

WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES: April 5, 2010

MEMBERS: Chair: Harckham; Legislators: Abinanti, Kaplowitz, Myers, Rogowsky, Testa.

IN ATTENDANCE: Leg. B. Burton, C. Crane (BOL); G. Oros, K. Delgado (CEO); J. Baker, B. Herr, D. Aitchison (Parks Dep't.); Hon. J. Powers (Pound Ridge); Hon. R. Filipp (Rye City); W. Harding (NYSDOS); D. Lowry (Dobbs Ferry Deer Comm.); D. Erickson (WC Bowhunters Ass'n.); J. Peters (Consv'n. Bd.); J. Blaire (FCWC, Irvington); W. Greenawalt (Parks Board Chair) [list of other attendees on file]

Committee on Environment called to order at 3:10 pm.

Item(s) Discussed: County Deer Management Program

Chair Harckham opened the meeting by briefly noting the recent NYSDEC decision refusing a water quality certification for the Indian Point reactor re-licensing application. He then welcomed Mr. Baker to describe the county deer management program. Mr. Baker stated there were three program objectives: (i) reduce the number of deer in county parks to allow forest regeneration, (ii) conduct the program in a safe manner, and (iii) introduce a new hunting activity in county parks. The program was conducted at Muscoot and Lasdon parks from Nov.-Dec. 2009, and he presented maps showing the location of hunting and safety zones. The selected hunters were first chosen through a lottery, which was followed by archery tests and an orientation. The program harvested 45 deer, and Mr. Baker thought higher numbers of deer would have been captured if the program began earlier in October.

Chair Harckham welcomed participation of Hastings Mayor Peter Swiderski and Humane Society representative Laura Simon by telephone. In response to Chair Harckham's question on low capture numbers by the Westchester County Bowhunter's Association, Mr. Baker replied that this area in the pilot had not previously been surveyed on deer population and also hunters were not allowed to take deer on nearby NYCDEP property. Chair Harckham asked about the infrared radar detection in the County's Public Safety helicopter. Mr. Aitchison stated that the radar can be used

under appropriate ambient conditions (cold weather) to assess deer population to avoid counting other potential heat sources. Mr. Kaplowitz inquired whether other control methods are under evaluation such as contraception, and Mr. Baker responded that non-lethal aspects will still be evaluated but is not cost-effective at this time. In response to Mr. Abinanti's question about natural predators (e.g., coyotes), Mr. Baker noted that coyotes only prey on juvenile deer (fawns). Ms. Myers asked what became of the harvested deer, and Mr. Baker replied that many hunters kept the deer but some deer were donated to food programs.

Several attendees also provided comment on the program. Ms. Blaire stated that the public should have more opportunity to provide comment on the proposed methods. She noted contraception as an example of one method that could be more thoroughly evaluated (Dr. Rutberg, Tufts). Mr. Filipp stated that estimates mentioned at the recent Conservation Café were \$1,000/deer for sterilization, while "vaccine" sterilization cost approx. \$100/injections lasting for 2-3 years plus another \$100-200 to pay for the technician. Ms. Simon acknowledged that culling would be more effective than public hunting, but her organization believes immuno-contraception is more cost-effective and efficient over the long term. Mr. Powers expressed that hunters in the Pound Ridge program are required to follow/track wounded deer and must contact police if deer are not located. Chair Harckham closed the discussion and suggested a follow-up committee meeting in the summer before the county program begins again in the fall.

Chair Harckham then initiated brief discussion on NYSPSC's response to the County Board's resolution on transmission line tree management (NYSPSC Sec. Brillig letter to Leg. Kaplowitz dated March 17, 2010). Leg. Rogowsky commented that NYSPSC's letter suggests that NYSPSC's rules are a problem, as NYSPSC found no non-compliance with its rules. Leg. Kaplowitz noted that NYSPSC acknowledged many of the provisions in the Board's resolution when he presented it to them in Albany. Upon further discussion, committee members suggested trying to obtain a meeting with NYSPSC to clarify the Board's intent and NYSPSC's response.

Upon the motion of Leg. Myers, seconded by Leg. Testa, the Committee voted to adjourn (all in favor). The meeting ended at approximately 4:15 p.m.

[audio recording of the meeting is on file]