

Ray Barratt recalled that the allowed hunting distance from houses was increased to 550 feet was due to safety reasons.

Heidi Rubino said that the cost of the survey has gone up because the vendors need to defend their results by appearing before the Council and answering questions posed by the public in an open Council meeting

Andrew Hokenson recommended food reduction in yards.

Heidi Rubino said that we need participation from the DEP for their deer management expertise. Ray Barratt said that they have been here and are willing to work with us.

Ron Jubin said that we can find a better way to accomplish our goals. Grants can be worked on. He heard from the researcher who were out for calibration. Deer count can happen in the fall. Heidi said that there is no scientific basis for doing a deer count in the fall. She would like to understand where it came from. Ron said he can forward the email and suggest to have a discussion if so inclined.

Heidi emphasized that we are an advisory committee- we have no authority, we can make recommendations only. Heidi wants it to be made clear that the council takes what we say into consideration only. At the end of the day, there needs to be some accountability for turning the recommendations into actions As for the deer count that was recommended by the 2019 WMAC and supposed to happen in the spring- the missed days and delay for hiring the vendors don't correspond with COVID timing as an excuse for missing the opportunity to do a count

Ray Barratt states that deer management doesn't mean deer cull.

RVCC is a local group that historically did the count. Heidi said that when people bid on original deer counts, it included doing the count and doing a report. When forced to defend findings in front of the Council and in an open forum Council meeting by a generally hostile public it presented a new cost parameter in terms of doing business in Watchung. RVCC is lower cost because RVCC is not a for profit business, it is an academic institution. Their cost is simply the wages paid to students to do the work. The Save the Deer of Watchung group recommended another group which was commissioned by the Council the previous year and could have done the count Why wasn't that group hired if RVCC was unavailable?.

The Spring deer count was postponed due to COVID RVCC closure (equipment sent for calibration). The Fall deer count is planned with RVCC – we need to follow up to confirm and schedule.

GEESE

Ron said the borough paid for a Goose Stoppers contract. Andrew Hokenson said he has seen a difference- there are a couple of families of geese. Geese still show up, but it appears that the number of geese in green acres behind backyard is lower. Neighbors are getting smaller numbers of geese.

VULTURES

These are American Black Vultures, a native species. Andrew Hokenson said there is a resident who she was feeding cats. However, vultures go out and hang out by her house and on her roof and by her stairs when she comes out with food. Vultures probably think it's feeding time. Andrew will find out more about the vulture issue.

There is a wildlife ordinance in place regarding feeding of wildlife. We need to confirm what kind of vultures they are and if they are native.

NEWLY ADOPTED TOWN ORDINANCES

Watchung Fencing Ordinance – June 18, 2020

Ron Jubin said he wanted to make this a question about the visual impact it will have on the neighborhood and how it will impact wildlife. The 6 foot fence ordinance was passed.

Watchung Road Speed Ordinance –

Andrew Hokenson asked if we knew where the deer are and do we have signs up.

Ron Jubin answered that we know where the deer are but he doesn't think we have any signage up. Paul Michaelis said that there are many high traffic areas where deer are killed such as Bonnie Burn Rd., many get killed on Valley Rd. Get Deer Crossing signs.

MAINTAINING HABITATS FOR FLORA AND FAUNA – R & D

Providing wood chippings to residents – following tree maintenance. Trees on Ness Property can be grounded.

Unfinished Business:

Wood chipping:

Coraline, Andrew, Heidi, Scott, Paul we all agree this is a good idea.

New Business: To be discussed at the NEXT meeting: Bill Hance does the website.

Adjournment:

The next scheduled WMAC meeting will be decided. This meeting will be held at Borough Hall, 15 Mountain Blvd., Watchung, New Jersey 07069 or remotely if indoor conditions due to COVID-19 remain a health risk.

The WMAC must meet at least 4 times a year.

*This Committee has the responsibility to make policy recommendations to the Mayor and Council for the management of wildlife: coordinate with our municipal and County activities undertaken to control wildlife; review and make recommendations regarding the use of culling within the Borough specifically on Borough, County, and State owned lands; and may secure baiting/culling sites for a management plan at the direction of the Mayor and Council by resolution. This Committee also will review and monitor programs involving research and development in the management of wildlife.