

**Fairfield County Deer Management Alliance**

**Meeting dated December 10, 2012**

**Wilton Town Hall**

**Minutes**

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**In attendance:**

Erin McKenna, Stamford

Colin Kelly, Westport

Dave Shugarts, Newtown

Laurie and Tom McGrath, Darien

**Observers:**

Peter Knight, Westport

Peter Hood, Fairfield

**Welcome.** In the absence of David Streit, Erin McKenna presided and opened the meeting at 10.30 a.m. She asked Peter Knight to keep the Minutes.

**Approval of Minutes.** The Minutes of the September 10, 2012 meeting, having been circulated previously, were approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's report** In the absence of Treasurer Pat Sesto, no report was submitted.

Dave Shugarts informed those present that the annual membership fee for municipalities was \$250, and Colin Kelly advised that it was normally collectable at year-end. The Alliance currently holds about \$3,000 that is available for future projects.

**Town reports**

**Darien.** The McGrath's noted that no change of significance had occurred. Hunting is limited to private property. About 15% of the Town's acreage is public land, but this is not being hunted. Laurie drew the meeting's attention to an excellent article published recently in the New York Times on the deer issue and recommended it be read.

**Newtown.** Dave Shugarts noted that the "Be Safe Redding" initiative, spearheaded by David Streit, had been quite successful – the aim being to introduce properly licensed and active hunters to landowners who wanted the numbers of deer on their property contained. A similar program is under way as "Be Safe Newtown". The program depends on the active involvement of individuals willing to spread the word and knock on doors. The reception was almost universally positive, and David estimated that 60-70% of Town residents favored a management program.

**Stamford.** Erin McKenna reported that the Town's Director of Public Health, Safety and Welfare was open to the introduction of a management program. The attendance at the last Alliance meeting of a representative from the police department had been encouraging. However, as yet the Town had not taken the issue forward.

**Westport** – Colin Kelly said that he had made several attempts to contact the Deer Committee Chair, Susan Pike, but without success. He invited Peter Knight, a committee member, to inform about the committee's progress. After a year (2011) of meetings under the auspices of the RTM, Westport's First Selectman had formed a committee to address the conclusion by the RTM that the Town was host to too many deer. A further year (2012) had gone by and the committee had progressed on a number of fronts – most specifically to pursue the program of contraception promoted by Dr. Alan Rutburg of Tufts University and using the vaccine PZP that was administered to does by dart. In the context of the Town's "No Hunting" ordinance, this approach was favored by the majority of the committee (but not Peter who felt that a lethal solution was the only one that could produce meaningful results). The second major recommendation by the committee was to contract with a commercial enterprise, Vision Air of Boise, Idaho, to conduct a Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) survey to establish a count of Westport's deer population. The cost of this (\$6,100) was subsequently approved by the Town's Finance Committee.

**Other matters.** David Shugarts, in discussing the FLIR program, noted that the results at Shelter Island were so inconsistent that the residents refused to renew the fly over contract. In regard to the PZP program, Dave pointed out that this had only been successful in highly concentrated areas where the deer were easily approachable. Its success in a town such as Westport was more doubtful. He recommends spot light sampling. He also said that the State does daylight aerial surveying when there is snow cover for Fairfield County, but not individual municipalities – although Ridgefield has done one, and he wondered if the State assisted them or not.

It was noted also that the CAGS under the leadership of Kirby Stafford would conduct a 3-year study in Redding, partially subsidized by a grant from the CDC. The study, over relatively small test areas, would include the effectiveness of bait boxes, tick sprays, sharp shooting, hunting and an area that would be left untouched.

#### **Future meetings and Plans.**

Erin noted that David Streit had indicated his wish to step down from the presidency and there is a need therefore to look for a successor. Attendance at the meetings has dwindled, and we need to revitalize the Alliance's efforts. Specifically, if a representative could not attend, he/she should find a substitute.

Laurie reiterated that recruiting municipalities to join the FCDMA is very important. Collin suggested that we note which municipalities pay their dues but do not attend the meetings, and try to get them to send a representative.

Future quarterly 2013 meetings would be held on the following dates:

March 11, June 10, September 9 and December 9.

There being no further business, on motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Peter Knight



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