



Rochester Hills

Minutes - Draft

Deer Management Advisory Committee

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*Bruce Austin, Monique Balaban, Allen Decker, Jim Kubicina,
Thomas McDonald, Joseph Podvin, Benjamin Denno
Council Members: Adam Kochenderfer, Michael Webber
Youth Representative: Scott Difilippo*

Wednesday, July 9, 2014

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jim Kubicina called the Deer Management Advisory Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

Present 6 - Monique Balaban, Jim Kubicina, Thomas McDonald, Joseph Podvin, Bruce Austin and Benjamin Denno
Absent 1 - Allen Decker

Others Present:

Council Members:

*Adam Kochenderfer
Michael Webber (entered 7:20 p.m.)*

City Staff:

*Mike Hartner, Director of Parks and Forestry
Lance DeVoe, Park Ranger II*

Introductions were made for the benefit of new member Benjamin Denno.

Mr. Denno indicated that he has been a Rochester Hills resident since 1984.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gary Granader, Rochester Hills Resident, was in attendance. He commented that he appreciated what the DMAC Committee has done, noting that he has not seen this type of proactive work done in other communities in Michigan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2014-0285 Approval of Meeting Minutes - Deer Management Advisory Committee - June 18, 2013

Attachments: [061813 DMAC Draft Minutes.pdf](#)
[Resolution.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Austin, seconded by Balaban, that the Minutes be Approved as Presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 5 - Balaban, Kubicina, Podvin, Austin and Denno

Abstain 1 - McDonald

Absent 1 - Decker

Resolved, that the Deer Management Advisory Committee approves the minutes of the June 18, 2013 meeting as presented.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2014-0278 Review of 2013 Deer Crash Data and Aerial Survey Results

Attachments: [062514 Deer Count Summary Memo.pdf](#)
[RH Annual Deer Survey Results from Oakland County.pdf](#)
[Deer Count Survey Areas Map.pdf](#)
[2013 RH Deer Crashes Map.pdf](#)
[2013 RH Deer Crashes-StatRptGraph.pdf](#)

Lance DeVoe, Park Ranger II, presented the data for 2013 and 2014 to date. He noted the following:

- Deer/vehicle accidents went down from 155 in 2012 to 136 in 2013.
- Complaints are down from 106 in 2009, when call tracking began, to 55 in 2013.

Mike Hartner, Director of Parks and Forestry, stated that it is a testament to the educational information put forth throughout the years. He pointed out that the crash numbers and complaints are not evenly spaced out during a year, noting that October, November and December are high points for crashes and complaints are higher in the summer as deer graze in gardens.

Mr. DeVoe noted that flyover numbers indicated an increase, moving from 170 in 2013 to 303 in the early 2014 flyover. He explained that typically when there is a significant amount of snow, deer will come together in areas such as near a swamp or conifer area where natural wind breaks occur and food is readily available. He explained that deer also tend to follow the same trails in heavy snow to conserve energy. He commented that he believes the flyover numbers were influenced by these conditions and the fact that the snow cover allowed them to be more readily seen and counted.

Discussion ensued on the number of fawns a deer could have in a year.

Member Denno commented that he has seen more multiples born in the last couple of years, resulting in more deer than he has seen in several years.

Council Member Kochenderfer commented that he has heard the same comments from residents.

Member Podvin stated that his subdivision in Brookedale Woods has had

fewer deer.

Mr. DeVoe stated that if the deer population had actually almost doubled, the number of deer/vehicle accidents reported would have gone up.

Mr. Hartner commented that while aerial surveys are a tool, they cannot be relied upon as the only tool to gauge deer population. He stated that the population is fluid, changing locations.

Chairperson Kubicina questioned whether the count could be considered an anomaly due to the harshness of the past winter.

Mr. DeVoe responded that it was most likely that the flyover occurred in areas where deer tended to congregate in large numbers and were easily seen.

Member Balaban stated that while certain areas showed a jump in population, nearby roadways did not show a significant increase in accident numbers.

Mr. DeVoe commented that population counts decreased significantly in 2009 due to the occurrence of disease in 2008, and these counts rebounded the following year.

Member Denno stated that the deer near his residence have lost their fear of humans.

Council Member Kochenderfer questioned what he should tell residents when they express concern over health issues. He noted that he has received calls from residents who wish for the City to do something to reduce the population.

Mr. DeVoe suggested that residents can call him. He noted that complaints will go on record and he will be able to discuss their concerns with them. He stated that deer will always be in the area.

Mr. Hartner commented that there are things that can be done to discourage deer from coming in a yard, such as deer-resistant plants. He pointed out that information is available on the City's website, along with a list of volunteers who are willing to visit residents to suggest various deer-resistant plants.

Member Balaban noted that she brought samples of pouches of Irish Spring Original Soap that she had made up, which discourage browsing when hung on plants in a yard. She suggested that she could visit residents who complain and discuss alternatives to discourage deer.

Member Denno commented that he has made up gallon jugs containing Liquid Fence with strips made up of towel material acting as wicks and strung these every ten feet around his yard perimeter to discourage deer from entering his yard. He noted that this seems to last through rain better than applying the Liquid Fence to the plants. He stated that the damage caused by deer has an economic impact as residents no longer wish to spend monies on plantings only to have them destroyed.

Mr. DeVoe noted that a number of complaints are by residents who say that they do not wish to have the deer dictate what kinds of plants they can have in their yards.

Mr. Hartner noted that fencing can help.

Mr. Denno commented that fencing is not allowed in many subdivisions.

Council Member Webber entered at 7:20 p.m.

Member Balaban commented that individuals living on a lake have similar complaints when it comes to waterfowl.

Council Member Webber questioned whether there had been a decrease in the number of complaints that deer were not being picked up fast enough after being hit. He commented that last year's discussion included concern over the number of complaints that deer were being left on the roads for days. He noted that he is not hearing as many complaints this year regarding deer on roadways.

Council Member Kochenderfer commented that last year's discussion included the possibility that the City's waste hauler could help out picking up deer.

Mr. DeVoe responded that the waste hauler is not currently involved in helping pick up deer.

Member Denno commented that the Road Commission for Oakland County has done a better job this year than in the past in clearing roadways.

Mr. DeVoe noted that complaints rise during summer months.

Mr. Hartner stated that the County has been responding in a timely manner to calls regarding deer on roadways.

Chairperson Kubicina noted that the previous Council's position in discussions held in 2009 was that deer/vehicle accidents were of more concern than garden damage. He commented that the Committee brought in gardening experts and held meetings at Rochester College to provide information for residents about gardening. He added that information was made available on the website, and Member Balaban has been willing to go out and visit homeowners to provide samples of deer deterrents. He stated that while he does not know what the current Council's position is, he would suspect that it is the same.

Council Member Webber commented that a good time to gauge the position of Council will be when the Committee gives its report.

Council Member Kochenderfer stated that from Council's perspective, there

is little that can actually be done to permanently decrease the deer population. He pointed out that even the catastrophic option of culling is not effective, as the population rebounds.

Mr. DeVoe noted that any action must be undertaken City-wide and would have to be a multi-year effort to be effective.

Member Denno questioned whether there had been any fatalities due to deer/vehicle accidents.

Mr. DeVoe responded that there have not been any fatalities in the City.

Member Denno expressed concern that while accidents that occur on surface streets were at lower speeds, there was the potential for a catastrophic accident on M-59. He commented that an accident occurring at 65 or 70 miles per hour could have catastrophic results. He questioned whether it would take a death for the Committee to take a decisive action to lower the population. He pointed out that Stoney Creek Park has opened up controlled hunting.

Member Austin responded that the Stoney Creek hunt occurs in a park and not in a residential area.

Member Denno added that Rapid City, Iowa, is a similar suburban community that allows archery from elevated positions in a controlled and organized manner.

Member McDonald stated that the Committee set parameters for the deer/vehicle accidents and deer population counts, which, when exceeded, would prompt discussion regarding lethal actions.

Mr. DeVoe noted that crash numbers have to reach 200 to prompt discussion regarding action.

Member Denno stated that with the deer population moving south, the odds of a car death occurring is increasing.

Mr. DeVoe noted that hunting laws dictate that hunting cannot occur within 450 feet of an occupied dwelling without permission of the owners. He pointed out that Rochester Hills' Ordinances specify that hunting cannot occur in the city.

Member Balaban commented that a significant number of vehicle accidents occur due to elderly or young drivers, drinking, and texting.

Member Denno mentioned manufacturers undertake car recalls due to only a few deaths. He commented that one death is too many and the safety issue must be considered. He noted that economic impacts of higher insurance premiums due to increased risk of hitting a deer and lowered revenue from retailers should be considered. He stated that the Committee should have a plan.

Mr. Hartner noted that this discussion has been held numerous times over the past several years. He commented that the deer population is not a problem confined only to Rochester Hills. He pointed out that other communities have approached Rochester Hills to review its efforts to educate the public. He stated that it is hoped that the environmental authorities throughout the country will eventually come up with better options. He noted that many of the suggested controls do not work with an open urban population. He noted that efforts focus on educating the driving public to encourage drivers to slow down and make them aware of the possibilities of deer on the roadways. He stated that the agreed-upon threshold has not been reached to move toward recommendation of a lethal method for control.

Member McDonald mentioned a Wall Street Journal article regarding a town in Long Island, New York, utilizing a bow-culling effort to control deer population.

Mr. DeVoe pointed out that Lyme Disease is a concern in the East.

Council Member Webber noted Council discussed the option of bow hunting in 2008, and arrived at the conclusion that they did not want to deal with some of the issues involved, such as licensing. He stated that this discussion led to the Oakland County Sheriff's Office volunteering to undertake sharpshooting activities.

Member Balaban expressed concern that hunting during the cull had occurred from helicopters.

Mr. Hartner noted that no hunting occurred from helicopters. He stated that infrared cameras were used on helicopters to determine that the area was cleared of human activity prior to any sharpshooting activities. He stressed that no deer ever left City property during the cull.

He stated that it is hoped that a better answer could be found. He mentioned that one way to cut down on the number of crashes would be to lower the speed limits significantly on all roads; and he stated that this was not a viable option. He commented that drivers can make the most impact by being aware and slowing down, and the City's mission should be to make them aware as much as possible.

Member McDonald stated that the Committee should continue to hold its position against recommending lethal action as long as the crash numbers are maintained under the 200 threshold.

Mr. Hartner pointed out that the meeting packet included two sample resolutions to continue the two elements recommended to Council over the past few years, including continuation of the aerial survey and use of changeable message boards. He noted that these signs used in eight areas of the City are seen by thousands of cars traveling in each direction. He pointed out the Traffic Improvement Association's statistics include breakdowns of hours and days of the week where crashes occur, and show that there is no safe time of day or day of week. He added that crash numbers peak in November. He mentioned

that not many communities provide extensive information or work as proactively to educate the public.

Member Podvin noted that the Committee's actions are a work in process, and communities approach Rochester Hills to see what it has done.

Member Balaban questioned whether a Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) Safety Audit could be of benefit.

Mr. Hartner noted that the SEMCOG Safety Audit offered would not deal with wildlife and only focuses on the timing of traffic lights, road design and maintenance.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of the speed signs in areas of high deer/vehicle accidents.

Chairperson Kubicina noted that he was recently in Gratiot County and saw signs with highly-reflective posts. He mentioned that if funding could be found, it could be an effective way of making the signs more visible to motorists.

Mr. Hartner added that businesses and churches were approached last year and encouraged to display "Don't Veer for Deer" messages.

Chairperson Kubicina questioned whether the City's sandwich board signs could be used, as was suggested last year.

Mr. Hartner noted that the signs are not available in November, as they are used by the Clerk's Office for elections. He mentioned that homeowners associations frequently have message boards they use to announce activities and commented that they are approached during the City's annual homeowners meeting to suggest that they be used at exits to subdivisions.

Discussed.

2014-0279 Discuss continuation of usage of four (4) changeable message boards at eight (8) locations in the fall of 2014 and the incorporation of message board expenses into the 2015 budget (approximately \$4,000)

Attachments: [Resolution.pdf](#)

A motion was made by McDonald, seconded by Podvin, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 6 - Balaban, Kubicina, McDonald, Podvin, Austin and Denno

Absent 1 - Decker

Resolved, that the Deer Management Advisory Committee (DMAC) hereby recommends the submission of a request to City Council to approve the four (4) changeable message boards at eight (8) locations in the fall of 2014 and to add changeable message boards to the 2015 Budget.

- 2014-0280 Discuss the continuation of using Oakland County for an annual aerial survey and the incorporation of annual survey expenses into 2015 Budget (approximately \$2,000)

Attachments: [Resolution.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Balaban, seconded by Austin, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 6 - Balaban, Kubicina, McDonald, Podvin, Austin and Denno

Absent 1 - Decker

Resolved, that the Deer Management Advisory Committee (DMAC) hereby recommends the submission of a request to City Council to add an annual aerial survey to the 2015 Budget.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Member Balaban suggested that the use of higher visibility sign posts be explored.

Chairperson Kubicina noted that he would be up north this coming weekend and would take photographs of the sign posts. He would distribute the photographs to the Committee members along with Mr. Hartner and Mr. DeVoe.

Member Podvin questioned whether construction barrels could be retrofit with deer crossing signs or blinkers.

Mr. Hartner noted that the barrels are rented and the lights are expensive.

Member McDonald questioned whether the City approves the use of reflectors on signs.

Mr. Hartner stated that putting the reflectors on every post or sign would cause the signs to not be as effective.

Chairperson Kubicina stated that he would contact the County Road Commission up north and determine whether information is available on the cost of the reflectors on sign posts.

Discussion ensued as to when the Committee would be making its report to Council. It was determined that the Committee would make its report sometime in October.

NEXT MEETING DATE

None scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chairperson Kubicina adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Mary Jo Pachla

*Minutes were approved as presented/amended at the _____ [year]
Regular [Committee] Meeting.*

Jim Kubicina, Chairperson