

**EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP
DEER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 4, 2007**

The East Goshen Township Deer Management Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, June 4, 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, Bob Huebner and Albert Zuccarello. Also in attendance were Gary Althouse (Township Building Inspector), 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:

Bob moved that the minutes of May 21, 2007 be approved as corrected. Al seconded the motion.

Public Comment:

Abbas Rahberi, 1613 Manley Road – said they failed to provide the public with a copy of the minutes for review prior to approval and respectfully requested that they table the motion until the following meeting. Jim said meeting minutes are always available at the township building but Mr. Rahberi cited that the Sunshine Law states that you must provide copies to the public. Copies were made and distributed to the public and the motion was tabled until the June 18th meeting.

No further public comment or discussion was heard.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Jim stated that after discussing their progress with the BOS, subsequent emails were exchanged on the subject of their “charge” by the BOS. Jim stated that in their original letter the BOS charged them with specifically finding ways to reduce the deer herd size. Don said it is also in their Charter. Jim said something should be included in their recommendation that addressed how to reduce the deer herd population over the next 10 years or provide an explanation for why we are not. Ellen said she felt “invited” not “charged” with the task. None-the-less she said a specific number of deer should be set as their goal if they do recommend hunting.

4. NOMINATIONS

Jim said they need to select a Chair and Vice-Chair before proceeding and recapped the responsibilities of each. The Chair might also need to work with neighboring townships to develop collaborative programs. Al asked for this discussion to be held at the end of the meeting as he wasn’t really sure if the committee would need to continue if certain decisions were made tonight.

5. INCLUDE HUNTING IN BOS RECOMMENDATIONS?

Al urged the members to review and discuss the Ridgefield Connecticut Deer Report again, stating that this region is extremely similar to East Goshen and that they could build a program based on this extensive study, which included expert research, rather than trying to start from scratch. Al said the number of deer in East Goshen has more than doubled since 1995. He asked how many more people need to be involved in accidents or contract lyme disease before action is taken. He doesn’t want to

kill all the deer but said they need to be controlled for the public's welfare, even if that means taking an unfavorable position in the township.

With only one more meeting left before their recommendation to the BOS, they would need to devise a detailed deer management program that included hunting and there probably isn't enough time; the 2004 program was included in their packet for reference. Don said the DMC has done a decent job collecting information/research but they still have a long way to go with educating the residents.

Ellen stated that hunting already goes on in the township and if they decide to develop a hunting program, it will need to be very structured; members need to realize that it will need to continue every year and personally she doesn't want to live in a hunting township. Steve said the DMC isn't prepared to develop a hunting program for deer management. They should make a recommendation to the BOS and then work with an outside organization to develop a sound program.

Al moved that their recommendations to the BOS include a deer management hunting program. Bob seconded the motion. Maria and Ellen strongly objected citing the numbers don't support it and hunting is too extreme. Ellen suggested drawing them out onto public land to hunt but didn't know how to go about doing it. Steve said baiting isn't a viable option. Safety is still Ellen's biggest concern. Sue agreed that safety is always a concern but feels it's being blown out of proportion; even Dave Cantor said hunting accidents were rare and hunting is an effective way to control deer. Bob suggested identifying the large private land owners that already allow hunting on their property and comparing it to where the township open spaces are to try and get a better idea of where herd clusters might be (based on the aerial survey map). Ellen has statistics that show bow hunting is dangerous but Jim said they need to be careful to make accurate comparisons.

Matt informally e-mailed his neighbors again with their three proposed questions, and asked for feedback "if a hunting program were part of their recommendations." Although he only got two responses, one was from a strong anti-hunting neighbor. Ironically the only acceptable terms for a hunting program seemed to be covered in the program that was included in their packet, making it seem like a great tool for them to start to develop a program. He liked having all hunters register so you know who is where and when in case of problems. Ellen said 18 days of hunting is too much and is worried that it will become recreational hunting that she cannot support. Jim said a schedule for the hunting would need to be included in their recommendations.

Al reiterated that his motion was to include hunting, under the strictest of guidelines and restricted to certain parcels of land, as part of their recommendation; it is not the only aspect of the solution. He reiterated the deer count numbers and said they continue to multiply. He said Jack Yahraes has seen 9 bodies on the side of the road in the past few months and no one really knows how widespread lyme disease is but has a petition from Hershey's Mill residents. Ellen urged him to present the petition to the BOS and reminded everyone that this was an election year.

Ellen asked how many years a deer hunt should be proposed for and Al said until the numbers are within state guidelines. Jim said all the information they have received was essentially presented within the context of a certain number of deer, and consistently hunting was cited as a viable solution. If they were to propose no hunting it would actually be tough to prove why they are disagreeing with all of the expert groups they have heard from.

Matt said there are three choices for reducing the deer population:

1. Private Group – such as QDMA, which hunts for consumption.
2. Commercial entity – who charge money to hunt.
3. Federal – Dept. of Agriculture, which uses firearms.

Of the three, he believes a group such as QDMA – hunting for food at no cost – is the best and most beneficial solution, without having to resort to channeling deer into a “kill zone” and slaughtering them. Steve said they also contribute about 90% to food banks as well as donate to scientific research.

Maria spoke to someone involved in the Ridgefield study, who's numbers were 40-80 deer per sq. mile, and their goal was “20 or fewer.” Educating the public was a big aspect of their program. They choose one plot of land and used 20 hunters based on expertise. The parcels were closed to the public and hunted for 20 days, M-F only. Hunters needed to log-in in the AM/PM and use a check station; they did not differentiate between does and bucks. They had one committee make the recommendations and another develop the program. They are currently looking to open a 2nd tract of land this year. Maria said that if they pursue a hunting program, they shouldn't have to change their opinions but she does see holes in the previous pilot program that they should improve upon. Don said they could download the complete Swathmore report on-line.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Carol Navarro, 201 N. Chester Road – believes the DMC was formed in 2007 due to “opposition” from residents rather than support because in 2004 and 2005 when township hunting was taking place, no committee was in place. She asked what other townships, specifically Willistown and Westtown, are doing about their deer herds. Jim said the Council of Governments is currently discussing the problem but they are not ready to establish an all-encompassing program. However, many townships have programs including the Willistown Trust and East Bradford Twp. Ms. Navarro asked what size acreage was required for private hunting. Jim said landowners must meet the 50 yd. setback rule from an occupied building (or have the permission of the homeowner), not an acreage requirement, in order to hunt. Ms. Navarro said the Game Commission promotes hunting as a good management program because they are a business. Al said if they killed all the animals, they would be out of business so it must be working.

Jack Yahraes, Municipal Authority (MA) – was asked to reiterate his recent sightings. Jack said the MA is out before 7am every day to pump stations and he has personally been counting any deer he's seen on the side of the road since January 1st. He has seen one per week since the start of the year. Ms. Navarro argued that she doesn't see them and periodically drives the township looking for them. Jack said he has seen them on Boot Rd., Greenhill Rd., Paoli Pike and elsewhere. Ms. Navarro thinks the BOS is supporting hunting for personal reasons. Her family in Pittsburg hunt and she knows personally, that arrows are a cruel way to die. Steve said deer could run after being shot with an arrow or gunshot. Ellen asked how they could be controlled from running onto her property. Ms. Navarro is also concerned that the deer meat is contaminated from eating pesticide-ridden grass and shrubs in the area. Steve said deer meat is probably safer than cattle meat you buy in a store that has been FDA approved.

Elizabeth Anderson, 1607 Margo Ln. – is upset to hear that the township is leaning towards hunting because it has been found to be “ineffective due to reproductive rebounds” and once you begin you can never stop. She asked them to seriously consider PZP contraception and said Dr. J. Kirkpatrick would be willing to speak on the subject. He has been a hunter for 50 years and is the premier expert

on PZP, which was specifically developed for suburban areas and is currently being used effectively in 7 states. The cost is nominal and funding may be available. He is looking for a pilot program in PA and knows the Game Commission has been fighting its use. Hunters would still be needed for darting purposes. More information can be found at www.pzpinfo.org.

Matt asked how they could ensure that deer would only be darted once and Ms. Anderson said that would have to be answered by Dr. Kirkpatrick. Al said it is only 30% effective but Ms. Anderson argued it was close to 90%. Jim said the Deer Forum and other experts say the opposite and agree that it is ineffective in “free roaming herds.” He has heard of the rebound effect but said that every method they discussed will have to be continued annually to be effective. Al said PZP success has only been found in controlled environments such as zoos and Assateague Island. Ms. Anderson urged the DMC to contact Dr. Kirkpatrick or his assistant for more information, citing that PZP has been around for 34 years but the Game Commission continues to fight it. She provided contact info.

John Gaul, 1323 Park Avenue – said he’s been present for several DMC meetings so far. He said their short-term goals would need to be modified yearly. If they want to do something productive they should recommend that private landowners plant trees around their property as part of their long-term plans.

Bernadette Delorenzo, 1718 Clocktower Drive – reiterated that she does not believe there is a deer problem in East Goshen Township and asked why they are trying to pursue hunting. Jim said the DMC voted 6-2 that there is a problem and that is just a difference of opinion. *Rocco Navarro* asked why they need to kill the deer when he never sees them and Jim said they want to reduce the deer population but no program has been defined yet.

Sue Bernhart, 220 N. Lockwood Ln. – said it is a conflict of interest to have Mark Gordon in charge of the program because he is hunter. Ms. Bernhart suggested baiting the deer and taking them all out in one shot. Steve said that is not ethical and most “anti-hunting” residents wouldn’t even support it as it’s perceived as being unfair to the animals. Ms. Navarro suggested baiting, darting, and relocating the deer but members agree this is not an option. Ms. Bernhart asked if it was possible to identify large land owners and Jim said they would request that information from Mark.

Debra Woodward, 155 Colonial Lane – asked if ALL residents would be notified this time, not just those residents who are within 1000 feet of an open space and Jim said they will be including something about education in their recommendations. If there is an outpouring of interest, they have discussed holding a large public forum at the high school but that would need to be decided by the BOS. All BOS meetings are open to the public at all times.

Abbas Rahberi, 1613 Manley Road – complimented Ms. Anderson on her research and stated that last year the BOS tried to sneak the program through and put the zoning officer in charge of it. They had township personnel, fire fighters and police officers involved. Also, he contacted a friend in the air service about the aerial typography and he said they are always flawed. If there is a problem, he asked why more hunters weren’t at the meetings. If the township does enact a hunting program, he assured them that the residents would be out there making sure it is done safely. Jim encouraged all residents to attend meetings and be involved in a positive manner. Mr. Rahberi said the dissemination of information by the township isn’t adequate.

Don McConathy, Board of Supervisors (BOS) – said the DMC would be remiss to put a hunting program together by their next meeting and should be looking at a skeleton program at best. In

addition to Ridgefield, he found a report from Swathmore and based on it generated a way to justify how the deer population has grown over the past 10 years. Don distributed a table to the members. The 1995 deer survey that found 153 deer was conducted that winter. Comparing male/female ratios and reproductive rates, you can easily reach an estimated 430 in 2007. Given that deer love canopy and if they were hiding under pine trees, Don said they would easily have been shielded from the aerial count and it is reasonable to assume we could be at this number today.

Marcia Gordon, 3008 Valley Drive – is personally against killing and would like to see the DMC pursue sterilization methods because we don't have the right to kill deer. She asked who was a hunter on the committee and Jim said 1 out of 9 members were hunters. Al said if the deer count numbers were less he would not support a hunt but even if we sterilize the deer, they still live for 15-20 years; although arrows are unpleasant, they are effective and a reasonable option. Ms. Gordon argued that the mortality rate for the young is usually higher than 15%.

No further discussion or public comment was heard. The motion was approved 6-2.

6. JUNE PRESENTATION

Jim said they currently have his summary report and the list of non-lethal recommendations. He envisions a presentation that includes slides/bullet points and would like other members to be involved, to (1) make it more interesting and (2) make them seem like a cohesive committee. Jim said Mark could help merge their Power Point slides. Jim suggested 15 minutes for each part of the presentation.

Jim will take the Introduction/Do we have a Deer Problem? Ellen & Maria will take the Non-Hunting portion. Ellen would like to look into PZP further. Al will discuss Lyme Disease – not so much the problem, but what they can do to help reduce cases. Steve will cover Hunting and Sue will present a section on Deforestation (members discussed several possible sources as there is a lack of scientific data to use as research). Car accidents will not be a separate section as it is hard to quantify. Beyond the information, Jim said they would need to formulate a formal recommendation including non-lethal and hunting steps, education, and the survey as well as the future of the committee. Sue said a target deer number should be established as their goal. Jim agreed that it could be necessary but it would be hard to defend; more important than a number is the health, habitat and human-deer impact. The committee also needs to establish a timeframe, such as re-evaluating in 3-5 years and can discuss it at the next meeting.

7. NOMINATIONS

Jim asked if anyone was interested in stepping up as chair or vice-chair because he would not be able to continue due to responsibilities with work and the Planning Commission. The BOS will appoint a chair if one cannot be found within the committee. Ellen doesn't have the time and feels unqualified for the position but is willing to help. After they make the recommendation, they will need to define the work and outline the hunting program. Don doesn't foresee them being able to enact any hunt in 2007 but hopes to have something substantial to present by April 2008. Bob suggested taking July and August off and having the committee reconvene in September. Al said after they make the recommendation, he believes it is unnecessary for the committee to continue. However Don said they have done a lot of research and hopes the committee members would continue with the knowledge they have gained. Plus the township will need to monitor the program, especially in the first year and the DMC would help with that.

Jim suggested having an outside organization develop a deer management program because the committee members are unqualified. Maria suggested having township residents and/or employees develop and run the program because they are familiar with the township but Ellen disagreed saying group members are willing to come in and work on education with the residents. Steve understands that residents may seem to have more at stake in the township but an outside organization would already have qualified hunters, upon which the DMC could build a program. Plus QDMA members for instance are held to high moral and ethical standards, with deer management hunters being held to even higher standards. Plus group members can objectively help solve problems with little tolerance for mistakes.

Maria questioned the motives of Tim Smail and QDMA. Steve said Tim helps expedite people to establish and maintain a deer management program for the good of communities. Jim believes residents would be more skeptical of a resident-driven program, questioning their credibility; an outside group provides expertise. Sue said the DMC is still needed to establish guidelines for any programs such location, time, days, etc. Steve said groups would need to study the area before enacting any program. Members agreed that it would be best to have the DMC collaborate with an organization to get optimum results.

Al said with all the information they have, a program could be formulated relatively quickly and implored Jim to stay on as chair; Jim agreed but asked for Vice-Chairs. Ellen agreed to be Vice-Chair. Members unanimously agreed to the appointments.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

John Schorn, 1401 Large Lane – asked about liability insurance of the hunting groups and if the township or residents would need additional insurance. Steve said these kinds of organizations carry their own but they would need to look over the disclaimers, research and qualify any group. Matt said hunters are always personally liable. Mr. Schorn said having a group would provide better protection than having individuals run the program.

Abbas Rahberi, 1613 Manley Road – stated that PA recently changed their liability laws and now they can decide what percent a landowner is liable. Also, he is totally opposed to any township employee being involved as someone could indirectly sue the township or if they get hurt the employee can collect workman's comp and either way, it comes back to the tax-paying East Goshen resident. Finally, the delineation of the 50-yard safety zone must be marked. Jim clarified that township employees cannot claim workman's comp if they are injured during recreational activities but Mr. Rahberi said there are always loop holes. He also believes that sharp shooting is much more humane than arrow hunting which entails intense suffering. He worries about the legalities of using PZP but supports its use.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The DMC will meet again on June 18th. Bob made a motion to adjourn. Steve seconded the motion. There was no further discussion or public comment. The meeting adjourned at 9:37pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Tracie Hill, Recording Secretary