

Fairfield County Deer Management Alliance

Meeting dated June 9, 2014

Wilton Town Hall

Minutes

In attendance:

David Streit, President, Redding

Russell Cornelius, Brookfield

Tom McGrath, Darien

Laurie McGrath, Darien

Dave Shugarts, Newtown

Teresa Gallagher, Shelton

Colin Kelly, Westport

Patricia Sesto, Wilton

Observers:

Peter Knight, Westport

Peter Hood, Fairfield

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The meeting was opened at 10.30 a.m. by David Streit, President.

Approval of Minutes. The Minutes of the meeting of March 10, 2014 , having been circulated previously were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's report. Pat Sesto reported that there had been no change since the previous report. David Streit noted that Matt Palermo had continued to maintain the Association's website on a pro bono basis. David suggested that a token recognition of appreciation might be appropriate. There was general agreement that \$30-50/month for maintaining our website would be appropriate.

Press release. David Streit had asked for contributions for a press release to mark the Association's 10th anniversary. Pat Sesto had prepared a draft and comments were invited to be sent to Pat no later than Wednesday, June 11.

Discussion. David Streit asked if anyone had heard of high rates or Lyme disease in areas without high deer densities. None had. David Shugarts confirmed that the potentially fatal "Lyme carditis" resulted from undetected heart inflammation caused by **the disease**.

Town reports:**Darien.**

Laurie McGrath reported that, in an effort to raise awareness, she had been in touch with the Town library with little response or interest. More positively, Darien had formed a "Green Team" consisting of 22 organizations oriented towards improving the environment in areas such as recycling, tree conservancy etc. Both Tom and Laurie sit on the committee, representing the informally sanctioned Deer Committee. The Team is very supportive of all efforts to manage the deer herd. Laurie mentioned that in previous years, deer hunting had been allowed on public land but that had been halted after opposition by Friends of Animals. As a result, parts of public lands had been decimated. Moving forward, Laurie and the Green Team Chairman will meet with the local papers to try to establish a regular column, with each member of the Green Team being assigned dates for an article. Laurie commented on the excellent Wilton website that provided FAQs on hunting and also on how to communicate with hunters. Pat Sesto invited her to access the website and use it freely.

Brookfield. Russ Cornelius continued to promote the documentary "Under Our Skin" whenever possible. He had an appointment scheduled to meet with the Brookfield First Selectman to continue discussions on the deer issue.

Ridgefield. Pat Sesto reported that the Town's Lyme Disease committee did not deal with deer issues. It was hard to get accurate numbers for hunting results. The feeling was that herd sizes were lower and they had taken properties off the list of those to be hunted.

Newtown. Dave Shugarts said that the "Be Safe Newtown" project was going well. Resources were available for education and disease prevention but a program had not yet been launched.

Redding. David Streit remarked on the incongruity of having hunters aligned with PETA in opposition to deer management strategies. Under the ongoing Redding study, 25 deer had been taken by White Buffalo vs. 51 the previous year. Hunters did everything they could to disrupt the study and prevent more deer from being removed.

Wilton. Consideration was being given to a 2014 sharpshoot, possibly training the existing cadre of hunters to participate. However, there were many problems such as the cost of using night vision equipment and the training that would be required. The Be Safe Wilton program had been successful but there was always a problem of lining up properties with hunters – good communication between the two being the most difficult to establish. The Town's harvest target was 165 and they were generally stuck at that level. Pat was trying to promote the use of mechanical bait traps, the use of which Howard Kilpatrick of the DEEP had been very willing to demonstrate.

Shelton. Teresa Gallagher reported that, after a 20 year campaign, a deer committee had finally been formed. Public interest was still generally low but the aim was to start slow and also to develop good press communications. They had also to dispel misinformation such as that White Buffalo had been contracted for a cull (false).

Westport. Colin Kelly reported that the 2013 report of the deer committee remained with the (relatively) newly elected First Selectman. It called for the formation of an Implementation Committee and this had yet to be initiated. Colin suggested that access to the report be added to the Alliance website. Peter Knight said that he had not been in agreement with the conclusion of the report that favored contraception as a means to control the herd. He had resigned from the committee and felt that the conclusion indicated the need for further public education on the subject.

Other. On a positive note, David Streit noted that the reduced number of deer that threatened his property had allowed his wife to raise flowers and vegetables and they had noted the return of certain welcome native plant species. Russ Cornelius was also pleased to note that his tulips had survived this Spring.

Conclusion. David Streit called for more active participation in the Alliance. Certain towns had fallen out or stopped sending a representative to meetings. There was a need to involve the towns' political leaders. The following initiatives would be pursued:

Darien – talk to First Selectman

Efforts would be made to bring in other towns – Bethel (Dave Shugarts) – Danbury (David Streit), – New Canaan/Greenwich (David Streit or Pat Sesto), Fairfield – (Colin Kelly)

David Streit asked for any comments from the public. There being none a motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 12.05 p.m.

Peter Knight