

MINUTES
COOK CITY COUNCIL – COOK, MN 55723
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 28, 2013
2013 MN DNR PROPOSED BOW HUNT

PRESENT: Mayor Harold Johnston, Councilors Kim Brunner, Karen Hollanitsch and Elizabeth Storm

ABSENT: Councilor Jody Bixby

OTHERS PRESENT: Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer Theresa Martinson, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Cindy Palm, MN DNR Area Wildlife Manager Tom Rusch, MN DNR Jeff Hines and Dawn Plattner, Cook News Herald, The Timberjay, David Quiser, Joan Pedolsky, Dan Manick, Keith Aho, John Fisher, Robin Fisher, Randy Pearson, Robert Strand and Darcie Meehan

Mayor Harold Johnston called the Public Informational Meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

The purpose of this meeting is to consider a proposed bow hunt within the city limits of Cook to control the increasing population of deer within the city.

MN DNR Wildlife Manager Tom Rusch and staff were on hand to inform and answer questions regarding the proposed bow hunt for the City of Cook. Tom Rusch stated that the purpose of an organized bow hunt in city limits is to thin, but not delete, the deer population as it will not decrease unless managed. This type of hunt is designed as a long term strategy as population reduction takes time. If the city only offers the hunt one year, then the deer population will be back in two-three years. This type of hunt is not considered a special hunt as it simply allows bow hunting in city limits during the regular bow hunting season.

The MN DNR is concerned about the spread of disease among congregating deer and that nose-to-nose feeding spreads diseases such as Tuberculosis, Lyme and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Rusch also commented that “problem deer are always habituated deer”.

Rusch reported that the MN DNR organizes numerous community bow hunts that have proven safe and effective. Hunters are advised to follow regulations, obtain permission to hunt private property and stay 500 feet from a dwelling unless given permission by the land owner to hunt within 500 feet of a dwelling. Both resident and non-resident people can participate in the hunt.

The process in organizing a city bow hunt would be to first approve the hunt through the city council. Next contact the MN DNR and design a plan for the city and request the number of permits for the hunt. Revenues from the permit sales go to the state and there is no expense to the city unless special law enforcement is needed. Rusch stated that the local game warden would be able to handle the bow hunt along with the regular season.

Councilor Storm asked if the bow hunt could be restricted to designated city owned areas. She asked what consideration the airport has for deer removal. Rusch replied that the airport licensing is specific to that particular property as an as-needed basis for public safety.

Councilor Storm asked about the safety of hunting on private land. Rusch replied that the required distance is 500 feet from a dwelling unless permission is granted by the landowner to the hunter, and trespassing laws are enforced statewide. Storm asked if the city is responsible for monitoring these agreements between landowners and permitted hunters and was told no. The hunter will need to possess the required licensing if requested.

Mayor Johnston commented on the numerous vehicle/deer incidents in city limits and wondered if the current deer population affects vehicle speed causing drivers to slow down. He commented that the increased deer population also contributes to human safety issues not only by vehicle put distressed deer can cause harm to people and pets.

Gary Martinson was absent and submitted some key items for consideration. He suggested regulations be reviewed for the effectiveness of bow hunting from an elevated stand versus ground level. Age consideration should be reviewed for first time versus experienced bow operators and he also asked about the dwelling distance which was covered earlier by Storm.

Jane Marconett submitted a letter requesting the proposed bow hunt be stopped as she felt there never has been a deer population problem past or present.

Christian Thornburg submitted a letter against the proposed deer hunt stating that it is a costly, time consuming, ineffective undertaking. He stated that the real issue is the excessive and irresponsible recreational feeding by clueless individuals which results in the numerous deer-vehicle collisions within city limits. He feels that an ordinance should be passed banning the feeding of deer in city limits.

Dave Quiser commented that deer group in the woods just as they would in feeding areas in city limits and spread the same diseases. Deer are unique to our area and people like to see deer and they don't cause that much of a problem. As far as vehicle/deer collisions, slow down as you could hit a child driving recklessly too. Eliminating the deer population now will only allow them to come back later. Deer hunting could be controlled in outlying areas of Cook by offering more doe permits to hunters during the two week firearm season held each year.

Darcie Meehan commented that feeding the deer is beyond their natural habitat. She is frustrated with the neighbors feeding the deer and drawing them in to eat her gardens which she puts a lot of time into. Fencing is expensive and she doesn't feel she needs the added expense to protect her gardens.

Councilor Brunner commented that fencing is not an alternative as deer can get caught in the fence trying to jump it, which has happened by the Doug Johnson Park.

Randy Pearson questioned how many residents in city limits would allow hunters on their property and whether it is realistic to offer a bow hunt.

Mayor Johnston asked if crossbows could be utilized if a hunt was to take place and Tom Rusch replied that under DNR regulations handicapped individuals would qualify.

Dan Manick asked if a specific deer count had been done within the city limits. Rusch informed him that continuous deer studies "per square mile" have been completed for many years in all zones neighboring the City of Cook. Manick also felt that the deer population was more prevalent during the garden growing season.

Motion by Storm, second by Hollanitsch to adjourn the Public Hearing Meeting 6:45 PM.
MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Palm
Deputy-Clerk/Treasurer