

TOWN OF ISLESBORO  
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Meeting of Thursday, February 25, 2013, 4:30 PM, Town Office

MINUTES

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

Absent: Pete Anderson, Scott Sienkiewicz

By invitation: Keel Kemper, MDIF&W (by phone)

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

Approval of Minutes, meeting of February 21, 2013. Upon MOTION made and seconded, the minutes were approved as written.

Review of the proposal from White Buffalo, Inc. Fred said that on the recommendation of Keel Kemper during a phone meeting on February 1st, the DRC had requested a proposal from Anthony (Tony) DeNicola of White Buffalo, Inc. (WB), one of the leading wildlife management organizations in the country. In Maine, WB has successfully implemented deer reduction initiatives on Monhegan and Peak's Island. As the proposal's budget for deer reduction work was high - \$177,000 over three years - the DRC asked for a scaled-down version, which WB submitted on February 20; it has a three-year budget of \$80,440. Copies of this second proposal had previously been circulated to the committee, though WB had inadvertently omitted budget detail for years two and three. Linda Gillies obtained the missing budgets and circulated them at the meeting. Gil Rivera pointed out that some of the copies dated back to the original proposal; Linda apologized for her clerical error.

A wide-ranging discussion followed:

- *Number of deer taken on Islesboro in 2012.* Keel said that while the final numbers weren't yet in, MDIF&W estimates that 120 deer or more were killed during the expanded archery season. With the 50 killed during the Special Hunt, the total is approximately 170-200. Andrew Coombs said that deer killed by vehicles on the roads should be factored in to the total.
- *Number of deer that need to be taken to reach 10 deer per square mile and maintain the herd at that level.* Keel made a calculation based on the assumption that Islesboro had 10 square miles and that there were 500 deer on the island (50 deer per square mile). If 200 were taken (20 per square mile), that would leave 30 deer per square mile, approximately 60% of which were does. They would go into lambing, and the number would jump right

back up to 50 per square mile. In order to reduce the herd, considerably more than 200 deer per year need to be taken. He said that this is impossible to achieve with recreational hunting.

- “*New tools*” from MDIF&W for *Special Hunt*. Keel said that:
  - It will not be possible to suspend the extended archery season, for Islesboro is part of a State-wide structured framework.
  - MDIF&W will not allow 50 hunters to bait individually, for the efficacy of baiting would be reduced.
  - The Special Hunt could be extended by backing into the end of the extended archery season, though there could be problems in managing two hunter groups, archers and hunters using shotguns. Archers who usually use camouflage would have to wear blaze orange. Babe Hatch said that a good many mainland hunters come to the island after Thanksgiving, when the rifle season ends on the mainland. Bill Tilden said that landowners might prefer to give permission to shotgun hunters rather than archers. The season could also be extended forward into January – March.
  - MDIF&W would be OK with rifle use.
- *Sharpshooter techniques*. Keel described the WB and its approach:
  - As far as he knows, WB is the “only game in town.” Tony DeNicola is a genuine guy who has devoted his entire career to wildlife management.
  - The WB hunter selection process is rigorous.
  - Hunters are not hunters in the traditional sense but snipers.
  - .223 rifles with suppression and silencers are used. The bullets do not explode.
  - 10 deer at a time can be taken.
  - Deer are shot in the head.
- *WB work on other Maine islands*. Linda said that she believed sharpshooting on Monhegan and Peak’s island had been paid for by Lincoln county.
- *Number of local hunters to be trained*. According to Tony DeNicola, there would be three baiting sites on Islesboro (not including 700 Acre Island), with a hunter at each site. He advises training a fourth hunter in case one has to drop out.
- *Deer being “negatively trained” by the Special Hunt*. Linda said WB stresses that the effect of shotgun seasons is to “negatively train” the deer; WB says that the deer become difficult, if not impossible, to find. She asked Keel if having a Special Hunt in 2013 would have this result. Keel replied that the impact would not be significant; 4-6 years of Special Hunt would cause negative training.
- *Volunteers*. Keel said that in addition to the 3 volunteer sharpshooters, approximately 12 support volunteers would be needed. Laura said she was concerned that a sufficient number of people would volunteer. Linda said that people who worked as sharpshooters or support volunteers should be paid a per diem; they should be “paid volunteers.”

- *Vaccine against Lyme disease.* Philo said that large deer populations were causing public health issues in many communities, particularly coastal islands, and asked if any pharmaceutical companies were in the process of developing a vaccine. Carol Macaulay could not find any reference to such a vaccine on the Center for Disease Control website.
- *Informing the Islesboro community.* Sandy Oliver said that the DRC should inform the Board of Selectmen as soon as possible about the new information provided by MDIF&W and the WB proposal. Fred said that the DRC should also inform the community through an information meeting – “Not telling them is like saying that you know the cure for a disease but you are not going to let them know what it is.”
- *Long-term budget projections.* Linda had prepared five-year budget projections comparing the cost of proceeding with the Special Hunt or going with WB and had circulated them at the meeting. Gil Rivera questioned whether the numbers could be trusted. As an example he pointed out that the WB budget allowed for 6 support volunteers, when Keel had just said that 12 were required. Fred said that the projections were rough – firm numbers would come if a decision to go with WB was made.

The group then started working toward a motion. Several members said they thought it was too soon to make a change to the DRC’s original plan. Philo proposed that the Special Hunt be discontinued. Linda proposed two options, one endorsing the WB approach and one suggesting that the decision as to whether to change be decided by the Town. After discussion:

MOTION: The Deer Reduction Committee recognizes the significance of new information about how to most effectively reduce the deer population to 10 per square mile and maintain it at that level. For 2013 the DRC recommends that a second Special Hunt be conducted in December, working with MDIF&W and the community to gain approval for new “tools” such as a longer season and use of rifles. In early 2014 the DRC will reassess Islesboro’s deer reduction strategy going forward.

In addition the DRC will: a) present the new information to the Board of Selectmen at the earliest opportunity and to the community at an information meeting before Town Meeting; b) keep careful records of the incidence of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases on Islesboro, ticks found per hour and their infection rate, and deer-related road accidents/road kill; and c) estimate the aggregate annual cost to individuals and the Town as they deal with deer-related problems – medical treatment, loss of work due to illness, damage to cultivated plants and trees, vehicle damage.

The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

It was decided that the DRC would make a presentation about the new information to the Board of Selectmen at their March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting; the committee will review the materials that go to the Selectmen in advance. A community information meeting will be held in April.

Keel Kemper strongly advised the DRC to keep MDIF&W Commissioner Woodcock advised of its decisions at a meeting in his Augusta office.

DRC meeting schedule. The next meeting will be held on Monday, March 11 at 4:30 pm in the Town Office.

Upon MOTION made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies, Secretary

Follow-up:

- Prepare packet for Board of Selectmen meeting of March 13, 2013. (LG, DRC)