



**Wildlife Management in Genesee County Parks
Public Information Meeting Minutes
April 23, 2009 11:00 a.m.**

Present:

Parks Commissioners Patrick Gleason, Mike Keeler, Jeff Wright, Bob Ranger, Billy Bradshaw, Ted Henry, Joe Krapohl.

Staff: Amy McMillan, Director; Ron Walker, Deputy Director; Nancy Edwards, Hilda McShane, Greg Parks, Katie McGlashen, Deborah Wilkes

Others: Liz Shaw, Flint Journal; Cindy Carnes, Purchasing; Brian Barkey, Legal Counsel; Joan Wiltz, David Lewis, Deborah Lewis, Tom Gensel, Roger Pilot, Dale Roat, Bill Goodfellow.

President of the Parks Commission, Joe Krapohl opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending the informational meeting. The purpose of the meeting is for the parks commission to receive the public's comments, concerns and questions regarding the proposed wildlife management plan that will be presented by Ms. McMillan. He further added that the parks commission values the public input and wants to hear from the public so all points can be considered before the plan is presented to the board and adopted.

He explained the format of the meeting. It is not a question-answer session. You may address the committee at this time and state your name and address and make a comment or ask a question. The meeting will be taped for the record and a transcript will be posted on our website www.geneseecountyparks.org. Per commission rules, everyone will be allowed three minutes to speak. There will be another meeting on May 14 so all questions will be posted on-line. You may also ask questions or leave concerns on the website.

When a request is brought before the commission it is assigned to staff to do careful and well-thought out research about the issue. A sub-committee was formed to consider wildlife management and whether it is in line with our mission at the Genesee County Parks as custodians of the park property, is it something we have the power to act on, what impact it will have on our facilities, staff and park users, would there be any financial implications of granting such a request. This request is not specific to a hunting issue, but how we manage the wildlife to protect the natural environment of our 11,000 acres we are entrusted to protect and manage.

This sub-committee spent many hours discussing this request. Not everyone will agree with the proposed plan. This is just a presentation and the commission will need to accept, reject, or modify the proposed plan. He asked that everybody respect each person's opinions, concerns and questions whether you believe they are right or wrong and please appreciate the effort we have put into researching this issue.

Ms. McMillan showed a slide presentation explaining the research and studies that were considered when putting together a proposed wildlife management plan. (Copies of the slide presentation are available upon request)

Questions and comments:

Roger Pilot, 2382 Stockbridge Avenue, commented that the lottery (to obtain permit to hunt) should be opened to the residents directly around For-Mar property before the general county residents. Neighbors to For-Mar are more attentive to the property around that area. Over the years they have maintained and repaired fence lines and trees along the property lines due to the parks not having the staff to do the work. He believes that since they have helped to maintain the property they should have the first opportunity at the permits to hunt. If there are any permits left, then fill it with residents from other parts of the county. He has also commented that he has seen about 85 deer and about 50-60 turkeys in front of his property.

Dale Roat, 2207 N. Genesee Road, resident across the street from For-Mar. He congratulated the County for maintaining the property at For-Mar in the condition it is. It is a pleasure for him and his wife to walk the property. The problem is unique in For-Mar as it is smaller and an enclosed area and it "would be like shooting fish in a barrel". Everybody who calls themselves a hunter wants to get in there and slay the deer. He thinks there could be open hunting in the larger areas where the deer are harder to find, but in For-Mar there should be a controlled hunt and bring in experts that are a good shot to hit the deer not shooting his house or his grandkids playing in the yard. There is a problem to solve and it will continue because the deer migrate and will continue to move into For-Mar.

Jack Wiltz, 2183 N. Sycamore, has lived in the For-Mar area for 21 years. He has seen as many as 16 deer in his yard at one time. They absolutely destroy the shrubs and evergreens. He has to cover his landscaping with burlap around the evergreens. They eat everything up to five feet from the ground. There are deer droppings in his yard making it look like a farmer's barnyard. He is also concerned about Lyme disease. The line fence has also been a problem for a long time and he has offered to help pay to help repair or renew it. He has seen that the barbed wire has been removed. He has noticed the deer problem more in the last 5-7 years. The deer are destroying the neighborhood's way of living. He is encouraged that we are looking into the problem and hoping the plan goes smoothly.

Tom Gensel, 7225 Northfield Circle, said that right now crossbows are considered a firearm – would they be considered to be used in For-Mar? Would pop-up ground blinds be allowed to be kept on the property or would they have to be removed?

David Lewis, 5361 N Sycamore, his property is next to For-Mar by the maple sugar shack. He has a large picture window with a unique view of For-Mar. He believes the property was given by the Merkleys with the intent of leaving it as natural as possible and letting nature take its course whether it be good or bad. He quoted from a Flint Journal article from 1968 that says the Merkleys always treated the farm as a wildlife reserve and did not allow hunting. Entering For-Mar you see "no hunting" signs, there is a park rule prohibiting hunting in the parks, and, the perimeter of For-Mar is posted with "no hunting" signs. He is reminded of the phrase "what part of "no" don't you understand. He believes hunting is against the Merkely's intent for For-Mar. The presentation indicated there is birth-control for the does, but he wonders why neutering the bucks (since there are less of them) is not considered. He thinks that would be more in line with the wishes of the Merkleys and the way they wanted their property taken care of.

Bill Goodfellow, 3249 S State Road, Davison Township, commended the commission for the decision to hunt the deer in For-Mar. He is glad to be a potential user of the parks for hunting. He has noticed the overeating of the plants and erosion of the shoreline. He welcomes the opportunity to hunt closer to home. He said it's not a matter of whether to hunt and whether it is overpopulated, but the manner in which to control it, whether sharpshooters or letting the public use the land as another form of recreation to county residents.

President Joe Krapohl clarified that there have been no decisions made yet. This is just a proposal. There is one other public information meeting (May 14, 7pm) to get input from the community and park users and then the proposal will be reviewed and it must then be submitted to the parks commission for approval. He thanked everyone for attending and asked that they check the website for updates regarding the wildlife management.

The meeting concluded at 11:48 a.m.