

**EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP  
DEER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
JULY 16, 2007**

The East Goshen Township Deer Management Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, July 16, 2007 at 7pm at the East Goshen Township Building. In attendance were: Chair, Jim McRee, and members Steven DiAntonio, Maria O'Hara, Bob Huebner and Albert Zuccarello. Also in attendance were Gary Althouse (Township Building Inspector), Don McConathy (Board of Supervisors), Linda Gordon (Historical Commission) 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 June 18, 2007 be approved as corrected. Walter seconded the motion. No further public comment or discussion was heard. The motion was unanimously approved with one abstention by Maria O'Hara.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Jim reported that Ellen Sinclair resigned from the DMC. The BOS will look into appointing a new member. Al and Jim attended the BOS meeting on July 10<sup>th</sup> and will discuss the BOS feedback later in the meeting. Resident Cheryl Nash emailed a picture of her car following her deer collision on Strasburg Road that occurred last week.

**4. PZP VIDEO PRESENTATION**

Elizabeth Anderson introduced Dr. Priscilla Cohen: founder/director of PNC, author, speaker, the 1<sup>st</sup> to organize an institute for animal contraception in the U.S., she founded the 1<sup>st</sup> PZP controlled study, is a professor at Penn State University and was presented to the Queen of Spain.

Dr. Cohen explained that Dr. Kirkpatrick's work with this non-hormonal contraceptive, starting with horses in the West. It has been used on zoo animals successfully as well as other wildlife. They continue to work on more effective doses, including a one-dart treatment. Dr. Kirkpatrick is the leading scientist in the field of contraception.

Dr. Cohen introduced Dr. Kirkpatrick and his video presentation, pre-recorded at a lecture series in Pittsburg at Carnegie Melon University during October-November 2006. The video will explain the process of contraception, Dr. Kirkpatrick's work with elephants and horses and the use of PZP on deer populations.

**20-MINUTE VIDEO PRESENTATION**

Dr. Cohen distributed prepared information packets to the DMC members and volunteered to answer questions from the board members and public. The packet covered deer management, deer reproduction, deer contraception, myths, excuses for killing deer and a summary.

Al asked if the new single-dart method could be shot anywhere on the deer's body and be effective for one year. Dr. Cohen said the PZP is mixed with an agitator that allows for slow release over one

year. PZP has come under the control of the EPA. Dr. Cohen said it would be beneficial if tagging darted deer were not necessary, as this requires the use of tranquilizers.

Jim said there is a lot of information out there and on a per deer basis, it appears that contraception is effective in about 80% of deer when properly treated however he has not found any government body such as township municipalities, that embrace PZP as a deer management program. Dr. Cohen cited a list of government agencies that endorse PZP. Jim said you cannot compare the U.S. Navy to East Goshen Twp. and he would be interested to find similar communities that have successfully used PZP. Dr. Cohen said the NY Game Commission endorsed their work on Fire Island but PA is a big hunting state and therefore they cannot get the support they need because of the PA Game Commission's close ties with the hunting association. She said PZP was specifically developed for urban/suburban areas like East Goshen Township where hunting is dangerous but they are being blocked by state agencies. She admitted that it could never be successfully used on a statewide basis. The PA Game Commission has been stalling the use of PZP for the last 12 years according to Dr. Cohen, and is more concerned with pleasing the hunters than the majority of state residents.

One hunt did occur on Fire Island before they heard of PZP, which seemed to satisfy both sides (hunters and animal activists). Dr. Cohen has visited the site and the deer population has dropped by 60%.

Members discussed the deer situation in Valley Forge National Park with Dr. Cohen who is very interested in doing a pilot study there but was told they cannot as Valley Forge does not have deer management included in their plans. Al stated that in 1986 a deer count found 86 deer to be in Valley Forge National Park. According to a deer count done in February 2006, there are 1312. There are no predators in the park and the herd looks sick. Dr. Cohen said when deer do not have enough food or become overcrowded, they will not breed so to say that a herd is expanding and emaciated is contradictory. Food is the primary source of herd control, not predators. Deer seek shelter inside the park boundaries because they know they are safe there but Al said they still pose a danger to motorists.

Bob asked how the fear of dart hunting is better than the fear of bow hunting; how can they satisfy residents' concerns. Dr. Cohen said the darts are very small and shot with an air gun vs. arrows that are razor tipped and cause the deer to bleed to death so darts are much safer. Jim read that the darting distance could be up to 30 meters (approximately 90 feet). Dr. Cohen doubts hunters pick up missed arrows but after darting, the darts fall out and are cleaned up. Darting should be done in the fall. Dr. Cohen said there is no danger if a dart accidentally hits a child/person, as PZP is a protein.

Walter asked how you could tell which deer have been darted. Dr. Cohen explained that initially on Fire Island, they simply recognized which deer were which. Tagging deer or using "marker darts" that leave a paint stain are also options. If they can use the one-dart method, this won't be an issue as a 2<sup>nd</sup> booster shot won't be necessary. After fawning, they will know if the one-dart method was successful on Fripp Island.

Dr. Cohen said the PA Game Commission claims that it is too expensive; they need only give permission for its use. Al asked if they supply all the materials and Dr. Cohen said no. Ideally they should find individuals to go to Montana to learn how to dart with Dr. Kirkpatrick. Jim said a rigid research study would not yield a successful program. Dr. Cohen said the PA Game Commission did eventually give permission, with eight conditions, for the use of PZP in the Pittsburgh community,

but ultimately the program fell apart. The science works, funding is there but you need political support to make it happen.

Al said PZP could be a good solution and compromise eventually but it's still early in its development and doesn't solve the immediate problem. East Goshen deer are healthy but there isn't enough space to maintain them.

Dr. Cohen said permanent sterilization would no longer be considered contraception. There is a possibility that after 6 years, deer can become sterile but that is not the intended purpose. There has been a lot of technology and use of PZP in zoos to control reproductive rates. PZP costs approximately \$21/dose. There are other commercial products including colacon and spaback but they are more expensive and last longer. Dr. Cohen could not estimate a cost per animal but said you need to pay for the dose, labor to dart the deer and those to oversee the program. You also need to factor in local conditions including the size of the population, number of females vs. males and how tame they are.

Dr. Cohen said historically deer are known for browsing but are becoming grazers. She noted that in 1900 the deer population was almost extinct due to the dense forests and lack of low branches to browse on, but Jim clarified that information shows that they were almost extinct because of over hunting. Today the deer population in PA is over 1 million. Dr. Cohen said hunting would never solve the population problem because of "compensatory reproduction" that results in increased birth rates when deer populations drop. A healthy herd should be 50/50 male: female but the PA Game Commission says the current population is 1:5 and she has heard up to 1:20. Only 3% of male deer reach maturity (5 years) in PA due to trophy hunting.

Jim said trophy hunting would not result in a successful program but asked how they keep track of the treated deer when they roam in and out of the township. Dr. Cohen said deer don't roam too far and that it took 8 years to reduce the population on Fire Island, approximately 20 sq. miles. She maintained that it was a free-roaming herd.

Jim said, of the 6500 acres in the township, 400 acres are township open space on which they could operate the program. Dr. Cohen said a feeding program would need to be started to draw the deer into the open space so they could be darted and it would take several years to see results. Maria said hunting is not a one-year solution either because deer will continue to come from other townships into our own. Maria also read that the hunting program that has been going on in Tincum Twp. for several years is being reconsidered. Dr. Cohen was given a copy of the aerial deer count and indicated that she could put the township in contact with a someone about darting but looking at how the deer are scattered throughout the township, she's not sure if they could be interested.

There is some controversy about Streider Lites. Dr. Cohen said they need to be properly spaced and kept clean to be effective.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

*Sam Long, Kennett Way, Hershey's Mill* – said Hershey's Mill might be interested in the PZP program and said there must be a way to calculate the cost and length of the program. Dr. Cohen said she could not do that personally but agreed that it could be done if you considered variables like how much wooded space there is and if tagging is required; they are anxious to work in PA. According to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, one dose of colacon is approximately \$10-15 but they

estimate the cost of darting the deer to be \$500-1000; they said contraception alone does not reduce the number of deer. Dr. Cohen questioned their data and urged the DMC to consider material that has been peer reviewed as credible data; any information from game agencies are skewed. Jim would be interested to see data on what is happening “around” the PZP treated areas to see if other factors are effecting the populations.

*Elizabeth Anderson, 1607 Margo Ln.* – asked what the risk of trying the PZP method for 5 years would be and Al said it doesn’t solve the immediate problem. Dr. Cohen said random killing is liable to make the problem worse. Al said he wants to see more studies done on PZP.

*Christine Scott, Bowtree* – if the population has increased from 150 to 300 deer over 10 years, Ms. Scott asked if they used accidents to determine that there is a problem in East Goshen now. Jim said there is no solid data on accidents but there are numbers in the report and the existence of the problem came down to the observations and opinions of the DMC. Ms. Scott has deer in her yard that eat her plants but she accepts them; private hunting is already going on and is probably enough. Dr. Cohen said Lower Merion Twp. claims that private hunting has reduced the number of accidents there but she maintains that killing deer is cruel and unnecessary. In Pittsburgh, most deer are killed on highways.

*Karen Galese, Bowtree* – encouraged the use of PZP now so that a hunting program may never be needed, especially since the BOS have admitted that a hunt will not take place in 2007 anyway.

*Abbas Rahberi, 1613 Manley Road* – said he has a fundamental problem with a handful of people in the township deciding that there should be a deer hunt. He encouraged residents to question why Ellen Sinclair left the commission and which members of the DMC serve on other committees in the township. He doesn’t trust the deer numbers, hasn’t examined the document or the equipment used in that survey. He said the DMC members should be “independent members.” Dr. Cohen agreed that politics always play a role and cited the ongoing hunting program in Ridley Creek Park as an example. Jim said all the committee members are volunteers and the DMC was intended to include members from the Planning Commission, Park & Recreation and Conservancy Board who are familiar with the open space; at the start 9 members were residents and 3 were from other boards. Mr. Rahberi maintained that a true independent board should not consist of individuals involved in township business and claimed that members are bullying the public when they should be allowed to speak freely. Al pointed out that Mr. Rahberi complimented the DMC on the outstanding job they have been doing at last month’s BOS meeting but Mr. Rahberi said it was only the chair Jim McRee that he complimented. Al said there is a vacancy on the committee and welcomed Mr. Rahberi to apply.

*Joseph Silvestri, QDMA* – said he is just observing and came to the meeting to learn about the PZP. Maria asked for feedback from Dr. Cohen and Mr. Silvestri on reduction rates of PZP and hunting. Dr. Cohen said the population on Fire Island actually increased the 1<sup>st</sup> year before reducing approximately 10% each year thereafter. Mr. Silvestri said, living on Highland Orchards in West Bradford Twp. and based on personal experience alone, hunting does reduce numbers each season. But deer roam and eventually some come back so hunting is done annually. He would like to see more data on PZP use on free-roaming herds. Dr. Cohen said dispersing after darting does not occur like in hunting and maintained that Fire Island is 20 miles long and is a free-roaming herd.

*Cheryl Nash, Fox Crossing* – said she emailed a picture of her recent deer accident and has been wondering when the township is going to do something. She sees many carcasses and accidents and

knows many people with Lyme disease and thinks something needs to be done. She has 40 deer on her property weekly and thinks safety is a big concern. She recommended contacting local body shops for accident numbers – her shop says their work increases 50% in the fall as a result of deer collisions. She can't believe how volatile the issue is and said deer are already compromised regardless of the food supply because they don't have enough space. She is not pro or con for either method but suggested that PZP might work in the long term. She reported her accident to the police who were reluctant to take it. Jim said most insurance companies do not require a police report so they aren't usually filed. They have already asked the police department to keep track of deer accident reports. Don will reiterate this request to the Police Chief tomorrow. Dr. Cohen agreed that no one should have to worry about deer accidents but that the Game Commission continues to support deer reproduction when they should be held responsible to the majority of PA residents who are against hunting. Ms. Anderson said if the township moves ahead with a hunting program, PZP is off the table because the population will be disrupted.

One resident pointed out that highway deer fences could be beneficial. Jim thanked Dr. Cohen for coming. No further discussion or public comment was heard.

## **5. BOS REPORT FEEDBACK**

- A broader cross-reference of input from residents is needed and a survey should be developed with the help of professional services; an independent mailing is recommended. Don said they would tabulate the numbers internally. The last survey, including tabulation, cost about \$20,000 so this could be about \$10,000. There are 7500 households in East Goshen.
- Expected results need to be established along with a clear goal. Maria thought 150 deer was the consensus for a goal and is included in the report. Jim said it needs to be called out.
- They need to develop a deer management program with references, that could be adopted voluntarily by private landowners. John Shorn of Large Lane asked what the ultimate budget was and Jim said the BOS would have to determine that following their recommendations. He said expected operational costs, as well as money already spent, should be conveyed to residents for their consideration. Bob pointed out that better, cheaper methods are always being developed. Mr. Shorn would expect a list of specific qualifications of darters or hunters as people need to feel safe.
- They should formulate non-hunting recommendations into a structured program sponsored by the township (ie. Lyme disease, foliage education, 4-poster feeder information). Al said he would discuss the 4-Poster with Hershey's Mill reps. Mr. Long said Channel 20 and different associations would be great means to spreading education. Hershey's Mill is a private community that makes up 30% of the township and 30% of the residents.
- They need to gather documents from neighboring townships on what they are doing, including the Willistown Tract that has begun working with Tim Smail on developing a deer management program. Steve said East Bradford has a deer management program and Westtown School conducted a private hunt last fall.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

The DMC agreed not to meet in August and will meet again on Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>. Walter made a motion to adjourn. Steve seconded the motion. There was no further discussion or public comment. The meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.

Respectfully submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

*Tracie Hill, Recording Secretary*