

TOWN OF ISLESBORO
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

MEETING OF THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2011, 4:30 PM, TOWN OFFICE

MINUTES

Present: Pete Anderson, Jacob Bethune, Andrew Coombs, Linda Gillies, Paul Hatch, Jr., Don Johnson, Carol Macaulay (via speaker phone), Gilbert Rivera, Rachel Rolerson-Smith, Fred Thomas (chair), William Tilden

Absent: Philo Hutcheson, Scott Sienkiewicz

Fred Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm.

Approval of Minutes, Meeting of November 17, 2011. Buddy Bethune suggested that mention be made of deer-seeking ticks that will cause an increase in the number of Lyme disease cases for a year or more after a cull. Upon MOTION made and seconded, the minutes were approved as amended.

Fred made several points that he said were based largely on Gerry Lavigne's useful comments at the November 17th meeting.

- The establishment of a biological station should be a top priority, for by weighing culled deer and analyzing a tooth or other body part, much useful information about the deer population on Islesboro could be gathered. The station would be State-funded.
- IF&W should make it mandatory that deer shot on Islesboro should be tagged here, during both the regular and culling seasons. The Town should provide \$10 per deer to the people who are tagging deer (200 deer would be \$2,000).
- When it comes to a cull, "We should get the hunter habit out of us." A cull is a reduction process, not a recreational hunt. People should be encouraged to shoot does.
- It will be too difficult to cull the number of deer we need to without the use of firearms; in reality, only bow use would make the job nearly impossible.
- In a cull, who is allowed to hunt should be very clear. Only island residents (owners or renters) should participate, not the representatives of property owners, which gets into a gray area.
- Given the information provided in the first two counts, we do not need a third count at this time.
- We should be honest and educated about Islesboro's large deer herd, which is causing not only many cases of Lyme disease but foliage destruction and lack of regeneration in our forest because of browse. Even though a cull will not be easy, we should agree that we have too many deer, and that the price is too high to pay.

Discussion then focused on the following topics:

Bucks/does. Don Johnson and Fred said trophy bucks should not be killed in a cull. Carol Macaulay said that when bucks lose their antlers depends on the weather; the cull should probably be held earlier in the year.

Timing of the hunt. Fred suggested that the cull begin 2 days after the end of the expanded archery season. Pete Anderson suggested that the cull last 1-2 weeks, with the possibility of expanding to a month – should be flexible.

Cost of culling to hunters. Pete suggested that the Town buy doe permits for the participants, so that the cost to hunters would be minimal. Carol Macaulay agreed.

Weapons. Fred reported that after the last meeting, Scott Sienkiewicz had suggested the use of control caliber rifles.

Enforcement. Carol Macaulay asked how the regulations for the cull would be enforced. Linda Gillies said it was her understanding that IF&W would be involved in both setting up the regulations and in enforcing them. It was agreed this was something to discuss with IF&W.

Alternatives to hunting. Gil Rivera said that Islesboro residents should be aware of other tick/Lyme disease prevention tools and mentioned a recent article about use of the four-poster system on Shelter Island, New York. He will circulate the article to committee members.

Tagging station. Rachel Rolerson-Smith said there should be more than one tagging station on the island. Pete Anderson said there should be a tagging station near the ferry. Carol said this would be convenient for people hunting on 700 Acre Island, who usually take their deer to Lincolnville.

Deer meat disposal. Linda said that since the November 17th meeting, Gerry Lavigne had been in touch with Windham Butchers in Windham, ME and that Dana Mains there said the company would be willing to come to Islesboro with a refrigerated truck to do butchering during culling season on two conditions – the deer must be “clean,” and there must be a minimum of 100 deer per season. It was agreed that Linda would find out about pricing for ground meat to be distributed to the needy on Islesboro and elsewhere, as well as customized orders.

Deer numbers. Babe Hatch said that through long experience and recent observations, he felt the deer numbers were decreasing on Islesboro and that the figures in the Stantec surveys were too high. Mike Boucher, who came to the meeting as an observer, also said he thought the deer numbers were decreasing and would continue to do so. He suggested that more hunters be allowed to hunt and that crossbows and bait hunting be allowed. Fred said that while there may be less deer than in past years, the herd was not being reduced fast enough.

Deer count. Gil and Babe said there should be a third deer count in 2012. Carol, Linda and Andrew Coombs said they thought the money could be spent more wisely on other aspects of the culling process, such as permits for the hunters, tagging costs and meat distribution. Andrew Coombs moved that the third deer survey be postponed.

MOTION: The third deer survey should be postponed until 2013 or beyond.

The motion was seconded and approved by a vote of nine in favor, two opposed.

Latest statistics. Linda reported on the results of the Vector-borne Disease Laboratory's October 2011 tick survey: of the 25 ticks found per hour, 55.3% were infected (in fall 2010 8.3 ticks were found, of which 49.4 were infected). To date, the Health Center has diagnosed 27 new cases of Lyme disease, as opposed to 9 cases in 2010. Statewide, the incidence of Lyme disease has increased from 637 cases in 2010 to 836 cases in 2011.

Budget. Pete said the committee should now put together a budget that takes into account the postponement of the deer survey and the costs of permits, tagging and butchering. Linda said she would have a draft for the December 15th meeting.

Letter to the Selectmen. The letter drafted in November should be revised in view of the new budget and reviewed at the December 15th meeting.

Meeting with IF&W. There was agreement that the committee should meet with IF&W staff as soon as possible - to bring them up-to-date, to discuss a number of questions that have arisen, and to plan the committee's work with the Department going forward. Linda said she would be in touch with Jim Connolly and Lee Kantar about the possibility of IF&W participation at the December 15th meeting.

Upon MOTION made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies

Follow-Up

- Get cost information from Windham Butcher s (LG)
- Revise draft budget (FT, PA, LG)
- Revise draft letter to Selectmen (LG)
- Set up appointment with IF&W (LG)

12/5/11