

TOWNSHIP OF RADNOR

***Minutes of Public Safety Committee
Special Meeting of February 28, 2012
Deer Management Plan***

The Radnor Township Board of Commissioners met at approximately 7:00PM in the Radnor Memorial Library, Winsor Room, 114 West Wayne Avenue, Wayne, Pennsylvania 19087.

Commissioners Present:

*Elaine P. Schaefer, Chair
Donald Curley
James C. Higgins*

Also Present: *John C. Nagle, Board of Commissioners, Robert A. Zienkowski, Township Manager, William A. Colarulo, Police Superintendent, Christopher B. Flanagan, Sergeant, Joseph Pinto, Sergeant, William Gallagher, Ordinance Enforcement Officer, Mary Ann Donnelly, Administrative Assistant, Police Department.*

William A. Colarulo, Police Superintendent, addressed the need to reduce the deer population in inhabited areas as well as to minimize deer interactions and maximize public safety. Residents greatly appreciate the white-tailed deer, however; deer often cause problems for homeowners and can cause road hazards. If not properly managed, deer numbers can multiply dramatically which increases problems for people, habitat and impairs the conditions of the deer. The goal is to balance deer with their habitat, human land uses and recreational interests. Ecological concerns and the needs of homeowners/landowners and other groups must be considered. To date, no decision has been made and Township officials are looking to make a decision about wildlife control and would like input from the community.

Township Manager, Robert A. Zienkowski, asked the Police Department to perform a deer study. In 2011, there were 144 deer related incidents and 27 deer related incidents in January and February. The purpose of the deer study is to look at options to determine what works best for the Township.

William Gallagher, Ordinance Enforcement Officer, gave a PowerPoint presentation on a Deer Management Plan which addressed deer concerns in the Township. The Wildlife Society Bulletin (2006) state white-tailed deer caused more damage than any other species of wildlife. Deer over-population issues include public health and safety, various types of property damage, including the destruction of trees, shrubbery and plants, injury to the public, and traffic collisions. Among Deer related incidents in Radnor Township, Concord Township, and Thornbury Township, Radnor Township ranks the highest with 144 incidents in 2011.

Deer Management

Roadside reflectors and deer signage appear to have little long-term effect. Deer related accidents are increasing as both deer populations and vehicular travel increase. There are approximately one million traffic crashes per year, responsible for 200 vehicle fatalities and 10,000 serious injuries. These crashes produce at least \$1 billion in vehicle damage annually. In 2010, Penn Dot data states more than 3,000 crashes in Pennsylvania involving deer resulted in more than 600 injuries with 8 injuries resulting in fatalities. Based on Penn Dot data, licensed drivers have a 1 in 85 chance of striking a deer within the next 12 months. Penn Dot data also states that approximately half of all reportable crashes involving deer in the past five years occur in the month of October and November, 77% between 5pm and 7am. These numbers are rising every year as both the number of deer and the amount of motor vehicle travel continue to increase.

Lyme Disease

White-tailed deer serves as a host for the deer tick which is a carrier of Lyme disease and is transmitted to animals and man through the bite of an infected tick. Lyme disease has increased 25-fold since reporting began in 1982. In 2009, Lyme disease ranked 5th, becoming the most common nationally notifiable disease in the United States. In 2010, 94% of Lyme disease cases were reported from 12 states. Pennsylvania having the highest concentration in the south eastern part of the state. The Pennsylvania Department of Health reported over 4,000 confirmed cases in Pennsylvania in 2009.

Deer Management Options

No deer management is an alternative if natural factors (hunting, disease, famine, car accidents) maintain the deer population. Active management includes barriers, repellants, contraceptives, trap and transfer and lethal removal.

Barrier controls are an alternative, using fencing and netting. Options include tree shelters and deer enclosure fencing. These alternatives require frequent monitoring with high cost and maintenance requirements. Effective repellants require frequent applications, unpleasant odor, loud sounds, bright lights and are usually effective only in small areas (yards). Fencing or repellents will vary and what works for one area, may not work in another. These options are expensive and involve high maintenance. Contraceptives, using darting are prohibited by law in the state of Pennsylvania. The cost is \$1,000 per doe and can only be effective in small fenced in areas where deer can be controlled. The high cost for immunocontraceptives as well as the potential health risks of hormonal contraceptives. Track and Transfer is trapping or darting a deer and moving them from one location to another. This method requires a permit from the Pennsylvania Game Commission relocates deer to an alternate location and is the most expensive and ineffective deer control method. Survival rates of track and transfer is extremely low. Lethal Removal is the regulated hunting of deer by removing an estimated number of doe. Controlled hunting is the application of legal, regulated deer hunting methods in combination with more stringent controls or restrictions as dictated by elected officials. Controlled hunting results in lower deer harvest rates when compared to other deer control measures. Controlled hunting has been successful in many locations. All hunters will be screened and must have a history of ethical hunting practices. The selection of hunting method will depend upon number of deer and the potential for conflict. Currently, a controlled, recreational hunting program is the most practical deer management tool in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Haverford Township used Police Officers and their SWAT team and hunted the grounds of the old Haverford State Hospital and private residences in the area. Archery equipment was used. In 2010, 43 deer were culled as a result of the hunt, the following year, 21 were culled. Lower Merion Township Police Department acted as a liaison between licensed bow hunters and residents participated in hunting on private property in 1995. In 2008 the USDA conducted a study regarding the problem areas of deer density and where overpopulation exists. The data states that if the USDA establishes deer overpopulation, the USDA will develop a management plan for culling deer to satisfactory levels. The USDA culling methods includes trained, experienced sharpshooters, night vision optics, noise suppressed rifles, controlled baited areas with night time culling only between December through April, supplemented by archery hunters during September to January. In 2009, a total of 119 deer were culled during 10 days, removed 40 males and 79 females with a projected deer density reduction of 277. In 2010, there were two phases, one began on November 8, 2010 and an additional culling project began on December 18, 2010. Phase one, between November 8 and November 20 and phase two, five nights between December 13 and December 18. A total of 127 deer were culled, 86 female and 41 male. The female may have produced 172 fawns in the spring. The total deer density impact reduction in 2010 was 299 less in the township in the spring of 2011. Approximately 2,900 pounds of venison was donated to the City Ministries as a result of this project. Positive results were evident; deer density was very evident to the culling team. In 2010, the total cost for Lower Merion Township of this project was \$29,658 (budgeted \$35,000). The conclusion was a rapid reduction of deer density.

To keep the deer populations within limits, the township can continue as we have been, use resources, such as, Police Officers and hunters or establish a plan using outside hunting clubs or contract with the USDA to do an extensive study and formulate a program for township deer management.

Gino D'Angelo, Wildlife Biologist from the USDA, conducted three surveys on February 17, 18 and 21, 2012 which included a 26 mile survey route using infrared camera to identify deer, collecting deer density and impact data. They observed a total of 510 deer in 3 evenings of observation, observing 183 on February 17, 159 observed on February 18 and 168 observed on February 21, 2012. This is a total of an estimated 101 deer per square mile in Radnor Township. Deer populations are at their lowest during this time. Breeding occurs during November and December and young born during the month of June increases the population.

Public Comments

Commissioner Schaefer explained how the meeting would discuss options and solicit public/residents input on the deer problem in the Township. A total of 144 incidents occurred, most being auto crashes involving deer. Something must be done because the increase is alarming. The second highest complaints were from residents in Ward 4.

Commissioner J. Higgins explained that the safety of the residents is the primary concern. There are approximately 1300-1400 deer presently in Radnor; if nothing is done the populations will increase by 20-50% by June.

William Colarulo questioned whether we need approval of the USDA to move forward.

Gino D'Angelo commented that we must use established guidelines.

Resident explained that Radnor has a wonderful habitat for deer to thrive and there is a growing concern over Lyme disease, car accidents and plants disappearing because of the increasing deer population that is out of control. Clearly deer must be harvested to keep their populations under

control. Hunters would harvest deer and donate the venison to feed the homeless shelters which is a humane way to deal with the problem.

Resident commented that it has taken Radnor Township a long time to talk about culling the deer problem. To date, Radnor has done nothing.

William Colarulo explained that no decision would occur tonight and ultimately the decision is up to the Board of Commissioners.

Resident questioned if there is a committee in opposition of killing deer. Township is not considering humans as a problem, feeding the deer and public transport. Deer that are killed come back and the township has not dealt with the situation using natural cycles.

Resident commented that he would like to have an idea as to the Commissioner's timeline.

Commissioner Schaefer explained that there is a deer problem that we need to address and she will be meeting with other Commissioners regarding the growing deer overpopulation problem.

Commissioner Higgins questioned Lower Merion Township's codes for culling.

Gino D'Angelo stated that approximately \$50-\$75 per deer, 1st year impact study, overtime for Police Officers and logistical support, recreational hunters are usually not compensated. Sharpshooting includes costs.

Commissioner Higgins questioned if we are required to use USDA sharpshooters.

Gino D'Angelo confirmed that we could use USDA sharpshooters or another entity.

Commissioner Higgins questioned the cost of carrying/removal of carcasses.

Gino D'Angelo stated that part of deer processing fee was approximately \$50-\$95.

Commissioner Higgins questioned if a recreational program would be efficient.

Resident explained that he has lived on Larchwood Lane for 30 years and has counted 36 deer in backyard and agrees that something should be done about the deer problem.

Resident stated that he has seen 22 deer on his private property and the situation has intensified. Deer come onto his deck and he wants them eliminated. He hired a bow and arrow expert to eliminate deer on his property.

William Colarulo emphasized that any plan should be utilized with the most humane techniques as possible.

Genevieve Burns, Board of Health, stated that she is interested in discussing these issues further and look at additional options.

Resident was pleased to see the Board of Health present because Lyme disease has steadily increased in Radnor Township.

William Colarulo inquired about incidents on Lyme disease which are not available at this time and may be protected by law.

Robert Zienkowski directed Gino D'Angelo of the USDA Game Commission and Lee Hall of the Philadelphia Advocates for the Deer to submit their plans for creating a deer management plan for the township.

Commissioner Higgins questioned if an Impact Study was necessary.

Commissioner Schaefer thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Additional meetings will be scheduled in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Donnelly