

Item Number: 1



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

DATE: December 3, 2024

TO: Mark Washington, City Manager

COMMITTEE: Committee of the Whole
LIAISON: Mark Washington, City Manager

FROM: James Hurt, Managing Director - Public Services Group
Public Services

SUBJECT: **Discussion on Wildlife Management Recommendations from the Public Safety Committee**

In response to concerns about health and safety issues related to the deer population in the City of Grand Rapids, staff contacted the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to explore options/remedies for managing a deer population that appear to be increasing in certain areas and causing safety/nuisance issues for residents of Grand Rapids. We have met with them several times as well as representatives from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and City of Kentwood - they recently conducted a deer population survey with Grand Valley State University (GVSU) in their city.

MDNR and USDA required the gathering of more data to better understand the problem before solutions regulated by them could be sought. We also identified that this is not just a Grand Rapids matter (deer don't know jurisdictional boundaries) but rather a regional issue within Kent County. Several municipal jurisdictions, including Kent County, are now collaborating to evaluate the deer population from a regional perspective. This work includes surveying the deer population throughout the entire County by GVSU, analyzing car/deer crash data, and deer carcasses collected data. The GVSU field work began in early November with results anticipated to be available in early 2025. A community survey was also distributed to some 93k residents throughout Kent County to receive feedback regarding deer in their neighborhoods.

MDNR made some changes to hunting regulations this year that could reduce the deer population in some areas of the state. Most notably there is an expanded Archery Deer Season from January 1, 2025, through January 31, 2025. This later season now includes Kent County and had previously been called Extended Urban Archery Season. In an email MDNR states that this season "Allows hunters more time to manage deer populations effectively, helping to alleviate the pressure on local ecosystems and reduce conflicts with human activities. This season is open on both public and private

lands. Landowner permission is required for private land or government lands not publicly open to hunting”.

At a recent Public Safety Committee meeting, the idea of a deer hunting pilot this fall/winter within a City Park(s) was suggested and staff were requested to review the potential for such hunt. City staff have been exploring that option and how such could work, in consultation with representatives from the MDNR.

In response to the request, recommendations were developed and presented at the November 19, 2024 Public Safety Committee that included three options as a first step towards managing the City's deer population. After discussing the options, Public Safety unanimously voted in favor of the following two to recommend to the City Commission for discussion.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

* Inform and educate residents through community meetings in December on archery hunting on private property in the City. Partner with Michigan Chapter of the National Deer Association.

* If the Public Safety Committee desires to have a pilot deer hunt yet this season, staff would recommend an archery hunting pilot for antlerless deer during the period of January 1-31, 2025 at one public park property located at 960 Bristol Ave NW – 12 Acres, and that community engagement needs to commence immediately with residents.

Staff will provide a presentation to the City Commission regarding Wildlife Management and the Public Safety Committee recommendations for discussion purposes. Please place this discussion item on the December 3, 2024 Committee of the Whole agenda.

Thank you.

CORRECT IN FORM

DEPARTMENT OF LAW