



**COMMUNITY SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 25, 2024, 6:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Pryor called the November 25, 2024 regular meeting of the Community Services Advisory Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 5555 Perimeter Drive.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Ann Bohman, Cathy Axcell, Jessica Tobias, Vice Chair Vicki Guinther, Chair Rex Pryor

Members Absent: Vivek Arunachalam, Hong Qiu

Staff Present: Ms. Goliver, Ms. Ray, Chief Paez, Deputy Chief Tabernik, Mr. Earman, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Kregel, Mr. Ament

Others Present: Geoff Westerfield and Gary Comer, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife

PUBLIC COMMENT

Seeing no members of the public who wished to speak, the floor was closed to public comment.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Chair Pryor inquired if there were any corrections to the September 9, 2024 meeting minutes. [No corrections were requested.]

Vice Chair Guinther moved, Ms. Axcell seconded approval of the minutes from the CSAC meeting held on September 9, 2024.

The minutes were approved by the following vote: Chair Pryor, yes; Vice Chair Guinther, yes; Ms. Tobias, yes; Ms. Bohman, yes; Ms. Axcell, yes.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chair/Vice Chair Elections

Chair Pryor opened the floor for nominations for the Chair for term ending in 2025.

Ms. Axcell moved and Ms. Tobias seconded the nomination of Vice Chair Guinther as Chair. There were no further nominations.

Vote on the motion: Ms. Axcell, yes; Chair Pryor, yes; Ms. Bohman, yes; Vice Chair Guinther, yes; Ms. Tobias, yes.

Chair Guinther opened the floor for nominations for the Vice Chair for term ending in 2025.

Mr. Pryor moved and Chair Guinther seconded the nomination of Cathy Axcell as Vice Chair.

Vote on the motion: Ms. Tobias, yes; Ms. Axcell, yes; Mr. Pryor, yes; Chair Guinther, yes; Ms. Bohman, yes.

2025 Community Services Advisory Committee Meeting Dates

Chair Guinther stated that the proposed dates were distributed via Granicus for the Committee to review. As a reminder, absences totaling more than 20% of meetings within one year may result in a member's removal from the Advisory Committee by City Council.

Mr. Pryor moved and Vice Chair Axcell seconded approval of the meeting dates.

Vote on the motion: Ms. Bohman, yes; Chair Guinther, yes; Vice Chair Axcell, yes; Ms. Tobias, yes; Mr. Pryor, yes.

Deer Management Next Steps

Ms. Goliver introduced Geoff Westerfield and Gary Comer from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife and Barbara Ray, City of Dublin Nature Education Coordinator. Staff has been leaning on their expertise with the regional landscape and the topic of deer management. Dublin has adopted the no feed ordinance that prohibits feeding of wild animals or animals running at large on private property. Ms. Ray has been working hard to educate the public on the no feed ordinance and enforce when necessary.

Mr. Westerfield explained that his experience in Northeast Ohio is unique because things have transpired there that have not yet transpired in Central Ohio. He has worked with many communities on deer management. He typically lays out options, the community ultimately makes a decision, and he helps them implement a plan. He and other Division of Wildlife staff are hopeful that what has helped in Northeast Ohio can help in other areas of the State. Mr. Westerfield stated that one of the questions he receives most is what options are available. Several years ago, he worked with deer biologists around the State of Ohio to create the publicly available document, Methods for Managing Human-Deer Conflicts. It contains discussion on how urban deer populations came to be and different tactics municipalities throughout the country have used to address deer management.

Mr. Westerfield shared his top four questions for cities considering deer management.

Questions City Leaders Need to Ask:

1. Has the City provided the residents with all available options to address the issue themselves? (ex: hunting)
2. What barriers can the City remove to allow residents to deal with deer issues on their properties? (ex: fence height regulations)
3. Do we feel the safety issues deer are causing in the City are above what we feel is an acceptable level? (ex: large number of deer/vehicle accidents)
4. Is the City being a good steward of City-owned/managed properties? (ex: too many deer, causing issues on neighboring properties, etc.)

Mr. Westerfield stated that he gets asked often if a city has too many deer. He shared basic biology of deer. A small deer population will grow slowly at first and then rapidly. At some point the numbers will reach the point where the herd is using all resources in the environment, that is the biological carrying capacity, and then it will begin to decrease only for the cycle to repeat. The biological carrying capacity is much higher than the numbers in Dublin. The threshold considered for this purpose is the sociological carrying capacity, which is a much lower number. As the

number of deer rises, more and more people bring up the concern that deer are a problem. The tolerance level is the sociological carrying capacity. Deer management program assessments and decisions are based on data. Mr. Westerfield stated that he follows a decision-making model for determining the right path for deer management. The model considers both public safety and citizen response. The number of deer/vehicle accidents and service department pick-ups are considered alongside citizen survey responses. If both of those numbers are unacceptable, action should be taken to reduce the number of deer in the municipality. How the number is addressed depends on the desired outcome: reduction or maintenance. Mr. Westerfield shared the following management options:

1. Hunting
2. Targeted Deer Removal
3. Combined Program.

These are the top items for consideration. Fertility control is often discussed as well. Northeast Ohio has several deer management programs underway. A map was displayed showing areas that currently have some type of management program. Mr. Westerfield offered his and Mr. Comer's services for the duration of Dublin's consideration and any potential program. The first step must be taken and typically, once an entity acts, other steps follow.

Mr. Westerfield stated that there are multiple ways to implement hunting. Some municipalities allow hunting following statewide laws while others have an application process. There are three components necessary for successful implementation of hunting for deer management. The first is having a good ordinance in place. The worst thing for a city to do is create a lengthy ordinance. That typically leads to changing the ordinance. He suggests keeping any ordinance brief stating that there is a process to follow in order to hunt in the city. Doing that allows for easier, more timely changes. The second component could be an application. He shared an example of an application for hunting. Hunters want to have a successful outcome and will take steps to do so. The third successful part is having a municipal permit in place. A permit can be revoked. Those three items tend to work well to get a program moving without too much argument.

Mr. Westerfield stated that he and his staff put together a perceived versus reality research project. The goal was to provide information to municipal leaders. He was hearing common concerns from residents and leaders. They conducted a survey with a response rate of 72%. The years that hunting was allowed in these communities added up to 460 years with an average of 12.5% per community. The survey measured the effect of a deer management program and common concerns. 78.8% of respondents noted some positive effect. The probability of common concerns is very low. The longer a problem runs, the fewer issues there are. The most frequently experienced problems were hunters trespassing and deer dying in a different location from where shot. Those incidents happened approximately once per year and permits were revoked.

Mr. Westerfield addressed the option for targeted deer removal/sharpshooting. He shared a map depicting targeted deer removal programs in Northeast Ohio. They have had good success in these programs. There is a permit required from the Division of Wildlife. A municipality works with the Division of Wildlife to obtain a permit each year. The permit requires a deer management plan as well as an annual request. There are many logistics to consider with sharpshooting, such as annual paperwork, permit application, coordinating deer receipting, etc. Mr. Westerfield stated that the Division of Wildlife can help with all of that and/or provide resources. Three main choices for carrying out the actual shooting are using a government agency, local police staff or a private

contractor. Hunting is low cost and requires low city involvement (approx. \$0-350 per deer/year); targeted deer removal has high cost and there is a large range of city involvement (approx. \$300-\$2,000 per deer/year). There are cost variables. As the deer population decreases, the cost can increase.

Fertility Control is an option often discussed. There are different types of fertility control. The option of surgical sterilization of female deer seems to have the most promise of success. It likely requires lethal control to be effective long term. Mr. Westerfield shared South Euclid's project as an example. It is currently in its fourth year. The first year, they did shooting only, each year beyond that, they added surgical sterilization. Costs went from \$425/deer up to \$3,500/deer. As deer numbers decrease, costs rise. All deer do not stay in one location. The more neighboring communities that participate in a deer management program, the more effective all will be.

Ms. Goliver invited questions from the Committee. She noted that there are many resources in attendance this evening to answer questions.

Chair Guinther stated that when this topic was previously considered, she thought there were only small areas that would be appropriate for hunting or sharpshooting. Ms. Goliver stated that staff has gained more understanding about what goes into hunting or sharpshooting and the space needed. Staff looked at where there are pockets of deer, and they were not matching up with large parks. As research on targeted removal has continued, staff has learned that there are ways to draw deer to a location.

Mr. Comer stated that every community thinks they are unable to allow this type of deer management. It can be surprising in which locations and spaces this can happen. A plan can be based on aerial views and it can include a combination of multiple properties. Professional organizations have standards and guidelines and they will not pull the trigger if it is not safe nor if a property owner will not allow it. Dublin has one of the better opportunities for targeted removal, hunting or a combination of both. Ms. Goliver stated that staff did not consider resident-owned property before. Chair Guinther asked about density and if one neighbor agrees while another does not. Mr. Westerfield stated that there are several communities with these programs that are more dense than Dublin. It is feasible if there are not barriers put in place by the City. A hunter does not want problems with property owners. From a targeted deer removal standpoint, those shooters do not want to put themselves in a scenario where there will be problems. Golf courses are often a great opportunity for deer management that are privately-owned and have minimal impact on residents. Deer management is mostly done at night when most people are inside.

Mr. Comer stated that Glacier Ridge has permitted targeted removal since the park has opened. There are approximately 75+ deer removed from Glacier Ridge each year.

Ms. Tobias asked what makes an area ideal. Mr. Westerfield stated that it is really green space.

Vice Chair Axcell stated that she can attest to the problem in Westlake, as a resident there for 16 years. The hunting approach looks well regulated. They involve neighbors and the permit can be revoked. She asked if Westlake worked with neighboring communities or if they lead the way. Mr. Westerfield stated that Westlake began a program because Avon Lake was managing deer. They did not do it collectively but did do it around the same time. Vice Chair Axcell asked if any

neighboring communities around Dublin are doing any deer management. Mr. Comer stated Groveport, Newark, and Heath are currently doing a deer management program. Worthington will begin soon. There are no programs in the City of Columbus other than what takes place in the Metro Parks. There are programs on the periphery of Franklin County, but there is a large hole in the middle of Franklin County. Some of the existing programs have been taking place for a long time. Gahanna's was in operation for 27 years before it was discontinued. Pataskala is unique because they have hunting just like in a rural area. There are restricted areas. Mr. Comer stated that Central Ohio is probably a decade behind Northeast Ohio. Population densities increased faster in Northeast Ohio. The fastest population growth is now occurring in Central and Southwest Ohio. He believes with more people and more housing, there will be more pressure to do some type of deer management.

Mr. Comer stated that there is no time ever where deer management will get easier. It will not get less expensive or less difficult than right now. We are creating habitat for deer, not taking habitat away. Deer are an edge animal. There is no other time in the history of North America that has more deer than right now. They choose to live here. We have eliminated large predators; there is an abundance of food; there is limited hunting.

Ms. Ray asked if there was a compilation of data of how communities have come to their social tolerance threshold. In Dublin there are about 100 calls for deceased deer pick-ups per year. The trend she is seeing is the deer aggression toward people and pets. That has escalated to 15-20 complaints this year. Deer/human interface is more problematic in Dublin. Mr. Comer stated that anecdotally, fawn aggression, canine aggression, and food aggression is increasing. That is the straw that broke the camel's back in Worthington. Clintonville has very high numbers of pet and people aggression. Landscape degradation is another major concern.

Ms. Goliver stated that Dublin has 10 or less deer/vehicle collisions per year. The City does get 20 to 30 service calls each year regarding deer.

Ms. Tobias asked what happens to an aggressive deer. Mr. Comer stated that ODNR Wildlife Division staff would remove that specific deer, especially if a history is identified. It would be shot by commissioned staff.

Ms. Tobias asked why a permit for a hunter would be revoked. Mr. Comer stated that there are many reasons. They may have hunted without permission, violated an administrative rule like a requirement to be a certain distance from a location or hunting from elevated platform, they could have a wildlife violation like an exceeded bag limit. City of Columbus Code prohibits hunting on public property. Few people realize archery hunting is permitted on private property.

Ms. Goliver stated that Dublin City Police Department will dispatch a deer if it is non-ambulatory.

Mr. Pryor stated that it seems like hunting is a viable option. He asked why some communities choose targeted deer removal instead. Mr. Westerfield stated that sometimes cost can be a driver for decision making. Communities that have more funds are sometimes more comfortable with targeted deer removal prior to hunting.

Mr. Westerfield stated that some programs have taken years off, and those deer population numbers rebound quickly.

Ms. Bohman asked if fawns are also targeted. Mr. Westerfield stated that a fawn is anything less than one year old. Most are born in April or May. Hunting season has been in since the end of September. Fawns are shot but they are self-sufficient at that point. Programs run mid-October through mid-March. Mr. Comer stated these programs need to run when the leaves are off the trees which works with the biology of the deer. They are starting to observe a prolonged fawning season. Mr. Westerfield stated that most hunters want larger deer and so will target larger deer.

Ms. Goliver stated that this is an information session before discussing next steps in 2025. This was for the committee to have the opportunity to gain understanding and answer any questions.

Mr. Comer stated he and Mr. Westerfield may come across as pro-management but that is their experience. They understand deer management is a community decision.

Vice Chair Axcell asked if cities like Dublin typically opt for targeted deer removal because the perception is that it is more City-controlled and the people doing the work are agency trained. Mr. Westerfield stated that if it were his decision, he would run a combined program understanding that hunting will be a smaller component of the overall program. Mr. Comer stated that a lot of education needs to take place. There are some communities that never get to a place where they are comfortable with non-professionals. Something for consideration is how many hunters are in Dublin. He added that no decision will please all residents.

Ms. Goliver thanked the Committee for the discussion and ODNR for presenting to the Committee. She also thanked Mr. Pryor for his service as Chair and she is looking forward to working with Chair Guinther.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business of the Commission to transact, the meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.



Chair



Deputy Clerk of Council