

JOINT MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL & PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

MAY 25, 2022

There was a joint meeting of the Warrensburg City Council and Parks and Recreation Board on Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Warrensburg Community Center at 445 East Gay Street, Warrensburg, Missouri.

Park Board President, Erica Collins, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Roll was called as follows:

Parks

- Erica Collins
- Dan Baldrige via Zoom
- Joshua Greene
- Jason Duffey
- Jessica Caldwell

City Council

- Jim Kushner
- Tarl Bentley
- Bruce Uhler
- Eddie Osborne
- Casey Lund

The adoption of the agenda was considered. Caldwell moved to adopt the agenda, Greene seconded. Yes: Collins, Baldrige, Greene, Duffey, Caldwell. No: none.

City Manager Dulin said that joint meetings between the council and parks board were held twice a year. Dulin requested feedback from both boards on the two presentation items listed on the agenda.

City Manager Dulin said the deer population in city limits had increased over the last several years and several citizens had voiced concerns caused by deer during rutting season of nearmiss accidents and property damage. Based on these citizen concerns, discussions and research began among Dulin, Parks Director Danielle Fesler, Beth Rutt of the University of Central Missouri ("UCM") and the Missouri Department of Conservation ("MDC") on the deer population in the area.

In 2007, the issue was reviewed but no action was taken. There is no data to show vehicle/deer collisions or near-miss collisions (which may or may not be called in). Although since November of 2021, Dulin had asked the public works department to track deer picked up on rights-of-way. The public works department reported that over twenty deer were picked up.

Dulin introduced Emily Porter and John George of MDC for a presentation on Urban Deer and Managed Deer Hunting. Porter said several MDC staff provided information for the presentation which included Joe DeBoldt, a biologist in in the Kansas City region and Chris Cain, an undergraduate student at UCM. Porter said there was no significant natural predator for adult deer in Missouri. Porter said there was a high reproductive potential for an undisturbed population (27 does + 9 bucks = 36 deer) with population nearly doubling in one year (36 original deer + 32 fawns = 68 deer the following fall). Based on 2022

Drone Survey Results on UCM properties, there were 170 deer for 647 acres equating to a very high density as opposed to 30-45 deer per square mile of green space generally. In addition, survey results indicated the community was strongly supportive of a managed deer program using archery methods.

Porter and George relayed managed deer hunt statistics for the Kansas City Parks & Recreation Department 2005-2021 of total deer harvested 1,127 does and 541 bucks and hunter participation of 1,975. Also presented were statistics of number of deer-related vehicle accidents from 2003 (51 accidents) to 2020 (7 accidents) reflecting a significant decrease since the urban managed hunt program was established in 2005 for the City of Columbia.

City Manager Dulin relayed three action items needed for a managed deer hunt program. The first item was to provide direction and guidance to staff to move forward with development a hunt program. The second item was to amend city ordinances (a) to allow for discharge of archery and (b) allow a managed deer hunt on public property. The third item was to establish and operate a sustainable managed hunt program within Warrensburg.

Some feedback/discussion included:

- A managed hunt from December 1st-January 15th when the parks were less populated by archery only.
- The parks would remain open to the public.
- Pertle Springs and Mitchell Farm owned by UCM would be included along with Culp Park-Lion's Lake, Blind Boone Park, West Park, Cave Hollow/Sunset Hills Cemetery, Wastewater Treatment Plant, Hawthorne Mitigation Site and Marr Park.
- Assess the program annually to strike a balance in setting deer harvest limits. Partner with MDC to require bowhunter safety certification course and include mandatory orientation prior to hunting timeline.
- The average participation of hunters depended upon hunter interest. Normally, hunters set their own limit based on acres available to hunt but flexibility allows for limitations by zip code preference or outside area if needed
- Set parameters whether to allow tree stands, blinds, or stationary position only
- Whether there was evidence of wasting disease in this area found in the survey? The answer was not in this area but in St. Clair County SW of Truman Lake area
- The City's density number of deer was 60 per square mile. This density number was high considering the green space comparison.
- The volume of harvested deer depends on the City or MDC monitoring the population. Columbia's hunt program in parks and public land harvested 58 deer in 2005 but in 2020 it was less than a dozen resulting in a balanced deer population
- Any City legislation would be in addition to Statewide MDC regulations.
- There was no obligation to participate in the Share the Harvest program and typically a hunter will harvest 1-2 deer for their family and then share through the program
- Whether deer will migrate to properties where the hunt is not authorized? The answer was yes, deer will change their pattern.
- There was no limit for State MDC permits costing \$7.00 on antlerless deer. A limit could be set for antlered deer in a managed program.

- The orientation may include 20-30 minutes of instruction plus completion of the permit application.
- Bowhunter Education certification was required by some communities but not required in Missouri. The course was eight hours, over age of sixteen at no cost in-person or \$30 online.
- It was recommended not to set a limit on hunters per the 560 acres available to hunt in Warrensburg to allow flexibility and harvest of deer. Some permits purchased will not be filled/used. Hunters will limit themselves if only 1-20 acres available to hunt.
- MDC will help with signage. Hunters are responsible for knowing boundaries and many have GIS applications for boundary identification.
- Beth Rutt of UCM said that UCM desires to collaborate but may set different limits depending on student activities and closing of trails. She cited appreciation for flexibility in the program
- The migration to a denser area may not occur if Marr Park and Culp Park areas allow the hunt together
- What is the safety-liability concerns of a managed hunt on public ground? The answer was the landowner would not be liable if not aware of unknown hazards. Landowner should perform due diligence by working with MDC, orientation, signage, etc. for example. However, if there is a charge to hunt on the ground then the liability changes.
- There was a question whether changes to the ordinance would allow archery practice in a yard? The answer was the ordinance would be written to only allow archery for the deer hunt rather than backyard. Beth Rutt, UCM, commented that UCM has an archery range open to the public and holds student safety classes on site.
- Set controls on field dressing not within 100 feet of a trail.
- It was suggested to include Johnson County and not limit participation just to Warrensburg.

As there was no further discussion on this item, the matter was closed/

Parks Director Danielle Fesler presented a Transportation Alternatives Program (“TAP”) grant application opportunity. The grant provides opportunities to expand transportation choices. The grant is administered through Kansas City MoDOT District and TAP projects are eligible for up to 80% reimbursement. Further, the project must be principally for transportation and cost between \$100,000 and \$500,000. The deadline to apply is July 15th . Fesler proposed two projects that meet the eligibility guidelines and handed out site plans to council and directors. Blind Boone Connection and Lion’s Lake Connection.

The Blind Boone project connects two city-owned lots proposed for a covered greenspace farmer’s market location (in collaboration with Main Street). This connection is shown on the 2009 Trails Masterplan (it was noted that some trails had changed since 2009). It was suggested that the connection extend to Waters Street.

Fesler said the Lion’s Lake project consisted of finishing a trail at Lyon’s Lake by Hale Lake Road. There are lots of citizens that walk along the busy roads or embankment of Pertle and Hale Lake Road. There are steep embankments along this trail and making it ADA accessible would require lots of switchbacks and rights-of-way. The grant funds may not cover all of the cost of this project. One of the criteria for the grant is ADA accessibility.

Fesler asked for feedback on the project choice for the grant application. A question was asked whether there were foot traffic counts. Fesler replied that a study had not been performed but an eco-counter would give an idea of foot traffic.

There was consensus that due to the ADA component criteria and higher costs involved in switchbacks, right-of-way concerns, stormwater, slope of grade and the likelihood that resources may be awarded for the Blind Boone project as opposed to the Lion's Lake project, the council and parks board gave its preference/feedback to use the Blind Boone connection project for the TAP grant application.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned.



Erica Collins, President

Attest:



Alex Threlkeld