

TOWN OF ISLESBORO
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Meeting of Wednesday, December 9, 2015, 4:30 PM, Town Office

MINUTES

Present: Michael Boucher, Linda Gillies, Paul Hatch, Jr., Don Johnson, Jr., Jon Kerr, Peter Mills, Gilbert Rivera (chair)

Also attending: Michael Clayton, Sandy Oliver, Fred Porter, Maggy Willcox

Gil Rivera called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm. A quorum was established.

Approval of the draft minutes for the meeting of November 18, 2015. Upon MOTION made and seconded, the minutes were approved as written, with one abstention (Boucher).

Report on meetings with Commissioner Woodcock of MDIF&W and Commissioner Mayhew of the Department of Health and Human Services, Augusta, December 2, 2105. Sandy Oliver and Peter Mills, who attended the meetings, reported. There were 6 people in the delegation from Islesboro: in addition to themselves, Janet Anderson, Arch Gillies, Derreth Roberts, Allie Wood. Maggy Willcox also attended on behalf of Islesboro Island News. They met first with MDIF&W and then with DHHS.

- MDIF&W. Commissioner Woodcock, Keel Kemper, and two other persons attended the meeting. They were gracious and well informed about Islesboro. They said that for deer reduction, at the present time there were three choices: 1) sharpshooter 3) a regular State of Maine firearm season 3) continue with the expanded archery season. Keel emphasized that Islesboro should not be considered "special" and supported a real hunting season like everyone else. However, because of the health problem on the island, a potential option in such a season would be a public health permit, which would allow additional tags at no cost; hunters could be reimbursed for their butchering expenses. The firearms could be shotgun only. Such a change would require approval by Town vote and rescinding the 1938 statute by the State Legislature. If a regular firearm season were approved, Islesboro could request more warden support. Peter said that the Commissioner and staff were dubious about the Block Island "bounty" program model, saying that Maine was different from Rhode Island.

Mike Boucher asked if the public health permit existed anywhere else. He also suggested that if a firearm season were approved, muzzleloaders should allowed as well as shotguns.

Fred Porter, who said that since 2008 he had enforced or warned on 35 hunting violations, suggested that if there were a regular season, more than one warden would be needed. Mike said that Islesboro would have to take measures to accommodate additional wardens, such as a place to stay and transportation.

Mike Clayton suggested that the funds for the extra tags could be underwritten with private donations.

Jon Kerr questioned whether a public health permit would increase the harvest.

- DHHS. Peter reported that Commissioner Mayhew and Kenneth Albert, RN, director of the Maine Center for Disease Control, attended the meeting. The Commissioner, who did not seem well informed about Islesboro's tick-borne disease problem, said that this was the beginning of a conversation and that going forward the department would be of assistance as appropriate. She added that DHHS had recently assigned an epidemiologist to Lyme disease. Ken Albert had read the

material sent in advance of the meeting and said that Islesboro had done a good job in documenting tick-borne disease on the island. Derreth and Allie requested clarification of the State's statistical reports, and it was agreed that Ken and the Tick-borne Disease Prevention Committee would be back in touch with each other.

Discussion on DRC recommendations to the BoS, due January 15, 2016.

Several committee members said they were not seeing the deer. Mike Boucher said that hunters were getting more deer in Belfast and Lincolnville than they were on Islesboro and that Stantec's estimate of 50+ deer per square mile was false science. Don Johnson said he had placed many cameras and that there was nothing on them; furthermore, apples were left under the trees. Babe said that mainland hunters were leaving the island earlier than planned because they were not seeing deer. Both Jon and Gil said that while there used to be 27-30 deer on their land, now there were only 1 or 2. Sandy Oliver said that she was seeing deer on her land. Linda Gillies said she thought a large number of deer were here, recalling that Tony DeNicola of White Buffalo had predicted that if Islesboro had three years of Special Hunt, they would go to different places on the island and could not be found.

Several committee members mentioned that fewer ticks than in the past were being found on deer that had been killed.

Several committee members also mentioned the need to instruct young people in hunter safety and practices. Jon Kerr suggested that it could be part of the school curriculum.

There was discussion about a next deer count. Mike suggested that because a camera survey requiring baiting would conflict with the November hunting season, perhaps it could be done in the last two weeks of August. Linda questioned the need for a count, saying that professional biologists who come to Islesboro conclude that there is a large number of deer because of the condition of our woods - the lack of understory, a reduced number of indigenous plants. She suggested that rather than a count, we monitor the woods, comparing places that are protected from deer for those that aren't. Jon agreed that perhaps such a study could be done.

Gil asked each committee member for his/her recommendation:

- Babe Hatch. The Special Hunt worked - we are seeing less than half of the deer we did in the past, we have done our job. If there is a gun season, we'll have it forever; there are safety issues.
- Peter Mills. There's not a lot you can do. The voters are against sharpshooting, and a regular hunting season with guns could cause hate and discontent. At this point, we should leave it; we have done our job.
- Jon Kerr. Islesboro won't approve sharpshooting, and the committee can't come to a decision about other alternatives. Best to leave it as it is.
- Mike Boucher. The Special Hunt was effective. We should go back to MDIF&W and do a better job of selling it. If the State statute were changed, he also favored a regular State hunting season with firearms if certain regulations were in place.*
- Don Johnson. There are a lot less deer; we should have a different kind of count.
- Gil Rivera. In favor of a financial reward for deer taken (not a bounty). Do a camera survey to get a better count.
- Linda Gillies. Has always been for the sharpshooting alternative, but open to other ideas. Does not see sufficient consensus on the DRC now, so we should wait, keeping track of the tick-borne disease numbers and studying the forest.

New business/old business. Gil circulated a letter from Deanna Page, president of the Maine Bowhunters Association, who has hunted on Islesboro this year and proposes that the MBA work with the DRC to conduct an "organized hunt." A key part of the strategy would involve working "as a team to convince more landowners to open their land to hunters" so that they have "access to contiguous parcels of land." Gil said

that the MBA is a good organization. Maggy Willcox said that they had been effective in a number of special hunts throughout the state, including in Marsh Island/Orono. Linda asked whether Islesboro needs more bow hunters. There was consensus that the DRC should talk with Deanna.

Next DRC meeting. It was agreed that the next DRC meeting should be scheduled for the second week of January. Linda will confirm the date, time, and place.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies, Secretary

*As Mike had to leave the meeting early, that evening he sent the attached email outlining the regulations that he has in mind.

Follow-up:

- Arrange conversation with Deanna Page of the MBA.
- Linda - Schedule DRC meeting for the second week of January.

C: Janet Anderson; Sandy Oliver; Laura Houle; Fred Porter; Cindy Gorham; Maggy Willcox; Keel Kemper; Mark Merrifield; Peter Rand, MD; Chuck Lubelczyk

Approved 1/715