

MINUTES WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WMAC)  
August 20, 2019

At 9:05 AM the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee met at Borough Hall. Those attending were committee members Juetta, Chairman, Canellis, Michaelis, Miller, Rubino, and Wellbrock. Visitors included Marilyn Goldstein and Ray Barrett.

The committee agreed several meetings ago that this committee waives the format of Roberts' Rules of Order at all future meetings and will conduct itself on an informal basis.

The minutes of the prior meeting of June 5, 2019 was unanimously approved by the committee members.

The chairman reminded the committee of its purpose by reading Watchung 2-44.1

Purpose and Intent. The Mayor and Council of the Borough of Watchung find that there exists an unchecked increase in the population of deer and geese within the Borough and that the unchecked population of deer and geese often results in excessive damage to property and an increase in the frequency of motor vehicle accidents, and that there exists the potential for an increased incidence of Lyme and other diseases and personal injury from wildlife and vehicle collisions. Therefore, it is in the best interests of the people of the Borough of Watchung to adopt measures targeted at controlling the wildlife population of the Borough through safe and effective means. (Ord. No. 04/21)

Chairman Juetta sought the approval of the committee to accept the two (2) third party surveys which each reported the Watchung deer population of in excess of 100 per square mile. Mr. Miller stated that the surveys were inaccurate and stated that within the Stewart Green report a photograph appeared to present as deer inflexible objects. The chairman pointed out that the reference to a certain photograph was not the one in the final report. Mr. Miller had not seen the picture which was presented at the meeting but would not retract his position stating that he wished to investigate further. Committee member Michaelis presented a discourse on the accuracy of infrared technology regarding investigation applications. He affirmed that infrared technology is regarded as capable of distinguishing various animals as well as inanimate heated objects and stated further that he was satisfied with the Stewart Green methodology and the use of a drone.

It was noted by Committee Member Cannellis that the Green engagement was initiated in response to community activists who seek to eliminate any culling program and who denied the deer conclusion of the Jay F. Kelly Report.

Much intense discussion followed. However, it was unanimously agreed that this committee should officially submit to Borough Council the Steward Green report and the Jay F. Kelly report. Committee member Miller in supporting this resolution reserved the position of not agreeing on the methodology or reported results.

After much discussion, no committee member took the position that Watchung does not have a deer density problem. Committee member Michaelis, in supporting the conclusion of the two surveys to be submitted to Council, presented to the committee a schedule which depicted the deer population per square mile in half a dozen other communities, most of which were contiguous to Watchung which depicted density levels equal to or higher than Watchung per square mile.

Mr. Miller later in the meeting expressed his concern over what he anticipates this committee's recommendation to Borough Council will be regarding the deer over population. He suspects that the recommendation report to come, will, in part, recommend the use of cross bows. He went on to argue that if the deer figures are accurate within the Kelly and Green reports, the many years of prior culling activities represent deer population control failure and has urged this committee to endorse his recommendation that Watchung consider non-lethal methods of control.

He does not deny that not only is the non-lethal array of options costly but also is a matter of limited geographical area success. Regardless, committee member Miller is of the opinion that Council should familiarize itself with various non-lethal deer management options and, if need be, is willing personally to fund such presentations. Committee member Miller will develop a recommendation proposal that will permit the Council to gain the knowledge about non-lethal deer management and the related cost.

Committee members Michaelis and Wellbrock agreed to create a draft of this committee's recommendation regarding the deer population in Watchung.

Committee Chairman Juetta and Committee Member Wellbrock have agreed to meet with various newspapers to discuss the deer overpopulation in Watchung and argue for a referendum, the results of which would be the foundation elements of a borough culling program. It was noted that Borough Council rejected the possibility of a referendum for 2019. This committee unanimously agreed to request the Borough to submit a survey similar to the 2013 highly responded undertaking. Committee Miller agreed to the concept of a borough wide survey, but did not agree with the questions stated within the 2013 document.

The guests were invited to make comments or ask question.  
The meeting was concluded at about 10:30 AM.

Richard D. Wellbrock, Secretary