

**Fairfield County Deer Management Alliance
Meeting dated December 8, 2014
Wilton Town Hall
Minutes**

In attendance:

David Streit, President, Redding
Laurie McGrath, Darien
David McConnaughey, New Canaan
Dave Shugarts, Newtown
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 September 8, 2014 , having been circulated previously, were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's report.

Pat Sesto confirmed that the balance of the Alliance account was \$5,767.95 and that collection of town dues continued to be deferred. She checked the Association PO Box periodically.

Town reports:

Darien.

David Streit welcomed David McConnaughey who had moved to Darien from New York two years ago. He and his wife were keen outdoors people and David McC. had recently joined Darien's deer committee. Deer management was handled by the Town's Animal Control department. Hunters and appropriate property that included the New Canaan Land Trust, the Aquarion property and New Canaan Country Club were identified.

Pat Sesto, as a point of information, mentioned that Ridgefield allowed hunting on the Town's public golf course. And from September 15 to the end of January, Connecticut allowed an unlimited number of antlerless deer to be taken.

In response to the general question on deer numbers, David Streit observed that coyotes were remarkably adept at taking 3-week old fawns. The latest DEEP survey indicated that Fairfield County deer numbers were down.

Wilton

Pat Sesto described the background to Wilton's hunting program that focused on controlled hunts on Water Company land, Town and Land Trust open spaces. Wilton has also adopted a "Be Safe" program that matched hunters to private properties. Bow and arrow, muzzle loader, cross bow and rifle were permitted – the last requiring 10 acres as a minimum area – the others 500 feet from residences.

Redding

David Streit reiterated his previous observation that hunters were the biggest adversaries to deer control in Redding as they had seen the numbers of their quarries significantly reduced. David Shugarts reminded the meeting that the DEEP was conducting a study in Redding that was focusing, in a very limited area, on sharp shooter deer reduction, tick control with spray (a fungus) and mouse bait boxes.

Newtown.

Dave Shugarts observed that a "Be Safe" initiative had resulted in a 60% positive response from randomly selected households. He noted that these varied from ¼ acre lots to large estates. There were plenty of properties and the deer count was probably down.

In general conversation, and commenting on the safety issue, it was noted that, since deer hunting was approved at the State level in 1973, there had been no injuries suffered by innocent bystanders. The only cases of accidents were of hunters falling out of tree stands or a case of poachers shooting across a road.

Darien.

Laurie McGrath participated with a group known as the "Green Team" that coordinated efforts made by the Land Trust, Audubon and friends of various environmental interests. Their current focus was to produce an article for the local newspapers every two weeks or so that kept, directly or indirectly, the issue of deer predation in front of readers. An example was a recent article entitled "Where have all the birds gone?" David Streit congratulated her and suggested that, if the articles were not purely local, the text could be shared with other towns and submitted to other town papers.

Westport

Peter Knight recounted his experience with the 2011 petition to change the no hunting ordinance in Westport and the resulting deer committee report (with which he was not in agreement) that proposed contraception as the recommended approach to control the population. The report had gone nowhere. David Shugarts described the background to the contraception idea that had been promoted by Dr. Alan Rutberg over many years and, apart from very extraordinary, isolated sites, had not been successful anywhere. Its appeal was based on the fact that it was non-lethal and therefore did not offend the sensibilities of those that felt the deer were to be protected against man and not vice versa. The only deer control agents in Westport continued to be motor vehicles and coyotes – at least officially.

General

On the issue of sharpshooters, David Shugarts noted that the firm, White Buffalo and its leader Dr. Anthony DeNicola, were very experienced and very highly regarded. They had operated for many years and in many locations. As sharp shooters, they were highly accurate and brought down their target with precise shots to the head. They had also participated in contraceptive and sterilization programs. They were not "hunters" but the embodiment of responsible wildlife management. Dave also observed that the reporting of Lyme disease had been distorted by changing State requirements. David McConnaughey noted that, because the difficulty of clear diagnosis resulted in many false positives and negatives. Doctors tended to prescribe the antibiotic doxycycline if there were a possibility of infection. This did not result necessarily in the need to report. Doxy was normally effective if taken in time.

Meeting dates for 2015

March 9th

June 8th

September 14th

December 14th

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 12.05 p.m.

Peter Knight