

DEER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
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TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**Deer Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2014**

In attendance: Mike Russnok, Chairman; Frank Mabley, Donna Merrill, Kevin Clark and Steve White

I. Chairman Russnok called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

Kevin Clark moved to approve the minutes of January 7, 2014 as drafted, Seconded by Frank Mabley, and carried 5-0-0.

III. Ongoing Business - None

IV. New Business

a. Homeowner Questionnaire Results

Steve White confirmed that the homeowner questions have not been distributed yet.

b. Hunter Questionnaire Results

Mike Russnok confirmed that there were two surveys that were sent for each phase of the season; one for the homeowner match and one for the controlled hunt.

Homeowner Match

The homeowner match included 32 hunters who were assigned approximately 50 properties. Nineteen of thirty-two hunters responded. The responses indicate 11 bucks and 17 does were harvested. This may include properties that were matched from previous years. It was noted that 13 hunters did not respond, but more deer were harvested than last year. Mike Russnok confirmed that it was a few of the newer hunters that did not respond to the required survey.

Mr. Russnok confirmed the key take-away on this version was question number 5 relating to communication with the property owner. The committee discussed

why there are inconsistent patterns and varying degrees of expectations from both sides. It is important for the hunter and the homeowner to establish a protocol prior to hunting the property. Mike Russnok added that there were only three restrictions noted in these surveys which were reasonable and positive. It was decided that question #10 can be removed next year relating to checking deer at the Town Hall.

Question #11 asked for suggestions to make the program better. The committee discussed the response of “after initial match it may make some sense to ask the hunter if they want another property”. If a hunter does not want a property that was assigned to them, they should communicate that with Steve White or Mike Russnok so it could be given to someone else. The other suggestion is that properties are screened prior to being assigned. Mr. White confirmed that the hunters are the screeners. It was noted that this piece should be strongly reiterated at the next meeting with the hunters to avoid miscommunications.

Question #13 includes three addresses that are not conducive to hunting. Steve White confirmed that he would contact all three property owners to let them know why the hunting cannot take place on their property.

It was noted that 50 homeowners signed up for the program this year, which is more than expected. Frank Mabley asked Mike Russnok to contact the hunters that did not respond to the survey and ask them if they have any issues or suggestions. It was noted that hunters that do not respond to this required survey would not be first choice for subsequent hunts.

Controlled Hunt

Out of 36 hunters in the controlled hunt, 34 responded to the questionnaire. The responses indicate 32 does and 22 bucks were harvested for a total of 54 deer. There were more properties open to hunting this year. There has been no response for Tito Lane after attempts to receive the survey.

The Comstock property had a high harvest of 19 deer, and City Lake, the biggest property, had 7 deer harvested. It was noted that the Queiros’ did very well with their numbers this year. One of the new properties, Pope’s Pond, did very well with 7 harvested.

It was noted that nine hunters did not get their January permission slips and the hunters that did take the time should be rewarded for next year. It was also noted that three hunters at City Lake have been there for many years however, they do not bow hunt. The committee discussed that this is not the best use of the property as there are bow hunters that would be very willing to hunt there during the bow season. It was also noted that these same three hunters did not embrace the baiting that was used this year. It was discussed that these hunters are not aligned with the goals of this committee which include maximizing productivity. They may get another location that is better suited for them with gun hunting only.

The Comstock property continues to be a challenge as hikers (even though they are not allowed on the property) walk through and even knocked over feeders which was caught on camera. Donna Merrill added that there is not adequate signage at this location some people may not know they are trespassing.

The committee agreed that Mike Russnok should call the three hunters at City Lake who did not harvest any deer to tell them that they may lose their permission to hunt this property. He added that this conservation may cost other hunters to leave the program due to bad feelings. However, the committee agreed that all hunters need to be on the same page as the committee for a successful season.

Steve White asked if the Town Forest could be opened next year for a short 2-week time-frame as there are many deer there. Donna Merrill stated that Wild Duck also has many deer. She offered to check on all town parks for their availability to hunt. Bradley Park was also noted as a possibility with lots of deer.

It was noted that the meeting with Howard Kilpatrick at the beginning of the season was very informative and well-received. Most hunters took advantage of the mechanical feeder recommendation and only hunters that have feeders should be allowed to take advantage of getting corn from the town. Some hunters were spreading the corn on the ground which is not preferred as other animals come and eat the corn. It was noted that this will be difficult to enforce as we do not know who has feeders. It was noted that the feeders are useless during acorn season. Mike Russnok indicated that all of the deer he got were near his feeders. The corn should be available earlier, such as September 1st as the deer take about two weeks to pattern.

Donna Merrill asked if the work that the committee completes is worth the 150 deer harvested in the town per the DEEP. Kevin Clark confirmed that the last flyover confirmed that the population has decreased from 61 to 42 per square mile. Steve White stated that this number is thought to be underreported (based on feedback provided to the Committee by Howard Kilpatrick last year).

Steve White confirmed that three new Land Trust Properties, of 6 – 8 acres each, were opened for hunting this year. The Culhane property was discussed as a new property that should be included for 2014 (access was given in January of this year).

The Diversion Parcel was noted as a challenge as there were hikers and downed trees. The water company owns this property and did not allow hunters to clear the area of debris to encourage deer movement and hunting.

Mike Russnok confirmed that Mike Conklin was noted on several surveys as being very helpful to hunters that check their deer at Town Hall.

- V. Mike Russnok made a motion to adjourn at 7:24 p.m., Seconded by Frank Mabley, and carried 5-0-0