MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

DATE: May 12, 2017

SUBJECT: **Deer Education Planning Efforts**

PURPOSE: This memorandum provides an update and establishes expectations for the development and implementation of the City's Deer Education effort. Staff's intent is to continue an inclusive and transparent process by engaging representatives from self-organized stakeholder groups to ensure educational efforts represent a balanced approach to an issue that has wide-ranging community opinion. In addition to the lethal and non-lethal objectives, the 2017 Deer Management Plan identifies public education and public rights-of-way improvements as a priority. It is the intent of Staff and committee to review and update currently available material, augment with new information, and to make suggestions on how to provide additional educational opportunities to the community.

BACKGROUND: In the process of developing the 2017 plan, both the lethal and non-lethal stakeholder groups identified the need to enhance education efforts. In response, education was included as a third component of the City's plan. In an effort to achieve this objective, staff anticipates reviewing a number of opportunities identified through the plan development process and from lessons learned. Some of these include:

1. Incorporate stakeholders from both the non-lethal and lethal committees into a single group to address education jointly. Review educational materials to ensure they are representative of the diverse community opinion regarding deer management.
2. Evaluate the City's fence and other ordinances to determine if changes would allow residents to provide additional protections from deer damage.   Changes should be respectful of neighborhood character and not be changed in a manner significantly altering existing neighborhood atmosphere.
3. Review existing deer signage and rights-of-way for potential improvements or additions.
4. Develop and expand the education component of the City's deer management website, review and make recommendations regarding existing and new content, and assist staff with future content.
5. Assist staff in the development of an interactive mapping and information-sharing tool. Staff has initiated the development of a GIS based tool to share historical and future deer management related information. Shared data will include flyover data, deer/vehicle crash locations, police crash reports, and other deer-related data.

6. Create and schedule a series of educational forums designed to educate the public on a variety of deer management related issues. The committee and staff shall work together to design forums that represent shared goals and objectives related to deer management. Subject matter experts will be engaged to provided relevant information regarding agreed upon topics.

IMPLEMENTATION: The successful implementation for the deer education plan is dependent upon the execution of the following tasks:

- ***Establish an education committee representative of the self-organized residents' groups (target completion: 5/31/2017)***. This task focuses on developing a working group representative of the wide-ranging priorities and opinions surrounding the deer management program. It will incorporate the perspectives all of the self-organized residents' groups and stakeholder organizations, including the Huron Valley Humane Society. Staff will solicit input and incorporate into final education deliverables and recommendations to Council.

- ***Review the City's fence ordinance and existing deer signage locations and make recommendations for changes and improvements (targeted completion: 7/31/2017)***.

- ***Develop and publish an expanded deer education component to the City's deer management website (targeted completion: 8/30/2017)***. Staff and the committee will work together to update and expand the City's website to ensure appropriate content is available to the public. The group will work with the City's communication department to promote the site and deliver content designed to assist in understanding the wide range of issues and information regarding deer management.

- ***Develop an interactive information/mapping tool (targeted completion: 9/30/2017)***. Create a one-stop shop for geographic deer information. Ideally, the tool will allow for two-way communication with community members, allowing them to provide updated information to staff and the committee.

- ***Create and hold a public forum designed to address questions related to the City's deer management program (targeted start: 10/1/2017)***. Work with the committee to identify and schedule subject matter experts to assist in educating the community on deer management and tolerance related issues.

LOGISITICS: The funding for the 2017 program is approved; the balance of that funding may be used to assist in education efforts. Staff and the committee will work to identify potential 2018 costs associated with education efforts and make the appropriate funding requests.

COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION: Derek Delacourt is the primary point of contact for this action, and can be reached at 734-794-6215 or at ddelacourt@a2gov.org.   Mr. Delacourt is supported by a number of other employees who will be focused on certain aspects of the plan.

 2 Attachments
   1 – Deer Management Plan Objectives
   2 – Deer Management Data Plan

2017 Deer Management Plan – Objectives

PROBLEM:
- The number of deer is adversely impacting beyond the tolerance level of a portion of the City's residents, the bio-diversity and sustainability of plants/animals/insects in the City's natural areas.
- The number of deer is adversely impacting beyond the tolerance level of a portion of the City's residents, the residential and commercial gardens/landscaping on private land.
- The number of deer/vehicle accidents has increased over the past 5 years.
- Chronic wasting disease in deer is getting closer to Ann Arbor.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

Overall Program for 2017:
- Number of firearm related injuries associated with the deer management program is 0.
- Number of deer in Ann Arbor with chronic wasting disease is 0.
- Total number of deer/vehicle crashes and percent of vehicle crashes involving deer reported in the legal boundaries of the City of Ann Arbor does not increase.
- MDNR approval of a permit to the City for a non-lethal deer management program in 2017.
- Establish a baseline for measuring the vegetative impact of deer in the City's natural areas and establish ecological goal.
- Implement an education program that increases the community awareness of the role of deer in the local ecology and offers residents options to manage potential deer impacts on their private property.
- Community acceptance of herd impact - when 75% of surveyed residents in a ward respond that damage to their landscape or garden plants is at an acceptable level on private lands. Recognizing there will be variability of this measure over time, a trend towards 75% is desired.
- Community acceptance of deer management program - when 75% of surveyed residents in a ward respond that the City's strategy of managing the deer population is acceptable. Recognizing there will be variability of this measure over time, a trend towards 75% is desired.
- Investigate where deer signage is appropriate and implement where possible.

Non-Lethal (Sterilization) Program for 2017:
- MDNR approval of a permit to the City for a non-lethal deer management program in 2017.
- Number of firearm related injuries associated with non-lethal activities is 0.

- Number of deer sterilized is between 40 and 60. (goal obtained after discussion with proposed vendor.)
- Mortality rate associated with sterilization will be established during discussions with the selected vendor based upon best practices.
- Coordinate with University of Michigan to increase the number of available locations for the deer management program.

Lethal Program for 2017:
- Number of firearm related injuries associated with cull activities is 0.
- Number of deer removed is 100 (goal established from conversation with proposed vendor).
- Acceptable level of park closures – in survey (Citizen survey).
- Coordinate with University of Michigan to increase the number of available locations for the deer management program.

Educational Program & Public Right-of-Way Improvements:
- Review the City's "Fencing" ordinance for areas that could be modified to assist residents with deer management efforts.
- Develop an educational program for residents by March 15, 2017.
- Publicize educational program by April 30, 2017.
- Identify desired locations for deer signage in the right-of-way.

Data Plan

Background:

In 2015 City Council directed staff to implement a deer management plan over the following four years. The first year was implemented in January-February 2016. In May 2016, City Council directed staff to provide a data collection plan. This document was prepared to respond to this request.

It's worth noting that when staff talked with deer experts, there is not a specific number of deer or number of deer/square mile that is appropriate as a community objective. The experts recommend the deer level be managed based on social tolerance and the impact of deer to natural areas in a particular community. The following data plan establishes measures that can be used to monitor and evaluate Ann Arbor's deer management program. Modifications to this plan may occur as more local experience is obtained.

This data plan was prepared to collect the data necessary to estimate the City's herd size and measure important outcomes from the annual deer management plans. It will take 3-5 years of collecting this data before the herd size estimates can be calibrated and the appropriate long-term objectives determined.

Measures to be gathered:

Safety
1. Number of firearm related injuries associated with the deer management program
    Method: Reports from police
    Frequency: Annual
    Lead: Police

Vegetation Impact
2. Public Land - baseline & on-going damage measure of natural plant communities
    Method: In field assessment of vegetative growth
    Frequency: Annual
    Lead: Ecologist (presently consultant)

3. Private Land – residential perceived impact of damage to natural plant communities and landscaping plants
    Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by ward
    Frequency: Annual
    Lead: Communications Office

Deer/Human accidents
4. Total crash reports involving deer & percent of vehicle accidents involving deer within the City's legal boundaries
    Method: Police/MSP reports of deer involved crashes
    Frequency: Quarterly
    Lead: Police

Deer Nuisance (droppings, behavior, etc)
5. Deer Nuisance complaints (professional guidance required for wording of question)
    Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by ward
    Frequency: Annual

Lead: Communications Office

Herd Size Trend (estimated) & Health

6. Carcass removal
   Method: Carcass removal requests performed by City vendor
   Frequency: Quarterly
   Lead: Police

7. Existing herd size trend
   Method: Over time, estimate herd size trend with helicopter survey (or other method) in combination with Herd Health statistics
   Frequency: Annual
   Lead: Safety Office

8. Number deer removed
   Method: Reports from contractors
   Frequency: Annual
   Lead: Safety Office

9. Mortality rate associated with non-lethal (sterilization)
   Method: Reports from contractors
   Frequency: Annual
   Lead: Safety Office

10. Assess physical condition of removed or darted deer (weight & age [based on teeth pattern])
    Method: Inspection by City contractor
    Frequency: Annual
    Lead: Safety Office

11. Herd composition – to help estimate herd growth rate by measuring adult sex ratio and doe vs fawn ratio.
    Method: Spotlighting
    Frequency: Annual
    Lead: Contractor

12. Test for Chronic Wasting Disease
    Method: Lab Test
    Frequency: On-going
    Lead: MDNR for any deer carcass removed

Community Acceptance

13. Implementation plan
    Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by Ward asking about acceptability of City's method of deer management (includes acceptable level of time parks are closed)
    Frequency: Annual
    Lead: Communications Office

14. Awareness of deer educational materials
    Method: Statistically valid citizen survey by Ward asking about awareness educational materials
    Frequency: Annual
    Lead: Communications Office