He would provide information from a wide range of sources but did not focus on technical aspects. He could also make comparisons to Nazi extremists but does not harbor animosity, prejudice or stereotypes towards anyone and it is not meant to offend. *Complete transcript attached.*

Public Comment:

Bernadette Delorenzo, 1718 Clocktower Drive – asked if Mr. Cantor had done any research on the use of the contraceptive darts PZP. Mr. Cantor is familiar with PZP which has been found to effectively prevent pregnancy but it does not seem like a long-term solution and often raises more disputes because it is not only a violation of animal rights but is also a concession that the number of deer in a particular area is the problem, when it's not the real problem. Darting deer for instance, isn't going to prevent more accidents or prevent other, non-darted deer from enter the area. Darting involves a lot of discussion, planning, cost and maintenance and his organization does not actively campaign for or against it.

Abbas Rahberi, 1613 Manley Road – thanked Mr. Cantor for the excellent presentation and asked if he was aware of any organization that has filed legal action against a municipality to prevent a deer program. Mr. Cantor said he only knows of one local group in Philadelphia that filed a suit, 10 years ago, funded by local activists for \$14,000 and lost the case. No appeal was possible. Safety was the basis for the suit. Mr. Cantor said there are so few incidents of non-hunters being injured by hunter, that when it does occur, it is highly reported. However, the it is highly unlikely that someone would get hurt and irrelevant to human treatment of animals.

Carol Navarro, 201 N. Chester Road – thanked Mr. Cantor for the information and stated that this information was given to the BOS in 2006 and 80% of the people present at that meeting were against hunting (she has video to confirm). At the time, the BOS thought East Goshen had 500 deer in the township and approved the expense of \$20,000 to count them, only to find out we have 297. Ms. Navarro believes this number to be even less. She is “very in-tune with nature” and does not belong to any animal rights group but the idea of murdering any animal for sport, offends her. She stated that she approached Rick Smith about joining the DMC committee but was not selected. She said she may be considered “radical” but believes that a deer hunt will happen. Jim clarified that the DMC was formed to determine if there was a problem and if so, how to handle it. Ms. Navarro said it was good to form the group but is not sure how the members were chosen. She can tell by looking at the members that there are at least three that are in favor of hunting. She does not understand how Christian people can trample on god's gifts and will do what she can to stop this primitive attempt to kill them. Mr. Cantor said it has been his experience that deer count surveys are often found to be incorrect.

John Gaul, 1323 Park Avenue – asked how long the deer count survey took in Fairmount Park's Wissahickon area. Mr. Cantor believes it was conducted for one day, during daylight, during the winter. He said people need to consider not only the number of deer but also the vegetation in the area. In the Wissahickon instance, plants were thought to have been damaged by deer but he took some of the plants in question to a lab for analysis and it was found to be a fungus. People need to be open to many different possibilities.

Matt asked, in regards to whether hunting was conducted for sport or food, what happens to the deer carcasses. Mr. Cantor said they are often donated for food or research and is different for each case. Personally he has found that deer do not necessarily die after just one shot (bullet or arrow) but since it is often government controlled, it is difficult to substantiate. Also, he advised them that the Pitman Robertson Act of 1937 provides funding to any state that runs a Wildlife Management Program. PA is the #2 hunting state in the U.S.

Since 90-95% of East Goshen is already built out, Jim asked what he recommends for a solution. Mr. Cantor is not sure. Obviously we already have roads, houses and gardens that aren't going away. Things won't change without a deliberate process on the part of the large population or a radical change to our system, such as the end of oil. He suggested fencing off the deer's food supply and educating people about what's happening. He also suggested seeking creative solutions from high school students or other non-agenda group. Al agreed that East Goshen was already built-out and that wasn't going to change and asked how, other than car accidents or hunting, do deer die. Mr. Cantor said the usual life expectancy of deer is 15 years but they can die of injury or sickness. The sick, young or old usually die from predators. Since deer travel across township lines, he suggested coordinating efforts with 3-4 municipalities to create a pilot program.

5. REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Jim will email the complete recommendations to members for review. Maria said she and Ellen broke them into the three categories they had discussed: car collisions, Lyme disease and yards. They included some statistics and broke the recommendations down by individual and township.

Under car collisions, Maria said they included some recommendations from the Insurance Institute about how to avoid deer, including posting temporary signs in high density areas during October-December, never to swerve and using the Strieter-Lite road reflectors. Maria believes they are currently for sale but is not sure of pricing. Mark said they would need state approval for placement on any state road (ie. Paoli Pike, Boot Road, 352). Jim suggested experimenting on 1 mile of selected road to try and gain an idea of its effectiveness.

Maria said the Chester County Health Dept. reported 481 cases of Lyme disease vs. the year before when 672 cases were reported. The numbers fluctuate but there is a connection between the number of acorns and rainfall in a particular season and the number of ticks. Taking the total numbers and breaking them down by the number of townships in the county, she estimates that there were 8 cases in East Goshen. Al does not think this is in any way a fair representation of the actual numbers and that many cases go unreported altogether. Maria said doctors are legally bound to report Lyme disease cases. Al said we must conclude that there are all kinds of information disseminated on both sides of the issue and they are not all accurate. The most communicable disease in Chester County is sexually transmitted diseases. Their recommendations include information from Doug Fearn's presentation as well as local merchants.

Maria said they included the Tubex pricing and information under the landscape section. Commercial sprays are also available and they found many other deer deterrent options out there. Mark said this was great information that could easily be included on the website. Jim asked if any or all should be grouped into a recommendation to the BOS. Walter suggested including the information in the next newsletter article, followed up by the survey. Mark agreed that the article could get people emotionally involved in the issue and then move then to action with the survey.

6. HUNTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Jim said large landowners already do their own hunting programs, but did the DMC want to put together a model program. Ellen doesn't think this should be an option yet. Steve agreed that this should not be part of their short-term goal. Jim suggested recommending the BOS bid out a model program. Ellen believes they heard from enough experts that they could develop their own program if the time comes. Al said the large land owners probably pull a lot of deer away from the residential areas but Mark said typically deer herds naturally migrate towards this land but they are also in the open spaces around houses, such as in Grand Oak. Al is in favor developing a hunting program. Ellen said they should pursue the non-hunting avenue first and see how it goes before implementing anything else. Hunting is a multi-year commitment and she is not confident that hunting will reduce deer numbers.

Sue suggested organizing the private landowners so they can get data or reports on how many deer they harvest. Mark will approach them but it will be strictly voluntary. Walter asked if the Game Commission tracks deer harvests but Mark and Steve agreed that it is not broken down by township and would be very hard to breakdown. Plus PA does not require any reporting such as they do in Delaware. If they focus on large landowners, Jim said they could possibly help shape their programs. The majority felt this would be possible simply in recommendations in the newsletter or website. Mark said it would be difficult to promote, especially if the township isn't doing anything.

Al reiterated that fawns are soon to be born and hunting should remain an option. Matt said he informally polled the residents in Mill Creek (39 houses) and they don't see a problem. Sue agreed that there are less deer but they are still here. Al is concerned that if you calculate the fawns, plus deer on the borders of the township, the 300 deer counted is actually much higher. The topic of recommending a hunting program to the BOS was tabled at this time.

7. JUNE RECOMMENDATIONS

Jim said he has the draft recommendation from their last meeting, along with Ellen and Maria's recommendations and can work on incorporating the two for review at the next meeting. Mark said they would meet on June 4th and 18th. Jim asked if they should consider providing residents with supplies, as included in their recommendations but members felt they were easily accessible by the public and Mark said the township could not sell anything. Ellen suggested re-do the aerial count in 3-5 years. Matt said the civil air patrol would have the equipment and be able to do the aerial survey for the cost of fuel when the time comes. Mark clarified that the actual cost of the survey was \$15,900 after their discount.

Questions to include in the survey were discussed. Suggestions included:

1. Is there a deer problem? Yes/No
2. If there is a problem, how are you affected? Not affected, Lyme, Car Accidents, Landscaping, Other
3. Should they pursue a deer management program? Yes/No (*this was deemed too vague and the DMC has already decided there is a problem*)

Jim will e-mail the questions to members for review before the next meeting. Sue suggested sending out the survey with the quarterly sewer/trash bills but it was agreed that the newsletter would reach the most residents. There are 17,000 residents and about 7,500 newsletters that go out. Don recommended making the survey available via the website and email. The surveys will need to be per household, not resident; addresses will be required.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

Karen Galese, 440 Beaumont Circle – recommended including a questions that gives people a list of options to choose from.

Carol Navarro, 201 N. Chester Road – said there were only 6,000 residents in the township when she moved here; now there are more than 17,000. Why did they move here? For the trees and wildlife but now that we are minimizing acreage through development, reducing the area for the deer. The 8 deer that used to live in the woods at Manley Rd. & 352 are now dead due to the apartment complex. She recommended learning to live in harmony with nature and the animals otherwise annihilation of all wildlife and blacktopping everything seem like the only alternative. If these are residential problems, Ms. Navarro asked, “Where does government stop?”

Elizabeth Anderson, 1607 Margo Ln. – asked if their recommendation would include extending invitations to Willistown and West Goshen. Mark said the West Chester Council of Governments has looked into this issue but municipalities seem to be doing their own thing. There was interest on the part of both Willistown and West Goshen to take part in their aerial survey but neither could get the funding in time.

Marcia Gordon, 3008 Valley Drive – asked what would be done about people who do not respond to the survey. Mark said they would not be counted. Jim agreed that this is one of the problems with a survey and one of the BOS’s concerns. Ellen said the survey would show the effort on the part of the DMC to get resident feedback. Steve said it would help build education.

Regina Rule, 1788 Jefferson Downs – asked if they are not getting overwhelmed with complaints, why are they doing anything. Ellen said it all started with 60 residents last year. Bob said even if a hunt does take place, it wouldn’t necessarily reduce the number of car accidents; most of what they have done so far has been research and education.

Abbas Rahberi, 1613 Manley Road – said he has lived in the township for the past 20 years and coming from another country, he had never seen a deer but doesn’t think they bother anyone. He encouraged everyone to do their research, come to the BOS meetings and other meetings and questions the programs that the township wants to enact; he sees no scientific data. Ellen said they have been gathering information on the subject for the past six months and if he had been at the meetings, he would know that. Mr. Rahberi said even though he was not at the meetings, he did see the information. He said this is nothing but a “dog and pony show” to him.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Jim made a motion to adjourn. Walter seconded the motion. There was no further discussion or public comment. The meeting adjourned at 9:48pm.

Respectfully submitted by: _____

Tracie Hill, Recording Secretary