

TOWN OF ISLESBORO
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Meeting of Thursday, December 11, 2014, 4:30 PM, Town Office

MINUTES

Present: Michael Boucher, Linda Gillies, Don Johnson, Jr., Gilbert Rivera, Rachel Rolerson-Smith, Ken Smith, William Tilden (chair)

Absent: Andrew Coombs, Paul Hatch, Jr., Carol Macaulay

By invitation: Laura Houle; Keel Kemper, Regional Wildlife Biologist, MDIF&W; Mark Merrifield, Warden, MDIF&W; Fred Porter, Security Officer

Others attending: Janet Anderson, Town Manager; Sandra Oliver, Selectman

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

Report on Board of Selectmen meeting of December 3, 2014. Bill said that Arch Gillies reviewed the Board of Selectmen's role in the process of developing a new deer reduction plan once the third Special Hunt is over. He said that once the DRC has developed a plan, the committee should bring it to the Selectmen for their approval and recommendation that it be considered at a Town Meeting. Once it is approved by the voters, then it can be presented to MDIF&W Commissioner Woodcock and go through the Advisory Council (AC) process. Linda said that the Commissioner has stated often that he and the Advisory Council will consider a plan only after the local community has approved it.

Janet Anderson said it was her impression that the Commissioner and the AC were not willing to grant Islesboro permission for another Special Hunt. Gil said that the MDIF&W would help us no matter what, but that their goal was to open Islesboro's hunting to the whole state.

Report on deer taken to date in Expanded Archery Season. Laura Houle reported that she had tagged 40 deer; Rachel Rolerson-Smith said she had tagged 56. The total of 96 does not include deer tagged on the mainland. Ken said that 95% of the deer were killed by hunters from the mainland. Last year's total was 120 deer.

Fred Porter said that so far in 2014 there had been 6 reportable and 2 non-reportable vehicle crashes with deer.

Preparation for Special Hunt 2014/15.

- Regulations. Keel said that in opting for a Special Deer Hunt, which is referred to in the Statute, the Town chose a recreational hunting product that had certain fixed regulations such as no bag limit, no pre-purchased tags, no baiting and no hunting at night with lights. MDIF&W does not have the authority to change those regulations. Gil suggested that the Town should change the category; Keel said that was possible but that any change would have to be approved through the department's rule-making process. In any case, the DRC will be starting the process from the beginning. He said he would provide a copy of the Statute.
- Deer teeth analysis. Keel asked if the DRC wanted to continue with the analysis of deer teeth. The analysis done to date has revealed that Islesboro's deer population is well distributed by age class. He said we might learn more about the buck/doe ratio, but as the point of the Special Hunt is to kill as many deer as possible regardless of their sex, having that information is not so important. After discussion it was agreed to continue with the teeth analysis for the time being.

- Hunter qualification. Laura said that although 40 hunters have registered for this year's Special Deer Hunt, some are more qualified than others, and it is likely that 15-20 hunters will kill deer. She suggested that going forward there be more conversation about the level of hunter qualification.
- Violations. Fred said that if someone has been accused of a violation in another circumstance, they should not be automatically disqualified from the Special Hunt. Laura said the DRC has the right to disqualify a hunter participating in the Special Hunt for any reason.
- Mark Merrifield said that there were not a lot of safety-related problems in the first two Special Hunts.

Looking ahead - planning for after the Special Hunt. Both Ken Smith and Mike Boucher said that going forward the DRC wants to set things up in a way that is best for our community and that is effective in reducing the deer to 10 per square mile. Mike said that DRC should begin developing a plan in January so that it is ready to present at Town Meeting in May or possibly at a Special Town Meeting. Mike added that the vote on September 30, 2014 showed that the community does not want sharpshooting. A new plan will have to be something that the voters will accept. There should be community meetings - perhaps focus groups - so that people can tell us what to write.

Both Mike and Bill Tilden observed that hunting in February is *not* recreational or fun. Mike suggested that instead, there could be open gun hunting on the island, possibly in November, with some exceptions. Historically, there has been a distaste for open gun hunts, for with the island's road system and many houses, hunters must know what they are doing. Keel said that towns would line up to come here for such a hunt. Mike thought baiting would be necessary and pointed out that three-quarters of states allow baiting. He said that once the deer had been reduced to 10 per square mile, archery would not be a suitable method for maintaining the population at that level. Quality deer management will be important, for with deer at a low level, hunters will come from the mainland for trophy deer.

Mark said that archery and gun hunting can happen simultaneously and that the Special Hunt could begin at a different time of the year, perhaps in November. He thought that because Islesboro is a small community, issues such as discharge within a 100 years of an occupied dwelling could be worked out. Gil said that he'd be concerned about safety if gun and bow hunters were out at the same time.

Janet asked about a plan which she had heard had been prepared by Ken Smith. Ken said that he had showed the draft plan to Bill Tilden and Mike Boucher and asked Linda to send it out to the whole committee.

Janet also asked about how/when Islesboro agreed to the Expanded Archery season and whether it might be possible to go back to the Regular Archery season. Committee members said that in 2014 the Regular Archery season ran from October 2 through October 31; the Expanded Archery ran from September 6 through December 13.

Keel Kemper emphasized again that any changes will have to go through the Advisory Council process. He said that the AC had given Islesboro a lot of latitude when it approved three years of Special Hunt and he wasn't sure whether the members would be willing to be so flexible going forward. He said that any proposal must have the involvement and support of Gunnar Gundersen, the AC member who represents Waldo County, and strongly recommended that at the earliest opportunity the DRC should invite him to the island to meet with the DRC and the Tick-borne Disease Prevention Committee. Bill Tilden said that he knew Mr. Gundersen.*

DRC meeting schedule. A proposed meeting schedule had been circulated. It was agreed to review the schedule at the next DRC meeting, which is scheduled on the list for Thursday, January 15 at 4:30 in the Town Office.

New business/old business.

- Laura asked about the difference between reducing the deer to 10 per square mile and 20 per square mile. Would 20 per square mile be sufficient to prevent Lyme disease? Keel said that according to the accepted science, deer had to be reduced to 10 or less per square mile in order to deprive female ticks of their last blood meal and a breeding ground.
- Gil Rivera said that because Phil Berry was negotiating the sale of his express business, Leach's refrigerated truck would not be available for use during the Special Hunt. The Leach truck currently used by Durkee's is not available either. Laura said that she and Cliff would try to make a vehicle available for deer storage. Keel said that Boucher's Custom Cutting did not mind butchering frozen deer.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies, Secretary

*After the meeting Janet supplied Gunnar Gunderson's contact information: PO Box 2, Walpole, ME 04573; 207-563-1959; gunnarj@tidewater.net.

Follow up:

- Distribute Ken Smith's draft plan to the committee. (Linda)

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

Approved by the DRC as amended 1/13/15