

## MEMORANDUM

**Joint City of Bloomington-Monroe County Deer Task Force  
Tuesday, 28 September 2010, 5:30 PM  
McCloskey Room (#135)  
City Hall, 401 N. Morton St.**

**Present:**

**Task Force Members:** Keith Clay, Stefano Fiorini, Bob Foyut, Judy Granbois, Josh Griffin, Sarah Hayes, Iris Kiesling, Thomas Moore, Laurie Ringquist, Dave Rollo and Susannah Smith.

**Staff:** Elliot Englert (Intern), Stacy Jane Rhoads (City Council Office) and Dan Sherman (City Council Office)

**I. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Councilmember Dave Rollo welcomed all to the first meeting of the Joint City of Bloomington-Monroe County Deer Task Force. He thanked Task Force members for volunteering their time. He pointed out that he and Commissioner Kiesling sponsored legislation at both the City and County levels to establish this group. The Task Force consists of 11 members plus staff. Members introduced themselves:

- **Josh Griffin** is a District Wildlife Biologist with Indiana Department of Natural Resources. As a wildlife biologist, he has experience working with deer and other wildlife in urban areas. He pointed out that he is on the Task Force only to provide technical assistance. Decisions about how to approach urban deer are up to the community.
- **Bob Foyut** has been a wildlife rehabilitator for nine years. He has served on the board of directors for Wild Care Inc. and has been the team leader for the raptor and large bird team, the reptile team and the deer team.
- **Judy Granbois** is retired from IU's Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions. Judy stated that she lives in the Blue Ridge neighborhood (between Lake Griffy and Cascades) where there are many deer to observe and appreciate .
- **Keith Clay** is a Professor of Biology at IU and the Director of the IU Research and Teaching Preserve, a 1,600-acre nature preserve adjacent to Lake Griffy. He has been researching plant and animal interactions for over 20 years.

- **Susannah Smith** is a competitive archer and a recreational hunter. She was motivated to apply for the Task Force based on her work with friends and family who have concerns with deer and are seeking relief and resolution.
- **Elliot Englert** is an IU Senior Student Intern and will be taking minutes for the group. He has worked at the Indiana 15 Regional Planning Commission for the past three summers and is interested in public policy and the process involved in managing urban deer. He is also a wildlife enthusiast.
- **Stefano Fiorini** is a Research Analyst at the IU Office of the Registrar and a scientist for the *Anthropological Center For Training and Research on Global Environmental Change*. He has a PhD in Environmental Anthropology and has worked in natural resources management in Scotland for three years, addressing specifically deer management.
- **Laurie Rinquist** is the City of Bloomington Director of Animal Care and Control which has a limited role in addressing complaints related to deer, picking up deceased deer, and responding to some complaints of wildlife nuisance, and sick or injured wildlife.
- **Thomas Moore** is a PhD student in Environmental Science at SPEA. His research focuses on biodiversity management and protection. His Master's degree research focused on human-wildlife conflicts and the challenges between groups with different goals and backgrounds.
- **Sarah Hayes** is the CEO of the Monroe County Humane Association and the President, Indiana Alliance of Animal Control and Welfare Organizations. She is charged with advocating for all animals and the most humane solutions possible.
- **Stacy Jane Rhoads** is the Deputy Administrator/Researcher for the Bloomington City Council and will be working closely with the group.

Rollo mentioned that **Dan Sherman**, Council Administrator/Attorney is also in attendance.

## II. INITIAL CONDITIONS

### **Purpose**

Rollo relayed that as outlined in the enabling legislation, the purpose of the group is to mitigate human deer conflicts. The group has two specific charges: to issue an advisory report and to engage in educational outreach.

### **Nature of the Issue**

Rhoads stated that during the course of the Council's deliberation establishing Task Force, it became clear from public feedback that many well-intentioned people do not fully understand the complexity of managing urban deer. Many think there is a handy "quick fix." In addition to drawing up recommendations, a big part of the Task Force's work will involve public education.

### **Members**

Rollo communicated that members represent many different backgrounds and perspectives. All were selected based on their interest in the issue and their ability to keep an open mind and engage in dialogue in the interest of reaching common ground. Members were appointed by the Bloomington City Council, the Bloomington Mayor and the Monroe County Commissioners.

### **Transparency and the Community-Based Model of "Management"**

Rhoads pointed out that Bloomington is not the first community to address urban deer. Communities throughout the US have established community stakeholder groups to find approaches that fit their community-specific needs and values. While we have many comparator reports/recommendations from which to draw, the Task Force's recommended approach will be unique to this community. Many studies point out that urban wildlife management works best when everybody in the community has a voice and is able to lend their feedback. This Task Force is modeled on such community-based approach.

Toward that end, Rhoads offered that it is important that everything the Task Force does be maximally transparent. Thanks to Elliot, we will be able to turn around meeting notes fairly quickly and post them to the web. Similarly, it would be a good idea to develop an evolving set of FAQs to post on the City's website. All meetings of the Task Force are open to the public.

## **Jurisdiction**

Rollo stated that consensus-based community decisions are important. However, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has jurisdiction over the management of all deer. Griffin pointed out that the Indiana Code makes it clear that wildlife in Indiana are owned by the people of Indiana. IDNR regulates wildlife on behalf of the people. Griffin stated that he is participating in the Task Force only as a technical advisor. The IDNR wants to work with Bloomington and Monroe County to find ways to address deer in urban areas. Community input is key and the IDNR is not interested in imposing any “solution” on the community that the community does not want. Griffin stated that the State’s Deer Research Biologist, Chad Stewart, may attend meetings when his expertise is required.

## **Data**

### ***Deer Density***

The IDNR does not conduct deer censuses. Griffin stated that, while having deer population and density numbers is valuable, there are problems associated determining numbers due to the mobility of deer. In the past, the IDNR has conducted helicopter surveys. These surveys must be conducted in the winter and are staff and cost intensive.

He added that the next alternative is a sampling method, but the location and size of sample surveys is questionable. Counties vary widely in deer population. Habit types and county differences play a large part in deer density where an index can be used to estimate deer populations.

### ***Deer Harvest figures***

Griffin offered that the most reliable measure of deer density is the number of deer harvested/year. This data is collected by the State over time in each county. From 2000-2009, the number of antlered deer harvest increased from 574 to 592 and the number of antlerless deer harvested increased from 794 to 888.

### ***Deer-Auto Collisions***

In Monroe County, the number of deer-vehicle collisions has increased from 41 in 2000 to 120 in 2009. The number of collisions per billion miles travelled has increased from 43 in 2000 to 102 in 2008. (Note: these figures hinge on reporting practices; reliability of reportage tends to vary over time and the sheriff doing the reporting.)

### ***Damage Complaints***

The City Council has received two types of complaints. One, a petition signed by 500+ people calling for the establishment of this Task Force to address

issues of collision, Lyme disease and property damage. The other, a letter sent to the Council by the City's Bloomington Parks Board Environmental Resource Advisory Council calling for the Council to establish this Task force in the interest of addressing the ecosystem damage being experienced at Lake Griffy due to an overabundance of deer.

The IDNR tracks deer damage complaints related to agricultural land. IDNR issues special deer damage hunting permits where damage to crops exceeds \$500. When asked, Griffin stated that whether such permits reduce the density of deer over time is somewhat subjective. The point of the permits is really to alleviate immediate concerns pertaining only to agriculture crops and specifically specialty crops such as vineyards and pumpkins.

Fiorini asked if damage data could be disaggregated. Griffin stated that they may look into GIS studies in the future, but now they don't have the personnel capabilities. Fiorini mentioned that it would be useful to try to identify complaint "hot spots" – areas where complaints tend to be especially concentrated. Rhoads mentioned the IDNR damage complaint data attaches to agricultural damage. This information would be useful to identify problem areas in rural parts of the county, but would not really go to identifying where deer are more heavily concentrated in the City. We do have petitions and e-mails that give us a sense of where many people think there is a problem. A survey might give us a more accurate sense which areas are being affected by the presence of deer and which are not.

Fiorini said that thinking through approaches specific to certain geographic areas might be worth considering. Griffin pointed out that, that sort of context-sensitive approach is being followed by the Iowa City Task Force, although they used GIS information to discern areas of density.

### ***Lyme disease***

Rhoads communicated that she contacted both the local health department and the Indiana State Board of Health for figures on Lyme disease. According to both, the number of confirmed cases in Monroe County has held steady at "less than five" per year over the last several years. The State accounts for cases in a "less than" fashion in the interest of privacy. The number could be anywhere between 1 and 4. Kiesling commented about the difficulty of diagnosing Lyme disease and also the lag time between contraction and development of symptoms.

Clay pointed out that he has studied tick-borne diseases. He pointed out that some of the above-referenced confirmed cases could come from people travelling outside of the area and contracting Lyme disease elsewhere, yet being confirmed in Monroe County. He confirmed Kiesling's point that Lyme disease is often misdiagnosed. Also, other pests such as the Lonestar Tick transmit other pathogens with similar symptoms to Lyme disease. Clay and

colleagues have been trapping ticks for 7 to 8 years. They found healthy populations in southwest Monroe County near Springville. They have never found deer ticks in the Bloomington area until this spring in the Lake Griffy area, but the populations are very small, and they are currently being tested for Lyme disease

Griffin added that there are many other communities who have dealt with the same issues as Bloomington. One city in particular that is a good model is Iowa City. They have paid for deer population censuses where they looked at different segments of the city by land type and did a population study to determine the best management tools accordingly.

Clay pointed out that deer are not distributed equally across the City. Deer problems are localized in different regions of the City. Clay lives in Prospect Hill and has no deer living in his neighborhood.

Kiesling thought it would be important that deer would stay where there is water nearby.

Griffin corrected this, pointing out that deer are very mobile. In fact, if deer are attracted to landscaping plants and gardens and if someone gets rid of the deer, more will move in toward this food source. The problem is that deer are attracted to certain plants. Things that make deer move are the physiological changes during the rut and food. The seasons change the way deer behave and what they eat. In spring there is not much complaint because deer have plenty of food in the woodland. In early summer, May, when soybean plants are tender, they get eaten. After the soybean food source they move to other specialty crops and ornamental plants. Griffin made the point that deer densities vary locally and they change do to movement. Kiesling commented that she has seen problems year round. Griffin added that different years vary greatly due to the weather and crop planting times.

Rollo asked for closing comments about data. Thomas Moore asked if parallel data exists for other Indiana counties. Griffin responded that it does and he has all counties on hand.

Moore also asked about the attitude figures on the IDNR's "County Deer Data" sheet that rates "landowner attitude" on a scale from 0-92. Low numbers indicate good attitudes from either group of people, either happy landowners or happy hunters. Griffin stated that landowner attitudes tend to be inversely related to hunter attitudes. Most hunters want to see more deer or bigger deer.

Englert contributed an article from the Indiana Daily Student about the California Roadkill Observation System (CROS) in which The University of

California-Davis is using private citizens to help log and track road kill on a map in efforts to identify road sections that have high animal traffic. This might be interesting to explore. Rollo commented that this data would be a good resource, but the problem of honest reporting could be an issue.

Rollo asked if an economic study of deer damage has ever been done. Griffin responded that insurance companies tend to track such damage, but he is not aware of a quantifiable number or any studies done on the economic effects of deer damage.

### III. PUBLIC COMMENT

**Michael Lamm** has experienced recent deer problems living in the Sycamore Knolls neighborhood near the newly-developed 80-acre Renwick property – an area that was formerly greenspace. He explained that in one night his full-grown Anaheim Chili crop of 35 plants were devastated, because he forgot to fence the plants. Lamm brought a visual aide to demonstrate the damage. He stated that in one day he counted 6 does, 9 fawns and 2 bucks on Montclair Ave. He stated that he is a hunter and hunts in the county. He said that last season he couldn't find any deer in the county, but on his way home back into Bloomington, he counted 15 within the City limits.

Lamm stated that liquid fence works great on the garden, but needs to be reapplied frequently.

Kiesling commented on the Renwick development and how it disrupted a lot of animal habitat along the Jackson Creek greenway corridor.

**Al Turner** lives in the area around Renwick and counted a total of 16 deer browsing his plants over the course of a year. He said that his main concern is that his pet was attacked by an extremely aggressive doe after she gave birth. He pointed out that a dog was killed by a deer last year in Bloomington under a similar circumstance. He said he is concerned about the safety of children and pets. Deer are so acclimated to people that it's hard to scare them away.

**Nita Levison** is from the Eastside Neighborhood Association and said that she has a serious deer problem. She expressed that a 12-foot fence is not feasible as her neighbors have done. It is unrealistic and undesirable for walkers along the street to have multiple houses with these fences. She asks the question if deer belong in the city since they are called "wildlife." The flowers on her potted tomato plant were eaten by a deer before the plant could bear fruit. She said that spray repellants and netting don't work well. She said that Nancy Street and Woodstock see deer constantly. She stated that 5 deer live permanently on her block. She said she hopes the Task Force looks at what other communities are doing.

Rollo confirmed that the Council Office and INDR have many examples of how other communities address urban deer.

**Rose Thomas** said that she used to like deer, but now she thinks they are criminals. They trespass, steal, leave a mess and pests such as ticks behind. Some of her neighbors will not go outside because they are afraid of the ticks. She knows someone who got 17 ticks on their person from just going in their yard. She said that she has no beautiful plants left. She said that she thinks the police and the health department need to take drastic measures to cleanse the town of deer. She said that she has become distraught over the deer problem lately.

Rollo asked when the problem appeared to get worse. Thomas and others agreed that the presence of deer have become especially marked within the last 3 years. Rhoads stated that the Council Office started to receive complaints and questions about deer around 2006.

**Rebecca Lowe** has lived in the Sycamore Knolls neighborhood for the past couple of years and has noticed a significant increase in the deer population since Renwick was developed. She stated that a large part of this area was forested before being developed into high-rise condos. Lowe stated that she appreciates seeing wildlife in her Certified Wildlife Habitat yard. While some of her neighbors try to deter deer, she encourages them in her yard. She faults the development of greenspaces for the problem of increased deer in urban spaces. She stated that she believes the City needs to engage in some sort of wildlife population study of an area being considered for development before it allows development. She stated that she is concerned with the destruction of wildlife habitat. She further added that she is a volunteer at Wild Care Inc. and helps to rehabilitate fawns.

Lowe added that she will be starting a GIS research project with Wild Care Inc. in January looking at intake cards filled out when people bring in injured animals. She will be pinpointing where animals and fawns have been found thorough out Monroe County and comparing it to development and green space to see if there is a correlation between human and wildlife conflicts. Rollo commented that Clay has done work through Wild Care with green space analysis and wildlife displacement.

### **Response to Public Comment**

- Rollo asked if we could quantify injuries sustained by pets by consulting veterinary clinics. Laurie Rinquist stated that this data would depend on the records kept by veterinary clinics, and they are subject to HIPAA privacy laws about statistics. She added that Animal Care and Control has received very few complaints of this nature, including no complaint re: the dog that was killed. Injured pets being taken straight to the vet's office may not be reported to her agency. Rollo said that even anecdotal information on such injury would be helpful.
  
- Clay cautioned that any sort of data related to deer injuries to pets has to be contextualized by looking at these injuries against injuries sustained from damage by other pets, damage by cars, etc.

## **IV. STRUCTURE**

- ***Officers***

The group agreed to postpone the election of the chair until all can get better acquainted as a group. Rollo stated in the interim, he will act as chair. Rollo also mentioned that this group will likely get a good bit of attention from the press. It would be good to ultimately designate a member of the Task Force to act as a press liaison and do the work of speaking for the group. For now, Rollo agreed to act in this capacity.

- ***Meetings***

Rhoads sketched out a rough outline of the way the group might work. This is only a suggestion, subject to change by the group. Since the group is intended to finite, Rhoads offered the following schema which, she qualified, might be too ambitious:

<b>Meeting I:</b>	Introductions/Organizational
<b>Meeting II:</b>	Discussion of Approaches
<b>Meeting III:</b>	Approaches – continued
<b>Meeting IV:</b>	Approaches -- continued
<b>Meeting V:</b>	Discuss & Finalize Draft Recommendations
<b>Public Forum:</b>	Present Draft Recommendations; Hear Public
<b>Meeting VI:</b>	Discuss results of public feedback
<b>Meeting VII:</b>	Finalize Recommendations

- Kiesling asked about subcommittees to break up the issues at hand. Rhoads suggested that it might be really helpful to have subcommittee devoted to outreach and a subcommittee devoted to recommendations. Subcommittees mean more work for the volunteers, so it really depends on the time folks have to devote to subcommittee work.
- Rhoads asked if the group feels like turning to a discussion of approaches is a good idea. The group agreed that turning to approaches at the next meeting was a good idea.

## V. OTHER

- Rollo added that the group should strive to keep its meetings at 1.5 hours. Rollo asked if the group wanted to meet every two weeks or once a month. Griffin replied that his other obligations put constraints on his availability. He would not be able to participate in all bi-weekly meetings. Others indicated their agreement. The group decided to meet on a monthly basis.
- Fiorini said that in coming up with recommendations, it would be good to include a varied list of strategies that reflect public sentiment.
- Rhoads offered that a context-sensitive set of recommendations would provide a menu of different recommendations/options for different areas and needs of the community. A menu provides all stakeholders with options.
- Griffin stated that he wants to emphasize that the more objective and open the group is, the better. Griffin expressed that a menu of solutions is a good approach for openness so everyone can have input.
- Clay asked about City/County boundaries. Will the recommendations include both jurisdictions? Kiesling clarified that some recommendations will be City-specific, some will likely be more appropriate for County action, others with apply to both areas.
- Rhoads said that in the interest of the next meeting, she will work on putting together a summary of commonly-followed management approaches outlining issues such as efficacy, cost, safety, etc.
- Rhoads said that she will send out a survey in the interest of mapping out future meeting dates. Dates will be posted on the Task Force's website: <http://bloomington.in.gov/deertaskforce>
- Clay asked if the Task Force should consider cost in its analysis. Rollo stated that costs are very important and some issues will be appealing until costs are

considered. Rhoads added that the Iowa City report filters each management option through the lenses of: cost, efficacy, safety, community acceptance, etc. Griffin relayed that he has estimated the costs for many approaches.

**VI. NEXT MEETING**

To be determined via e-survey.

**VII. ADJOURN**

The Task Force adjourned at ~7:05 pm.