

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

DATE: October 14, 2016

SUBJECT: Winter 2017 Deer Management Planning Efforts

REFERENCES: Damage and Nuisance Animal Control Permit, Michigan Department of Natural

Resources

Deer Management Plan – winter of 2016, Staff Report

PURPOSE: This memorandum provides an update and establishes expectations for the development of the City's upcoming Winter 2017 Deer Management Plan. Staff's intent with this plan is to be as inclusive and transparent as possible in the hope that a community supported plan is developed and implemented. Inclusiveness is being sought by actively engaging with self-organized citizen groups, both for and against last year's program, as well as reaching out to the Humane Society of Huron Valley to request its participation. Transparency is achieved by maintaining a dedicated page on the City's website (www.a2gov.org/deermanagement) which tracks the status of and development of the plan. Full consensus on a plan is unlikely and should not be expected; however, increased awareness and acceptance of the plan is desired.

BACKGROUND: On December 23, 2015, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) approved a Damage and Nuisance Animal Control Permit to the City of Ann Arbor to implement the lethal removal of up to 100 deer from within the City. The permit was sought in response to community and council discussion and subsequent planning which started in 2014 regarding the negative impact of deer in the community. The plan for Winter 2016 was implemented and the results and lessons learned were reported to Council. An open survey to residents indicated this was a divisive issue for the community as a whole. Consequently, looking forward to the remaining three years of deer management authorized by Council, staff anticipates implementing a number of strategies identified by Council, resident groups, and lessons learned. Some of these include:

- 1. Revise the implementation plan to include a lethal cull, a non-lethal (sterilization) plan (if practical and cost effective), and an educational component. In addition, a future plan will seek to reduce the amount of time parks are closed, while keeping safety of residents a priority.
- 2. Investigate opportunities for a best practice, non-lethal sterilization/contraception program which is practical and cost effective with support from MDNR, Research Universities, citizens, and contractors.

- 3. Expand the number of parcels of public land that can be utilized for a lethal cull program to achieve the targeted number of removals.
- 4. Incorporate resident participation in support of the varying strategies by working closely with the self-organized citizen groups.
- 5. Provide implementation plans to the community for reaction/feedback prior to actual implementation.
- 6. Develop and implement an educational program that increases awareness of the role of deer in the local ecology and offers residents' options to manage deer on their private property.

Staff members assigned to this project include Steve Schantz, Safety Manager, to act as lead on the lethal program, Derek Delacourt, Community Services Area Administrator, as lead on the non-lethal and educational programs, and Tom Crawford, Chief Financial Officer, as project coordinator.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: The goals for the Winter 2017 Plan are anticipated to be evaluated across several categories: lethal, non-lethal (sterilization), and educational and right-of-way improvements. A data collection plan and separate measures of success for these three areas have been developed in coordination with the citizen groups and are provided as Attachment 1 to this document.

IMPLEMENTATION: The successful implementation for the Winter 2017 deer management plan is dependent upon the execution of the following tasks:

- Develop a Data Collection Plan & Measures of Success for the winter 2017 program (targeted completion 10/14/2016): This task focuses on engaging with the citizen groups to determine what data to collect, collection method(s), and frequency. It also incorporates lessons learned and resident input into what the measures of success should be. Some measures are specific for the 2017 Plan while other measures will be collected to establish trends towards a level of success over time. The current framework for the Data Plan is provided as Attachment 2 to this memorandum.
- Seek Council Approval of a Vendor & Ordinance Change for Discharge of Weapons in Public Spaces (targeted completion 11/14/2016): Staff has solicited a proposal from White Buffalo, a qualified vendor, to determine whether a lethal and non-lethal (sterilization) program could be implemented together this winter. After obtaining the proposal and discussing with the citizen groups, a recommended vendor along with recommended changes to the City's ordinance related to discharging firearms in public places will be brought for Council consideration. The anticipated meeting for first reading is the Oct. 17th meeting. For clarification, the proposal that would come with the vendor recommendation is not the same as the implementation plan. The proposal is a higher level plan without specifics. The implementation plan would be developed along with the vendor after Council approval.
- Develop Implementation Plan and Obtain MDNR Permit (targeted completion 11/30/2016): The
 implementation plan would be developed in collaboration with the vendor, resident groups and
 staff. If consensus on the details of the plan is not possible, the City Administrator will be
 responsible for making the final recommendation. Staff desires to apply for an MDNR permit as
 soon as possible to allow as much time as possible to communicate with residents about the
 implementation plan.

- Communicate the Implementation Plan (targeted completion 12/31/2016): After receipt of the permit, staff will implement a communication plan with residents to maximize community awareness.
- Implement Plan (targeted start 1/1/2017): It is anticipated some preparatory activities would occur prior to 1/1/2017 with the lethal and non-lethal (sterilization) plans estimated to start at the beginning of the year.
- Develop and Implement an educational program for residents about deer (targeted distribution 3/15/2017): Since natural predators for deer do not exist locally, there will likely always be some number of deer in Ann Arbor, regardless of how many deer the city removes. Developing educational resources for residents is necessary to increase the community understanding of the role of deer in the local ecology. Earlier development is not practical given the need to focus resources on the lethal and non-lethal programs for the upcoming winter.
- Follow-Up Survey and Reporting (targeted start 4/30/2017): Upon completion of the program, all required data will be collected, a citizen survey performed, and a report to Council developed.

LOGISITICS: The funding for the Winter 2017 program has already been approved. Staff will have a budget for use of the funds developed prior to implementation, which will be shared with Council. If additional funding is being sought, it is anticipated to be required at contract approval. Some logistics of the implementation will not be shared beyond the vendor and staff until after execution of the plan is completed. This is being done to insure the program is implemented in as safe a manner as possible.

COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION: Tom Crawford is the primary point of contact for this action, and can be reached at 734-794-6110 x45100 or at tcrawford@a2gov.org. Mr. Crawford is supported by a number of other employees who will be focused on certain aspects of the plan.

2 Attachments

- 1 Deer Management Plan Objectives
- 2 Deer Management Data Plan

2017 Deer Management Plan – Objectives

PROBLEM:

- The number of deer is adversely impacting beyond the tolerance level of a portion of the City's residents, the bio-diversity and sustainability of plants/animals/insects in the City's natural areas.
- The number of deer is adversely impacting beyond the tolerance level of a portion of the City's residents, the residential and commercial gardens/landscaping on private land.
- The number of deer/vehicle accidents has increased over the past 5 years.
- Chronic wasting disease in deer is getting closer to Ann Arbor.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

Overall Program for 2017:

- Number of firearm related injuries associated with the deer management program is 0.
- Number of deer in Ann Arbor with chronic wasting disease is 0.
- Total number of deer/vehicle crashes and percent of vehicle crashes involving deer reported in the legal boundaries of the City of Ann Arbor does not increase.
- MDNR approval of a permit to the City for a non-lethal deer management program in 2017.
- Establish a baseline for measuring the vegetative impact of deer in the City's natural areas and establish ecological goal.
- Implement an education program that increases the community awareness of the role
 of deer in the local ecology and offers residents options to manage potential deer
 impacts on their private property.
- Community acceptance of herd impact when 75% of surveyed residents in a ward respond that damage to their landscape or garden plants is at an acceptable level on private lands. Recognizing there will be variability of this measure over time, a trend towards 75% is desired.
- Community acceptance of deer management program when 75% of surveyed residents in a ward respond that the City's strategy of managing the deer population is acceptable. Recognizing there will be variability of this measure over time, a trend towards 75% is desired.
- Investigate where deer signage is appropriate and implement where possible.

Non-Lethal (Sterilization) Program for 2017:

- MDNR approval of a permit to the City for a non-lethal deer management program in 2017.
- Number of firearm related injuries associated with non-lethal activities is 0.

- Number of deer sterilized is between 40 and 60. (goal obtained after discussion with proposed vendor.)
- Mortality rate associated with sterilization will be established during discussions with the selected vendor based upon best practices.
- Coordinate with University of Michigan to increase the number of available locations for the deer management program.

Lethal Program for 2017:

- Number of firearm related injuries associated with cull activities is 0.
- Number of deer removed is 100 (goal established from conversation with proposed vendor).
- Acceptable level of park closures in survey (Citizen survey).
- Coordinate with University of Michigan to increase the number of available locations for the deer management program.

Educational Program & Public Right-of-Way Improvements:

- Review the City's "Fencing" ordinance for areas that could be modified to assist residents with deer management efforts.
- Develop an educational program for residents by March 15, 2017.
- Publicize educational program by April 30, 2017.
- Identify desired locations for deer signage in the right-of-way.

Data Plan

Background:

In 2015 City Council directed staff to implement a deer management plan over the following four years. The first year was implemented in January-February 2016. In May 2016, City Council directed staff to provide a data collection plan. This document was prepared to respond to this request.

It's worth noting that when staff talked with deer experts, there is not a specific number of deer or number of deer/square mile that is appropriate as a community objective. The experts recommend the deer level be managed based on social tolerance and the impact of deer to natural areas in a particular community. The following data plan establishes measures that can be used to monitor and evaluate Ann Arbor's deer management program. Modifications to this plan may occur as more local experience is obtained.

This data plan was prepared to collect the data necessary to estimate the City's herd size and measure important outcomes from the annual deer management plans. It will take 3-5 years of collecting this data before the herd size estimates can be calibrated and the appropriate long-term objectives determined.

Measures to be gathered:

Safety

1. Number of firearm related injuries associated with the deer management program

Method: Reports from police

Frequency: Annual

Lead: Police

Vegetation Impact

2. Public Land - baseline & on-going damage measure of natural plant communities

Method: In field assessment of vegetative growth

Frequency: Annual

Lead: Ecologist (presently consultant)

3. Private Land – residential perceived impact of damage to natural plant communities and landscaping plants

Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by ward

Frequency: Annual

Lead: Communications Office

Deer/Human accidents

4. Total crash reports involving deer & percent of vehicle accidents involving deer within the City's legal boundaries

Method: Police/MSP reports of deer involved crashes

Frequency: Quarterly

Lead: Police

Deer Nuisance (droppings, behavior, etc)

5. Deer Nuisance complaints (professional guidance required for wording of question)

Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by ward

Frequency: Annual

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Lead: Communications Office

Herd Size Trend (estimated) & Health

6. Carcass removal

Method: Carcass removal requests performed by City vendor

Frequency: Quarterly

Lead: Police

7. Existing herd size trend

Method: Over time, estimate herd size trend with helicopter survey (or other method) in combination

with Herd Health statistics

Frequency: Annual Lead: Safety Office

8. Number deer removed

Method: Reports from contractors

Frequency: Annual Lead: Safety Office

9. Mortality rate associated with non-lethal (sterilization)

Method: Reports from contractors

Frequency: Annual **Lead**: Safety Office

10. Assess physical condition of removed or darted deer (weight & age [based on teeth pattern])

Method: Inspection by City contractor

Frequency: Annual Lead: Safety Office

11. Herd composition – to help estimate herd growth rate by measuring adult sex ratio and doe vs fawn ratio.

Method: Spotlighting Frequency: Annual Lead: Contractor

12. Test for Chronic Wasting Disease

Method: Lab Test Frequency: On-going

Lead: MDNR for any deer carcass removed

Community Acceptance

13. Implementation plan

Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by Ward asking about acceptability of City's method of deer

management (includes acceptable level of time parks are closed)

Frequency: Annual

Lead: Communications Office

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14. Awareness of deer educational materials

Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by Ward asking about awareness educational materials

Frequency: Annual

Lead: Communications Office

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