

TOWN OF ISLESBORO  
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Meeting of Thursday, February 21, 2013, 4:30 PM, Town Office

MINUTES

Present: Pete Anderson, Jacob Bethune, Linda Gillies, Paul Hatch, Jr., Don Johnson, Carol Macaulay (by phone, Gilbert Rivera, Rachel Rolerson-Smith, Fred Thomas (chair),  
Absent: Andrew Coombs, Laura Houle, Philo Hutcheson, Scott Sienkiewicz, William Tilden

Fred Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Approval of Minutes, meeting of February 7, 2013. Upon MOTION made and seconded, the minutes were approved as written.

Letter to the DRC. Fred first read a letter sent to the committee by Nancy Hoffman, a summer resident. She said that last summer she developed some Lyme disease symptoms and the Health Center, taking a “wait and see” approach, gave her a one-time dose of antibiotic. When she returned to Pennsylvania further symptoms developed and she was given a full two-week course of antibiotic. She commended the Health Center and the DRC for their work on Lyme disease.

Report on recent information received. Fred then said that the meeting’s agenda had been revised to focus on new information received since the last DRC meeting from Keel Kemper and subsequently from Anthony (Tony) DeNicola of White Buffalo, Inc. He then outlined the content of two conference calls and one email:

- 2/12/13, conference call to follow up on suggestions made at the DRC 2/7/13 meeting. Keel Kemper (KK), Fred Thomas, Pete Anderson, Linda Gillies.
  - Rifle use. KK endorses the use of rifles during the Special Hunt; this would be a Town decision.
  - KK will inquire at MDIF&W about the possibility of eliminating extended archery season in order to have more time for special hunt.
  - Depredation permits. KK would be willing to issue depredation permits to be used in the winter, after the Special Hunt.
  - Training in sharpshooter techniques. KK suggested contacting White Buffalo about doing training on a “bare bones” basis.
  - KK reported that Tony DeNicola advises against conducting further deer counts; there are other ways to estimate deer.
  
- 2/14/13, email from KK to follow up on 1/12/13 call.
  - Officials at MDIF&W say that it is not possible to eliminate an extended archery season for one town.

- It may be possible for the Special Hunt to overlap with the end of the extended archery season; DRC could go forward into winter.
  - DRC should have a phone meeting with Tony of WB about hunter training. In the end less cost. Perhaps the training could begin on 700 Acre Island.
  - KK has discussed the above with Jim Connolly at IF&W. He likes the idea of training local hunters and depredation permits – “sounds like a real plan.” Jim and KK will report to Commissioner Woodcock.
- 2/20/13, conference call to follow up on KK’s suggestion. Anthony DeNicola (Tony), KK, Fred Thomas, Pete Anderson, Linda Gillies.
    - Tony is willing to help “at any level.”
    - Islesboro hunters did good job under circumstances, but 50 deer + 150 in regular archery season not enough, “basically pointless,” a waste of time and money.
    - Need 3-4 experienced island hunters who would be trained in sharpshooter techniques. One person to be a “continued presence” in managing ongoing hunts.
    - Volunteers will also be necessary to help with baiting, deer removal, etc.
    - Timing: meet with hunters and landowners in June, train in August, begin baiting at Thanksgiving, hunt Dec. 10-15, occasional hunts Jan. – March.
    - Given the cost of transporting people and equipment, initial training on 700 Acre Island is probably not a good idea.
    - Given existing talent on Islesboro, Tony is willing to go to \$50,000 (from \$133,000) for first year.

A new deer reduction strategy for DRC. Fred said that after meeting with Keel and Tony, whose knowledge and experience make him one of the best people working in the deer reduction field, he had concluded that the DRC should make a “paradigm shift” in its approach to deer reduction on Islesboro and should adopt a strategy using local sharpshooters trained by White Buffalo. Fred circulated a proposal from White Buffalo and informational material about the company. He outlined his reasons for the proposed change:

- Town after town has tried the approach that Islesboro has taken, and it hasn’t worked. These are documented in the Wildlife Society Bulletin’s 2012 article, *Evaluation of Organized Hunting as a Management Technique....* and other recent publications. Islesboro should learn from other people’s mistakes.
- Public agencies approve the plans for special hunts as a way to pay lip service to the problems caused by deer overpopulation, but increasingly they are acknowledging that special hunts do not reduce deer sufficiently, in fact they can make the problems worse.
- He is convinced that under DRC’s present plan we will the “trudging along” without getting the results we need, basically treading water.
- From Tony he has learned that by having the Special Hunt, Islesboro’s deer can be “negatively trained,” so that they get smarter and increasingly hard to find. In 4-5 years even sharpshooter techniques with baiting might not work. Under the WB baiting system, deer get “positively trained.”

- Through sharpshooter techniques and the equipment used, sharpshooters are able to kill many deer at one time.
- The expanded archery season can continue as it is.
- The number of Lyme disease cases (43 in 2012) and the tick infection rate (57.1 %) continue to increase. In addition, the scientific community has identified two additional diseases that can be caused by a tick bite.
- No one likes change, and the proposed adjustment to the DRC strategy will be difficult for DRC members and the community to accept. But we should be big enough to make the changes so that we accomplish what we need to and spend the Town's money in the most effective way.

There were comments from various committee members. Gil Rivera said he thought Tony DeNicola was just a good salesman. Babe Hatch disagreed that many deer could be taken at one time. He proposed dealing more with the rodents who carry Lyme disease. Don Johnson said the Special Hunt hadn't been given enough time. This had been a harsh winter and probably next year hunters will be able to get more deer. Pete said that in recent years an average of 168 deer had been taken off the island, with an additional 50 in the Special Hunt. Given the deer annual herd increase of approximately 40%, this simply isn't sufficient to reduce the herd to 10 per square mile. Rachel Rolerson-Smith said she agreed that many deer should be removed but was concerned about the cost. Carol Macaulay asked if landowner permission had to be secured; Fred said that WB would identify special areas and work with the landowners. Linda said that while making the case to the community about a change in strategy would be difficult and a lot of work, she felt the effort would be worth it because the DRC would spend the Town's money more effectively.

Projected budgets. Linda reviewed rough projected budgets for deer reduction on Islesboro in the years 2013-2017, one set of figures based on DRC's present plan and one set based on adopting the WB approach. The first-year cost for the WB option is high, \$65,600, but by the fourth year, when WB is no longer involved and the work is done by local hunters and volunteers, the cost is reduced to \$6,500 a year.

Gil said that that the budgets did not take into account the cost of baiting and deer removal. Linda agreed and said she would look into these costs and revise the projections. She also said she was a believer in "paid volunteers," and that funds for volunteer stipends should be included.

DRC meeting schedule. It was agreed that because five committee members were absent, we should schedule another meeting for a vote as to whether to change the DRC strategy at this point. As Fred will be away during March, the meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 25, 2013 at 4:30 in the Town Office. Linda said she would contact Keel Kemper to see if he could attend and would make calls encouraging DRC members to be there.

Upon MOTION made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies, Secretary