

TOWN OF ISLESBORO
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Meeting of Wednesday, June 24, 2015, 4:30 PM, Town Office

MINUTES

Present: Michael Boucher, Linda Gillies, Don Johnson, Jr., Gilbert Rivera, Ken Smith, Bill Tilden (chair)

Absent: Andrew Coombs, Paul Hatch, Jr., Carol Macaulay, Rachel Rolerson-Smith

Also attending: Janet Anderson, Maggy Willcox

Bill Tilden called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm. A quorum was established.

Approval of the draft minutes for the meeting of May 14, 2015. Upon MOTION made and seconded, the minutes were approved as written.

Report on MDIF&W Advisory Council (AC) meeting of 6/13/15. Ken Smith said that he attended the meeting in Bethel. He had asked two hunters to accompany him, Rick Douglass of Gray and an Islesboro landowner and Dick Cole of Winthrop a frequent visitor to the island. Ken said that Sheridan Oldham, a physician from Rangeley, circulated a written statement vigorously opposing the DRC plan in favor of sharpshooting. Copies of Ken's summary of the meeting and Dr. Oldham's statement have been sent to the Selectmen and to DRC members. Ken said that AC approval for the DRC plan was going to be an uphill battle, for the AC is looking for bigger deer harvest numbers. Gil asserted that the Town doesn't want sharpshooting and never will; Ken said that an AC member had acknowledged that the DRC must follow the will of the people.

DRC membership and chair for the coming year. Gil said that the make-up of committees was determined by the Selectmen at their first meeting in July. Mike said that the Selectmen should declare a vacancy for the positions held by DRC members who have missed many meetings and should seek new members so that the committee was 10 or more in number.

Mike then said he was disappointed that at the June 11th Special Town Meeting Linda had read a statement before the votes on the articles expressing the DRC's minority view held by Bill Tilden and herself. He said that the statement was not discussed by the DRC in advance, and because Linda and Bill were both officers, it constituted an official statement. As a result of her statement, which he described as a folly, the article was turned down, wasting a year's time and effort. He said that Islesboro should have a November gun season, as just about every town in the state does. Don said that the DRC should have talked about the statement first. Ken said that the statement undermined what the committee wanted to do and that it was "a crappy way to do business." He agreed with Mike that the State of Maine controls deer through gun hunting seasons, and that Islesboro should too. Gil said that the majority of the DRC has never been for sharpshooting.

Linda reminded the members that she when she returned as a member of the DRC in April 2014, she said that her view - that special hunts did more harm than good and were a waste of Town money - would not change, and that the committee would have to accept her "warts and all." She said that she did not feel the statement at the Special Town Meeting had changed votes, for the statement made clear that it expressed the minority view, not the DRC's recommendation. She felt that it was important for people at the Special Town Meeting to know that there were differences of opinion on the committee. She had been particularly troubled that in advance of the meeting some DRC members were widely asserting that the Stantec pellet count report showing that the deer numbers had risen slightly was faulty. She said that Stantec biologists used a reasonably reliable technique that has been used and recommended by MDIF&W and other state wildlife agencies for years. She added that at the Special Town Meeting two of the island's best hunters, Babe Hatch and Seth Wilbur, had spoken against the November-January option on grounds of safety. Mike countered that

Seth had been for the November hunt. Maggy Willcox remembered Babe as talking about November being a good time to walk in the woods using the IIT trails and Seth wanting to leave the hunt as it has been, saying "If it ain't broke don't fix it." She added that voters were just as likely to be swayed by these statements as remarks by Linda, and that the vote results "can't be dumped in Linda's lap." Linda said that if the committee felt that it was not appropriate for her to continue as a member, she would resign.

Bill said that he regretted having to be away at the time of the meeting, but he felt he had to take a well-paid job on the mainland. He supported Linda's statement, though he would have voted for the November option.

Mike said it was time to change the DRC chair to someone who supports the Special Hunt option. Janet Anderson said that the committee should wait to select a chair until after the July 1st Selectmen's meeting, when the committee members would be approved.

A possible camera survey. Linda said that if a camera survey, which has been approved as part of the DRC 2015/16 budget, is to be scheduled, the DRC should make the arrangements now. Ken said that Regional Warden Lt. Tim Place had real concerns about baiting deer during hunting season. He said that it is a game warden's nightmare when it comes to enforcement; it must be made clear what the controls would be. Lt. Place said he would discuss the request with his supervisors, the Colonel and others and get back to Ken as he had a scheduled meeting later that week. Ken added that although he's not against a camera survey, he had some questions and reservations. For instance, he asked, what are we going to do with the information? If the results are very different from the Stantec findings, how would that change the DRC's strategy? Secondly, from his online research, White Buffalo, which developed the camera technique, appears to be the only company doing the camera surveys. But there have been no studies as to the survey's accuracy, it's White Buffalo's word. An option would be to have members of the DRC trained to do the survey which is suggested in much of the on-line material. Bill said that the first such survey should be done by someone who is experienced. Gil said we need a count every year and that there should be a camera survey. He added that he does not trust Tony DeNicola, who would just be trying to re-coup the money he lost when White Buffalo's sharpshooting proposal was voted down. Mike said that having the survey baiting sites be a secret is not a good idea; one can't hunt within 300 yards of a baiting station. Linda said that she would circulate White Buffalo's cost estimate for a camera survey.

Mike said that Don Johnson had gathered additional information about camera surveys and that they would put it together and forward a copy to Ken.

Next DRC meeting. It was agreed that the next DRC meeting will be held at 4:30 on Thursday, July 16th in the Town Office meeting room.

Upon MOTION made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies, Secretary

Follow up:

- Obtain additional information about camera surveys. (Don and Mike)
- Circulate White Buffalo's camera survey estimate. (Linda)

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

Approved 7/22/15