



MEMORANDUM

TO: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator
Mayor and City Council

FROM: Tom Crawford, Chief Financial Officer

DATE: June 26, 2017

SUBJECT: **Winter 2017 Deer Management Results**

REFERENCES: Oct. 14, 2016 Memorandum to City Council, Monitoring Deer Impacts on Natural Vegetation in Ann Arbor – April 30, 2017, White Buffalo 2017 Deer Research Program Year One Summary Report – March 10, 2017, City of Ann Arbor Deer Management Program Evaluation – June 21, 2017

PURPOSE: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a summary of the results of the 2017 Winter Deer Management Plan. The emphasis in 2017 was to develop and implement an inclusive and transparent plan which included, if practical and affordable, a non-lethal component. Through discussions with the self-organized citizen groups a revised educational component was also planned. Furthermore, the 2017 plan established a data collection plan to establish baseline information and to determine measures for success. Although full consensus on the plan was unlikely, increased awareness and acceptance of the plan was desired.

BACKGROUND: The 2017 Plan was the second year of the four year effort approved by City Council. When the 2016 Plan was implemented and the results and lessons learned were reported to Council, there were areas identified for improvement. In addition, an open survey to residents indicated the City's Deer Management Plan was a divisive issue for the community as a whole. Consequently, looking forward to the 2017 Plan staff anticipated implementing a number of strategies identified by Council, resident groups, and prior experience. Some of these strategies included:

1. Revise the implementation plan to include a lethal cull, a sterilization plan (if practical and cost effective), and an educational component. In addition, seek to reduce the amount of time parks are closed, while keeping safety of residents a priority.
2. Expand the number of parcels of public land that can be utilized for a lethal cull program to achieve the targeted number of removals.
3. Incorporate resident participation in support of the varying strategies by working closely with the self-organized citizen groups.

4. Provide implementation plans to the community for reaction/feedback prior to actual implementation.
5. Develop and implement an educational program that increases awareness of the role of deer in the local ecology and offers residents' options to manage deer on their private property.

Staff members assigned to this project included Steve Schantz, Safety Manager, to act as lead on the lethal program, Derek Delacourt, Community Services Area Administrator, as lead on the non-lethal and educational programs, and Tom Crawford, Chief Financial Officer, as project coordinator.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: During the summer of 2016, staff worked with the self-organized citizen groups to create a problem statement, which was needed to establish goals and objectives. A summary of data measures to monitor were also developed that measured the goals and objectives. These objectives and the data plan were shared with Council in an October 14, 2016 memorandum. To be transparent staff maintained a dedicated page on the City's website (www.a2gov.org/deermanagement) which tracked the development and status of the plan elements.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS: Staff implemented the plan with the assistance of White Buffalo LLC, Nature Write LLC, Michigan State University, resident volunteers, the University of Michigan and others. Overall the implementation was a success. Both the lethal and sterilization components were very successful, but the education component had to be delayed, so it was not completed along with the other plan elements. The assistance of the residents cannot be underestimated in helping staff articulate issues, perspectives, potential solutions, funding, implementation of the sterilization plan, etc.

Attached is a two-page summary of the measures of success, which includes the overall measures along with separate measures for the lethal, sterilization, and education components.

A deer data dashboard has also been developed and will be available on the website within a few weeks. A copy of the dashboard is also attached to this memorandum.

One important measure of the success of the plan was whether 75% of the residents in each city ward found the city's plan to be 'acceptable'. Although this was a stretch goal and staff didn't anticipate achieving it in the first year of measurement, the citizen survey performed by MSU indicates with 95% confidence that all wards, with the exception of ward 3, met this objective.

Final reports from each of the major contractors were shared publicly and are available on the City's website (www.a2gov.org/deermanagement). These include:

- Monitoring Deer Impacts on Natural Vegetation in Ann Arbor – April 30, 2017 (performed by Nature Write, LLC)
- White Buffalo 2017 Deer Research Program Year One Summary Report – March 10, 2017 (performed by White Buffalo, LLC)
- City of Ann Arbor Deer Management Program Evaluation – June 21, 2017 (performed by Michigan State University, The Office for Survey Research, Institute for Public Policy and Social Research)

The plan was budgeted to cost \$258,545. Staff is now forecasting the total expenditures to be \$227,031. However, this expenditure was partially offset by the University of Michigan's financial contribution of \$22,508. In addition, interested residents established Ann Arbor Non-lethal Deer Management (a tax-exempt organization) which donated \$12,125 to support and make more affordable the sterilization

program. A2 Non-Lethal Deer Management (<https://www.annarbordeer.org>) is continuing to raise funds to minimize the need for culling (lethally removing) deer. These contributions resulted in a net expenditure to the City of \$192,398. A breakdown of program expenditures is attached.

LESSONS LEARNED: As with the prior year, staff documented some lessons learned after the infield implementation.

Timing:

- Beginning activities the end of January vs. the beginning of January better enabled the City to communicate with AAPS and UM as well as residents who are out of town for the holidays.
- Notifying residents several weeks in advance or as soon as the plan was finalized worked well and didn't hinder operations.
- Shortening the length of time parks were closed contributed to this year's success in a significant way.

Parks Monitoring:

- A city staff person actively monitoring park activities after parks closing was key. However this needs to be more than one person next year to cover all active locations and provide appropriate scheduling breaks.

Communications:

- The parks closure postcard and sterilization flyer were some of the most effective communication tools this year. In future years, we may consider expanding the number of parks closure postcards mailed.
- Deer Management Email and Voice Mail messages were far fewer than last year and very manageable, likely due to stakeholder engagement efforts.
- Consider using Parks & Rec newsletter to share when park closures are as well as alternatives for things to do.
- Try to communicate with running clubs in the area of closures as well as bicycling & (off leash) dog owners, if possible.
- Clarify appropriate protocols for contractor communications outside of City staff.

Signage:

- Use "Attention" instead of "Sharpshooters" at the top of signs posted outside parks. This language was used in 2016 but changed this year due to stakeholder feedback. Actual visitors to parks who ignored signs stated it was because Caution or Attention wasn't used so they ignored sign.
- Place signs in adjacent parks and parking areas, such as near Bird Hills. People parked at adjacent parks that were open such as Barton nature and Barton park and attempted to go into Bird Hills. This happened mostly with joggers and dog walkers.
- Place signs on taller posts so they are eye level.
- Add something reflective to signs for visibility in the dark.
- As needed, use a barrier at entrance point to physically stop people from entering.

Operations:

- Consider use of private property in future plans to supplement parks/nature areas.
- UM properties need to be closed for more than 4 consecutive days to increase effectiveness.

- Step-up anti-baiting enforcement.
- Close the area around a sterilization operating room to insure deer safety.

Next Year: With the completion of the citizen survey for the 2017 plan, staff anticipates engaging as soon as possible with the contractors and stakeholder groups to digest and develop the plan for 2018. Contract extensions for existing contracts will be brought to Council in July 2017. A recommended 2018 plan is anticipated to come to Council in the October timeframe.

The staff team involved with last year's plan will remain in place for the 2018 plan.

3 Attachments

- 1 – 2017 Deer Management Plan Results
- 2 – Deer Data Dashboard
- 3 – 2017 Deer Management Budget