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TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Steven D. Powers, City Administrator

CC: Sumedh Bahl, Community Services Area Administrator

DATE: October 15, 2015

SUBJECT: Deer Management Program Update

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### Deer Cull

Selection of sharp shooters: In early September 2015, staff began researching the sharp shooter selection process. After conversations with a number of communities that have implemented and successfully completed culling, and review of resources available to the City, staff recommends contracting with the United States Department of Agriculture – Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS) for the initial (pilot) culling program year. USDA-APHIS has staff of trained sharp shooters, who also serve as instructors to train others and are experienced in performing safe culls in urban environments. Additionally, a number of organizations model their culling safety program on USDA-APHIS's safety program. Currently, USDA-APHIS is performing culling in Meridian Township under contract with MDNR in its efforts to address Chronic Wasting Disease. USDA-APHIS staff has performed culls in a number of Michigan communities, including Big Rapids, Mount Pleasant, Grand Haven, Manistee, and Barton Hills and assisted Metro Parks in culling in their first year. They are an extremely professional and safe organization with the latest technologies available for carrying out a safe and effective cull, such as night-vision and thermal-imaging scopes. As another governmental agency, their financial goals are not to make a profit, but simply to cover their costs. They are also self-insured. All USDA-APHIS sharpshooters are USDA-APHIS employees, and most are biologists or specialists and are given rigorous special safety and training on conducting the culls.

USDA-APHIS will prepare and arrange any necessary deer cull equipment and will collect and transport whole carcasses to meat processing facilities providing the additional benefit of their expertise in site management.

In addition, USDA-APHIS is experienced in developing Work Plans that meet the program interests of both the USDA and the community. The performance of USDA-

APHIS' wildlife damage management Work Plans must comply with National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act and other applicable federal statutes. Working with USDA-APHIS during the pilot year of the City program will allow City staff to take advantage of their expertise in the inspection, selection and certification of baiting and shooting zones within the designated wards as part of the MDNR permitting process as well as preparation of the Work Plan for the 2016 Deer Cull with the joint goals of precision, accuracy and safety as both the City and USDA-APHIS top priorities.

This interagency approach can serve as a baseline for determination of the scope and compliance requirements of future Work Plans in later solicitations for sharpshooters. To that end USDA-APHIS will provide the City with an after-action report identifying the number of deer culled, target location specifics for the individual deer shot (time of kill, location) and any other information requested or required by the MDNR as part of the issued permit. This information will allow the City to better estimate the conditions and budgets for future culls if private sharpshooters are used in successive years (based on a per-deer kill bid rather than a per-day installation cost).

Therefore, City staff is recommending a contract with USDA-APHIS for the Winter 2016 cull due to its extensive experience in safe culling operations in urban areas rather than pursuing an RFP for selecting for-profit sharpshooters. Staff intends to bring the contract with USDA for culling in winter of 2016 for Council consideration at a Council meeting in November 2015. This will provide adequate time to submit the application and obtain the MDNR permit for a deer cull in Winter of 2016.

Firearm Ordinance: Staff recommends Council approve a moratorium on the restriction in City Code Chapter 115, Weapons and Explosives, to allow the City, by and through its proposed agent, USDA-APHIS to conduct a cull on City properties in Winter 2016 rather than amending Chapter 115. A resolution regarding a moratorium will be presented for Council consideration in November 2015.

Annual Aerial Deer Survey: This is being planned for January 2016, or whenever there is adequate snow cover to complete a successful aerial survey. Ideally, we will be able to conduct an aerial survey prior to the cull in order to help pinpoint the locations and movements of the deer at that time of year.

Deer management information and resources: Staff has begun collecting information that will include:

1. Information about the Deer Feeding Ban Ordinance
2. Don't Veer for Deer vehicle safety information: Link to [www.michigandeercrash.com](http://www.michigandeercrash.com)
3. Gardening with Deer Tips: Link to Michigan State information webpage [http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/how\\_to\\_protect\\_your\\_yard\\_and\\_garden\\_from\\_deer\\_and\\_rabbits](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/how_to_protect_your_yard_and_garden_from_deer_and_rabbits)
4. Tick and Lyme Disease Prevention: Link to CDC tick & Lyme disease prevention brochure [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/Tick\\_Lyme\\_Prevention\\_432371\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/Tick_Lyme_Prevention_432371_7.pdf)
5. Cull Information – Information to come once Council approves a sharp shooter contract.

6. Humane Society of the United States Sterilization Program or research next steps. When available, information will be provided.

This information will be available on City's Deer Management Program webpage by January 31, 2016.

A2 Open City Hall Survey: This survey will be conducted in early Spring 2016 and will be open for approximately four weeks.

Monitoring the Impacts of Deer to Vegetation in Park Natural Areas: City does not currently have quantitative data to assess impacts of deer on vegetation in City natural areas. Staff is considering what a long-term monitoring program should look like, that could start during the 2016 growing season. In the short-term, in an effort to establish some level of baseline data on deer impacts prior to initiating a cull this winter, staff recommends contracting with a local researcher to conduct browse damage in 4 wooded City parks beginning in November 2015. Also called "bioassays," these consist of planting sentinel (or "sacrificial") red oak tree seedlings at selected locations in the field and assessing them for deer browse damage over time. This method is referenced in Cornell University's recent Deer Management Study. Staff is proceeding with contracting with Dr. Jacqueline Courteau, a local consulting ecologist, to begin conducting these bioassays. Dr. Courteau has extensive expertise and experience monitoring deer impacts in southeastern Michigan.