

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
CITY OF TOWN AND COUNTRY
JANUARY 18, 2023
SPECIAL WORK SESSION**

The Board of Aldermen Special Work Session was held at 10:00 AM on January 18, 2023 at the Municipal Center

ROLL CALL

The 10:13 AM roll call indicated Aldermen Even, Francisco, Holman, Hughes, and Wiesehan to be present. Aldermen Allen, Mortland and Parrotte were absent.

Mayor Rehm presided.

DISCUSSION – DEER MANAGEMENT

City Administrator Bob Shelton recognized Erin Shank with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and Ryan Rodts with White Buffalo to be present to discuss non-lethal deer management methods and answer general questions related to the City's deer management program.

Mr. Shelton introduced Erin Shank. He noted that Ms. Shank is an Urban Wildlife Biologist with MDC and holds her master's degree in Wildlife Conservation. Ms. Shank has been with MDC for over 20 years.

Ms. Shank expressed how much she values her relationship with Town and Country and noted that she has been involved in the City's deer management efforts since its inception with the Deer Task Force. She described the changes that municipalities and St. Louis County have seen over the years, including changes to allow the harvesting of deer, managed hunts, and archery hunting.

Mayor Rehm inquired as to what is considered a normal range of deer density and where the City falls in that range. Ms. Shank explained that there are three categories to measure density; carrying capacity, social carrying capacity, and biological carrying capacity. With regard to carrying capacity, density is measured relative to how many deer a given landscape can hold before a threshold is met or detrimental effects begin on the community (decrease in oak trees, flowering plants, or anything that could create a domino effect on other economic factors). For social carrying capacity, density is measured based on when the deer become a nuisance or cause an increase in deer/vehicle collisions. Ms. Shank explained that biological carrying capacity is relative to starvation and disease and no cases have been reported in Missouri since the 70's. In response to questioning, Ms. Shank explained that Town and Country should expect 25 deer per square mile as a "normal" density range, but the number can fluctuate due to differing factors and it is ultimately based on what is tolerable and manageable for any given community.

In response to questions regarding disease and Chronic Waste Disease, Ms. Shank explained that State of Missouri has been investing more effort to control the spread of Chronic Waste Disease compared to other states. She stated the spread has decreased but MDC still sees new cases yearly, particularly in Franklin County and southern Jefferson County.

Mayor Rehm inquired about non-lethal methods of deer management. In response, Ms. Shank described the City's history with non-lethal methods including sterilization efforts in 2009-2010. She noted that sterilization is currently the only fertility control method that is effective in a free ranging population, however, it is very time consuming due to the steps that are required before, during and after treatment. She stated that MDC reviewed a more recent request for sterilization but will not explore that option unless other information or research angles are provided. Ms. Shank explained that 90% of does would require treatment to remain effective in overall population control and maintaining and monitoring that amount is not an achievable goal.

Alderman Hughes inquired about how the population is calculated and if it is the same throughout all communities. Ms. Shank described distance sampling to be the most effective way of calculating population and that is used throughout similar suburban communities.

Alderman Wiesehan inquired about the feasibility of reducing the current population from 25 deer/square mile to 10 deer/square mile. Ms. Shank explained that continued management will always be required to maintain any specific number but one year of increased effort would not decrease the population long-term.

In response to questioning relating to the managed hunt at Queeny Park, Ms. Shank explained that Queeny has been a refuge for a large part of the deer population on the City's south side, and noted that female deer typically stay in one place compared to male deer who tend to move farther.

Alderman Holman inquired about archery hunting and what MDC sees other municipalities doing. Ms. Shank stated that she has worked with other municipalities to allow archery on private property, but complications are introduced with that method and specific processes need to be in place to allow for safe access and hunting.

Alderman Hughes questioned why the acreage requirement for managed hunts has decreased. Mr. Shelton explained that certain areas that were previously used have been developed, and with the knowledge that has been acquired on how adaptable deer are to their surroundings and their lack of movement, the requirement for larger acreage became ineffective for significant control.

Alderman Francisco inquired about the steps needed for an archery hunt. Ms. Shank explained that once the hunter acquires a permit, tags must be purchased, and the hunter must have written permission from the landowner to conduct a hunt. Other requirements that may be in place by the specific municipality (tree stands, notification to neighbors, etc.) must be checked off as well before the hunt can take place.

Alderman Hughes questioned MDC's position on non-lethal control and how suitable Town and Country would be. Ms. Shank explained that there are no non-lethal methods in place currently that MDC believes are effective in communities like Town and Country. She stated that if those methods would ever present themselves, MDC would research and consider based on the needs of the community. She reiterated that sterilization is not effective for continued population maintenance, but MDC would consider any future technology or methods.

Mr. Shelton introduced Ryan Rodts with White Buffalo. He stated that Mr. Rodts is a Senior Wildlife Biologist with White Buffalo and has been with the company since 1998. Mr. Rodts holds a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Science which was acquired from Purdue University in 1997.

Mr. Rodts gave a background on White Buffalo and what their non-profit company does. He explained that when he started working with Town and Country, deer density was at 75/square mile and that number has decreased to 25/square mile. He noted that feedback shows the community no longer sees deer as a nuisance and residents are happy with the results.

With regard to archery hunting, Mr. Rodts explained that in communities who utilize this, only 1/3 of the population is effectively controlled and deer begin to learn that humans are predators, which leads to difficulties when performing sharp shooting efforts. He described non-lethal efforts utilized in other states but noted that those efforts still require extensive prep work and follow up and 90% of does would need sterilization to see any decline in population.

Alderman Even inquired about the sterilization process and how the deer are tagged. Mr. Rodts explained that the sterilization process is done in a temporary surgery site built either in a garage structure or trailer and takes about 10 minutes per deer. He noted that the process must be completed at a specific time in a doe's pregnancy to ensure efficacy.

He stated that most states require the animal to be labeled/tagged. In response to questioning, Mr. Rodts stated the average cost of sterilization is between \$1,000-\$1,500 per deer but can fluctuate depending on the method of tagging.

Utilizing a graph, Mr. Rodts demonstrated the population fluctuations before, during and after archery hunts were implemented in the City of Ladue. He reiterated that deer begin to recognize humans as predators making other management efforts harder to maintain.

Alderman Wiesehan asked if archery hunting could be supplemental to sharp shooting. Mr. Rodts explained that it could in certain scenarios but would not be a lasting effort. Some communities with a higher density could see a decline in population but supplementing in Town and Country would not be effective.

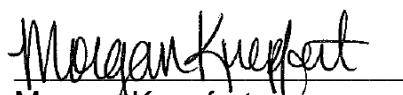
Mr. Rodts spoke to the acreage requirements and described the regulations the State has on top of what the individual communities require. He explained that in Town and Country, the requirement started off higher but has since been lowered as safe locations have been established and the community has become more comfortable with the efforts.

In response to inquiry, Mr. Shelton explained that of the 50 deer taken in Town and Country for the 2023 program, MDC authorized up to 20 of those to be donated to the Zoo for a red wolf program and the remainder to be donated to a food bank. MDC requires that all deer taken be donated or utilized unless disease is suspected.

Mayor Rehm thanked Erin Shank and Ryan Rodts for their time.

ADJOURN

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:11 AM.



Morgan Kuepfert

Communications/Administrative Assistant.