City of Dublin

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Memo

To: Members of Dublin City Council

From: Megan D. O'Callaghan, P.E., City Manager

Date: April 29, 2025

Initiated By: Michael E. Barker, Deputy City Manager
Emily Goliver, Operations Administrator – Sustainability
Barbara Ray, Nature Education Coordinator

Re: Community Services Advisory Committee Report – Deer Management

Background

The Community Services Advisory Committee (CSAC) began discussing deer management on February 8, 2022, as part of a presentation on the City's wildlife management program. The topic was further discussed at meetings on February 14, June 13, September 12, and October 10, 2023. At the October 10 meeting, the Committee recommended prohibiting the outdoor feeding of wild animals at large. City Council adopted this recommendation through Ordinance 47-23 on November 27, 2023, and later amended it on April 22, 2024, by way of Ordinance 05-24 to remove a reference to feral cats.

The topic of deer management was referred to CSAC at the October 21, 2024, Council meeting for further discussion and to encourage CSAC to continue engaging on the topic as the regional landscape evolves. Representatives from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) attended the November 25, 2024, CSAC meeting to present deer management tactics that have been implemented across the state. The presentation is included for reference.

At the February 11, 2025, CSAC meeting, the Committee reviewed regional deer management and Dublin-specific data, and city staff addressed several follow-up questions. The materials presented at this meeting are provided for reference.

Summary

Seasonality
As fawning season approaches in late May – early June, residents can expect to see deer in yards more prominently and potentially encounter fawns bedding in their yards. From late spring through fall, the City may hear from residents who have encountered a defensive mother deer. The City works with residents to provide recommendations on handling deer encounters and protecting the landscape from damage.

Deer/Vehicle Accidents

Year	Number of Collisions	# Resulting in Minor Damage	# Resulting in Significant Damage	# of Collisions Resulting in Injury
2015	11	10	1	2
2016	13	10	3	0
2017	13	11	2	2
2018	10	10	0	0
2019	10	8	2	2
2020	21	19	2	5
2021	12	8	4	1
2022	11	8	3	1
2023	7	6	1	1
2024	11	11	0	0

Given the low number of deer/vehicle accidents (DVAs) and their low severity, there is no present safety issue.

Code Enforcement
As part of enforcing the ordinance, the City's Nature Education Coordinator first contacts a resident to inform them of the issues caused by outdoor feeding. Further violation of the ordinance can result in the involvement of Code Enforcement. In most cases, residents who have received an educational outreach from the City cease the behavior once they understand the harm it causes.

To date, the City has contacted over 20 residents after receiving reports that they might be feeding wildlife. On three occasions, the behavior has not changed, and Code Enforcement was involved for further action.

ODNR Presentation
Geoff Westerfield, Assistant Wildlife Management Supervisor for the Ohio Division of Wildlife attended the November 25, 2024 CSAC meeting to present on deer management programs throughout Ohio. This presentation included guidance to let data guide decision making, including a reduction in DVAs when there is an inordinate number. He described the difference between sociological and biological carrying capacity. He estimates that Dublin is near sociological carrying capacity (sometimes referred to as nuisance) based on the survey responses from 2023 (listed below). However, based on the low number of DVAs, a relatively consistent number of dead deer pick-ups, and the lack of diseases present, Dublin is not at its biological carrying capacity. This means that, while Dublin residents may feel like there is a large number of deer present, there is no danger to the public that is caused by the size of the herd, nor is there a high risk of disease and/or starvation in the herd.

According to information from ODNR, Dublin and Worthington have approximately the same number of deer. However, given that Dublin spans 25 square miles and Worthington only 5 square miles, the deer density in Worthington is significantly higher and more concentrated.

Worthington Program
The City of Worthington City Council voted unanimously at its January 21, 2025 meeting to direct Worthington staff to implement a deer management program consistent with the recommendations of their Deer Task Force. The program includes targeted removal for the first three years and an archery program for ongoing management, likely in the program's third year. Worthington staff established an advisory committee to oversee the implementation of the program, including drafting the policies for City Council's consideration and establishing metrics to determine success. It is anticipated that the targeted removal will begin in late 2025.

While Worthington has not completed a total population assessment, resident survey data was used to inform the program. Residents reported $1.5 million worth of deer-related property damage. An additional $200,000 was reported in medical and veterinary expenses for the last three years. Over 3,000 residents responded to a spring 2024 survey, demonstrating the topic's prevalence in the community. Worthington residents have reported safety concerns about deer-pet and deer-human conflicts, with 7.7% of survey respondents reporting that someone in their household had experienced an incident with a deer. Notably, 71% of respondents indicated a desire to see a decrease in the deer population. Respondents supported the use of firearms and archery as a lethal measure, with the support for archery being greater than that of firearms.

CSAC Discussion
CSAC asked City staff members several clarifying questions at the February 11, 2025 meeting about regional programs, the effectiveness of the Outdoor Feed Ordinance, models for hunting in designated areas, and any liability the City might incur with a lethal program. After reviewing the information provided to them at the November 25, 2024 and February 11, 2025 meetings, it was CSAC's preference to monitor programs in other Central Ohio communities, such as the City of Worthington, to gauge their success.

Worthington staff anticipates that the Advisory Committee will report annually to City Council on progress, which Dublin staff will monitor closely and share with CSAC.

Survey
Staff partnered with the Ohio State University's (OSU) School of Environment and Natural Resources to conduct research during the weeks of May 9 through May 26, 2023. As part of the work for this project, a week-long community-wide survey was conducted and received 297 responses. The public's sentiment was split on whether the population of white-tailed deer in Dublin is increasing and needs to be managed. The results of the survey are below.

How would you describe your experience with white-tailed deer in the City of Dublin?	
Negative	74
Neutral	73
Positive	150

Do you think the white-tailed deer population in Dublin is increasing and needs to be managed?	
The white-tailed deer population is increasing and should be managed	150
There is no need to manage the white-tailed deer herd in Dublin	147

Have you seen a white-tailed deer on your property?	
No	17
Yes	219

Do you think there are too many white-tailed deer an acceptable number, or too little number in Dublin, Ohio?	
Acceptable amount of white-tailed deer	163
Too little white-tailed deer	8
Too many white-tailed deer	126

What negative experiences have you or a member of your household had with white-tailed deer in Dublin?	
Deer/vehicle collision or almost collission	29
Lyme's Disease from Deer Tick	2
Other	47
Plant/Property Damage	219

Recommendation

CSAC discussed continuing to monitor the regional landscape surrounding deer management programs. To support this, Staff would provide CSAC updates when there is new information to share to ensure that CSAC is properly apprised. CSAC would provide annual updates to City Council to outline any changes and return with additional recommendations to City Council, if desired.