

TOWN OF ISLESBORO  
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

MEETING OF THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2011, 4:30 PM, TOWN OFFICE

MINUTES

Present: Pete Anderson, Linda Gillies, Philo Hutcheson, Don Johnson, Carol Macaulay (via speaker phone), Gilbert Rivera, Rachel Rolerson-Smith, Fred Thomas (chair)

Absent: Jacob Bethune, Andrew Coombs, Paul Hatch, Jr., Scott Sienkiewicz, William Tilden

Fred Thomas, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm. After welcoming everyone and thanking them for joining the committee, he asked those present to introduce themselves and to say why they were interested in joining the committee. A common thread in the introductory statements was the recognition that tick-borne disease was a problem on Islesboro and that people wanted to help to find a solution.

Fred asked everyone to give contact information on a form provided (attached).

Charge to the committee. Fred read the warrant approved by Islesboro voters at the Special Town Meeting held on August 24, 2011: *To see if the Town shall support and establish a wildlife management plan with the goal of reducing the deer population to 10 deer per square mile and maintaining the population at that level, in order to reduce the incidence of tick-borne disease. The plan will be developed by a committee of local residents appointed by the Selectmen, The Selectmen will take said plan and any subsequent plans to the voters for approval before implementation.* Fred pointed out that the committee is tasked with coming up with a plan to reduce Islesboro's deer population – “it does not have a lot of leeway.”

Name change. Given the narrow charge, Fred said that he and others felt that the committee's present name, Wildlife Management Committee, was too broad, implying that it should deal with issues relating to animals other than deer such as squirrels, woodchucks, etc. Philo Hutcheson proposed that the name be changed to Deer Reduction Committee.

MOTION: The name of the committee shall be changed from the Wildlife Management Committee to the Deer Reduction Committee. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Considerations. Fred outlined the principal issues to be considered by the committee and discussion followed.

- Deer reduction number. Fred said that because anecdotal information about the number of deer on Islesboro varies from person to person, the committee should use the numbers provided by Stantec Consulting after the second count in April 2011 (48 per square mile on Islesboro, 53 per square mile on 700 Acre). Committee members felt that there should be a third count in 2012, before the committee decides on a final deer reduction program.

When asked about whether Stantec should conduct the survey, Linda Gillies said the tick committee had carefully researched companies that do this kind of work and had found Stantec, a national company, to be the best. The staff biologists who have come to the island in the past two years are knowledgeable and efficient. The committee agreed that Town funding for the survey (approx. \$14,000) would have to be secured in advance.

- Deer Hunting. It was agreed that the deer herd was not being reduced fast enough. There was also consensus that in a special hunt all deer should be tagged on Islesboro.
- Deer Hunters. Fred said he was aware that in general MDIF&W promotes an open hunting season for communities with large deer populations. He does not condone an open season for Islesboro “in any way or shape or form.” Because the island has a reputation for having many deer and is close to the mainland, we get a high percentage of off-island hunters who are inexperienced, do not know the island and are disrespectful of other hunters. Carol Macaulay said the same was true of 700 Acre. There was consensus that there were plenty of able-bodied hunters on Islesboro and that a deer reduction plan, both short-term and long-term, should be managed on the island and implemented by local hunters who were carefully pre-screened and regulated.
- Time of year for a special hunt. Various options for a special hunt were discussed – after Thanksgiving, the first two weeks of December, January. The time of year will depend on the method chosen and State guidelines. There was general agreement that the best “rough target” would be part of December.
- Disposition of deer meat. It was agreed that while meat could be given away off island, local needs should be met first. Linda mentioned that there is a program called Hunters for the Hungry, which is run in cooperation with MDIF&W.

Alternative tick-borne disease prevention measures. There was agreement that in addition to deer reduction, the Town should recommend effective alternative tick-borne disease prevention measures, such as deer licks, mowing grass, tick tubes, guinea hens, burning fields and other techniques described in the tick report. Philo Hutcheson suggested that there should be a “monster effort” to inform island residents and visitors of the threat of disease and prevention with a goal of reducing Lyme disease in 2012.

- Committee’s final report. Philo stated that in the event that the committee does not agree unanimously on a plan, there may have to be both a majority report and one or more minority reports to the Selectmen.

Background. Linda summarized information gathered by the tick committee from MDIF&W and other sources.

- In 2001 MDIF&W issued a new protocol, *Actions to Remedy Nuisance Problems Resulting from Locally High Deer Densities*. The protocol has enabled many communities to take new approaches to deer reduction and maintenance. She circulated a copy of the protocol and a list of actions taken by coastal communities (attached).

- Any deer reduction plan will have to be approved by MDIF&W. The first step in the approval process is a written application that includes a problem statement, documentation about deer numbers and deer harvests as well as what portion of the island is open to hunting and to whom, the community's thoughts about whether the harvest via recreation hunting can be increased or not, and a long-term plan. She circulated a sheet of specifications for the written request (attached).

It was agreed that a large part of the committee's work will be gathering information for the written statement. This will include special mailings and boxholder surveys.

Time Frame. There was consensus that the committee should establish a time frame as soon as possible. Given the many steps to be taken, realistically a first special hunt would most likely be scheduled for late 2012. Tasks that should be included on the schedule include:

- Preparation of a budget for the committee's work, including a possible third deer count and administrative costs (copying, travel, postage, etc.)
- Work with MDIF&W staff
- Landowner and hunter surveys
- Preparation of the written application to the State
- Presentation of the committee's plan to the Selectmen
- Re-submission of plan to the State, should the Selectmen make changes
- Selectmen's presentation of the plan to the voters (possibly at Town meeting?)

Working back from December 2012, Linda will prepare a draft calendar for consideration by the committee at its next meeting.

Request for Information. Several committee members requested copies of the two Stantec reports and other documents, including the tick committee report to the Selectmen issued in May 2011. Linda said that she would prepare an information "package" for the entire committee.

Committee members also asked whether all the people diagnosed with Lyme disease in 2011 (24 as of October 12<sup>th</sup>) had contracted the illness on Islesboro. Linda said she would check this with the Health Center.

Meeting Schedule. Fred proposed that the committee meet every two weeks, on Thursdays at 4:30 pm at the Town Office.

Next Meeting. The committee's next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> at 4:30 pm in the Town Office.

Adjournment. Upon MOTION made, seconded and approved, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies

10/18/11