

MEETING MINUTES

DEER COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2015

6:30 P.M. – GALENA CITY HALL, 101 GREEN STREET

1. Call meeting to order - The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. with the following individuals in attendance: John Cox (Chairperson), Beth Baranski, Carmen Ferguson, and Kirk Foecking. Mary Hartman was absent.
2. Approve agenda action – A motion to approve the agenda was made by Carmen and seconded by Beth. The motion carried.
3. Presentation of and discussion by committee with Joe Mattingly - Joe Mattingly, Galena Territory Property Owners Association (GTA) CEO opened the presentation stating that the deer management program in the Galena Territory has been a good and safe program over the years, and has resulted in healthy deer.

Dave Oldenburg, GTA Director of Architectural Compliance, explained that the resort developer, Branigar, banned hunting in the Territory when it was started in the 1970s. In 1988, the association board started to look at management options in response to increased vehicular accidents, complaints about private property damage, and devastation of forest floor plants. The issue was studied for two years, and Doug Dufford (then DNR Wildlife Biologist) helped with property owner education. They tried to count the deer using volunteers in vehicles, but this was unsuccessful. They then went to an aerial count from a helicopter, and found they had about 100 deer/square mile in the 10-square-mile area of the resort. The goal was to have 10-20 deer per square mile. 600 deer were culled the first year. Safety was the priority when considering culling methods, and the use of a rifle was selected because of its accuracy, range and the fact that it's not as loud as a shotgun.

Emily Lubke, GTA Natural Resources Manager, oversees the program and handles communication with the DNR and property owners. She emphasized that ongoing educational efforts are extremely important. In 2012 a comprehensive review of the program was undertaken. Increased bow & arrow hunting (like at Apple Canyon Lake) and reproductive controls (counter-gestation, surgical sterilization, contraceptives) were considered, but it was felt that rifle sharpshooting was still the best approach. They reviewed the type of rifle and the caliber being used, and made no changes. They decided they needed to have more communication with property owners. The sharpshooter is now more visible, wearing an orange vest and having a flashing strobe light on the vehicle. Shooting is done only in pre-approved zones. Property owners are asked for permission to shoot on their property and to access their property to pick up dead deer. They have basically maintained the same program since 1991. They considered culling only every other year, but believe it is better to maintain a consistent program because the

population can increase dramatically in one year, and then they would be trying to catch up, which is more difficult. After the initial large culling efforts, the culls fluctuated dramatically and it was hard to budget. They talked to the DNR about trying to even it out, and they now have an annual permit to cull 100 deer. They take into consideration other information and cull up to 100 deer. They cull between 50 and 100 annually. They have done this for the past 5 years, and it seems to be working well. They conduct an annual helicopter count in January or February when there is at least 4" of snow on the ground, with a DNR biologist and GTA representative in the helicopter along with the pilot. The count gives an estimate of the *minimum* population (the deer hide, bed down, etc., and are not all counted as a result), and the count is used only as a guide for control efforts. Now they sometimes do the count in the middle of the culling, and simply add the culled deer to the population total. In determining the number of deer to be culled each year, they consider the program objectives: Maintain the number of deer/vehicle accidents at less than 20 per year, Maintain deer browsing of native plants at less than 20%, Maintain deer damage to ornamental plantings such that 75% of residents are satisfied, Promote an understanding of the need for management in the community, and Continue to monitor and reduce the herd as needed to achieve approximately 20 deer per square mile. Regular resident surveys are conducted to evaluate resident satisfaction. They did Kisner tests (measurement of the body fat as an indicator of nutritional health) on the deer at the start and found they had a score of 25 (out of 100), which is very malnourished. Culling has resulted in higher Kisner scores and it was determined in 2007 that they no longer needed to do the test. They continue to educate people about not feeding the deer or putting out salt licks. If they learn that someone is doing this, they have let them know its illegal and that they can be fined up to \$75 by the DNR. They have not had to fine anyone. Ongoing education is very important, especially with the high turnover of the population. There is concern that they will lose shooting zones as the Territory is built up. Every 3 years they do a browse study of the woodland areas counting stems and twigs eaten by the deer. They have seen a good rebound of the understory plants and regeneration of the oak forest. They have a twelve-foot exclosure area in a transect area in which they can see an increase in shrub species, and they use this as a reference when evaluating other areas that are being browsed by the deer. Emily will send the committee deer browsing information. The DNR identified the shooting zones. They looked at the cover density and selected areas with adjacent open areas safe for shooting. They avoid rental areas. The venison is donated to the local food pantries. Shooting zones have contracted with development – there were 1000 homes in 1991 and now there are 2200. They have to continually evaluate because areas change. 25% of Emily's time is spent on communication. As currently being operated, the program cost is \$150 per deer culled. Emily will provide the committee with a breakdown of the costs.

Steve Birkbeck, Lake and Marina Manager is the trained sharpshooter who does the actual culling. There is a benefit to having someone who knows the area well (and knows where the green space boundaries are) doing the shooting. The deer are transient. They leave the Territory in the fall when the farmers are harvesting, and then when field food is no longer available they come into the Territory. They tend to concentrate in the core areas where food is easily available. The established deer paths remain the same over time. Does will travel a ¼ mile area, while the bucks will travel a 10-15 mile area. He only culls Tuesday through Thursday to avoid the increase in the number of people in the Territory on weekends. The culled deer are tested for blue tongue and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and the Territory is a good data source for the state. The rifle projectile can travel 2 miles. He only shoots when he has an adequate backdrop with no obstructions. 90% of bullets stop in the deer. The bullets don't ricochet, but shatter upon impact. Last year, he culled 75 deer with 77 shots. Two of the shots entered and exited the deer without creating lethal damage and required a second shot. Bow and arrow would be more time consuming and would result in deer not being killed, but wandering wounded.

Rich Mattas, property owner, was involved in the deer management program in the early 1990s as the chair of the Greenspace Committee which evolved from the Deer Committee. The Territory has 1500 permanent acres of green space. He believes there are basic steps to take: 1) Establish goals of a deer management program to address a. the health & safety of people in the area, b. the health of the deer, and c. the health of the environment. 2) Determine how many deer there are, 3) If necessary, adopt a deer population control program, and 4) Maintain an ongoing education program.

4. Comments from citizens

Bill Grosshans (418 Harrison St.) – Would like to see a breakdown of the Galena Territory's costs for the management program. Says that Police Chief Lori Huntington says there has been an average of 4 deer-related vehicular accidents per year since 2007. He asks that the City put on their agenda an item for action to dedicate funds for an aerial count now, because of concerns about the time it would take to put the service out to bid, etc.

Anna Hemm (226 S. High St.) – Says that at LinMar Gardens, they saw 15 deer in the past, but saw no more than 8 this year. Her yard used to have 9-10 deer, but this year she saw only one doe with 3 fawns. The deer are only a problem because they are bothering gardens. People need to protect their gardens.

Diana Mask (Division & Clinton) – She has deer in her yard in the morning. They're not afraid of people. She loves them, but has had to cage the plants in her yard because they eat everything. This year they ate her lilacs which they hadn't eaten

before. They have to be controlled. She has replaced some shrubs with a deer resistant variety, and so far that is working.

Tim Wedward (535 S. High St.) – If we're concerned with deer health, we should count the deer. If we're concerned about the deer because they're a nuisance, then we don't need to count them.

5. Committee comments and discussion on the issue of whether or not “we have a problem of too many deer in the city limits of Galena” – John is obtaining cost estimates for doing a helicopter count at the same time the GTA does theirs. Given the City process and budget, it may not be able to participate in the aerial count this coming February/March. There was a discussion about the possibility of collecting donations to have the count done this Feb./Mar. John asked each committee member if they agreed with Rich Mattas's assessment of the issues that need to be considered, namely: 1) the health & safety of people in the area, 2) the health of the deer, and 3) the health of the environment. All of the committee members agreed that these were the pertinent issues.
6. Discussion by committee members of the proposed agenda for December meeting related to the continued discussion regarding whether or not we have a problem with too many deer in our community – The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 16th. Representatives will present on the deer management program at Apple Canyon Lake Resort.
7. Comments by chair on how proceeding with discussion of issue of too many deer – John had no additional comments.
8. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.