

PUBLIC SAFETY AND HEALTH COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Council Chambers
140 West Pine Street
Missoula, Montana
May 30, 2012, 9:30 AM

I. Administrative Business

A Roll Call

Members present: Dave Strohmaier, Bob Jaffe, Jon Wilkins, Dick Haines

Members absent: Cynthia Wolken, Adam Hertz, Caitlin Copple

Others present: Gregg Schonbachler, Marty Rehbein, Mack Long, Jim Burchfield, Rita Johnson

B Approve minutes from April 25, 2012

Minutes approved unanimously.

II. Public Comment on Items not Listed

There was none.

III. Regular Agenda

A Safety aspects of management of the urban deer population in the city of Missoula.

Mack Long, with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks discussed the overpopulation of wild animals in the urban area. He discussed the issue of predators pushing deer to the valley bottom. He discussed the differences between Missoula and Helena in regards to geography/ topography. He discussed the areas that deer use as corridors and he estimates that there are about 300 deer using these corridors.

Dave Strohmaier would like to determine the current resident deer population in Missoula versus the estimated carrying capacity. He wants to determine how this data can be collected. Dave supports a deer management plan.

Jon Wilkins asked Jim Birchfield, Dean of the University of Montana College of Forestry and Conservation about this issue.

Mack Long wants to look at the valley basin as a whole. There needs to be and agreed upon management level. He estimates that 500 - 1000 deer would need to be culled. Jon Wilkins asked about conducting a count.

Jim Burchfield, expressed his support for FWP authority. He cited multiple techniques for measuring deer populations. He discussed the issue of social acceptability of the management plan. Long-term management needs to be considered.

Dave Strohmaier asked in the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners were involved in the deer discussion in Helena.

Mack Long agrees with Dave regarding the inclusion of Missoula County in this process. There needs to be buy in and support.

Jon Wilkins asked if the USFS could provide financial assistance. A deer count needs to happen first

Mack Long suggested utilizing University of Montana students. He stated that there is not much funding available otherwise. In Helena, employees are doing 95% of the work. He feels that the Police Department is the closest resource. MT FWP is willing to contribute.

Dick Haines discussed the increase he has seen in mule deer on his property. He asked if the growth pattern is different between white tail deer and mule deer.

Mack Long discussed the habituation of the deer to urban areas, with a corresponding increase in their numbers. There needs to be an evaluation of areas to target first.

Dick Haines observed that the mule deer seem to be more aggressive than the white tail. He wondered if the mule deer will displace the white tails.

Mack Long discussed the different habitats and habitat overlap between the two species. He stated that there are many variables. He stated that mule deer are more aggressive.

Dick Haines discussed letters and calls that he receives from his constituents. He would like to see a count.

Mack Long stated that it is good to have population info as a baseline. The baseline can be used to monitor population changes as a result of management. Incremental reduction or targeted areas can be used.

Dave Strohmaier asked about methods for deer management. He has concerns regarding the quality of deer meat because of pesticides/ herbicide content.

Mack Long stated that Dave's concern is reasonable. Mack stated that contraception is expensive and labor intensive. It is probably not the best solution for Missoula. He cited strategic deer removal that has been used in Missoula in the past. He discussed the use of tranquilizer darts. They need 7-14 minutes to take effect. Shooting creates issues, although it can work in certain areas. Trapping and euthanization are also labor intensive.

Bob Jaffe asked about contraception. Would contraception reduce the number of 'replacement' deer that move in if euthanization is used. He would like to see U of M involvement.

Mack Long feels that the U of M has a role to play. Contraception needs to be performed more than once. Removal should be considered.

Bob Jaffe asked about the correlation between deer control outside and inside the City Limits.

Mack Long discussed the City ordinance regarding firearm discharge within the City Limits. He discussed archery in and around Missoula. Housing density can be an issue. A large toolbox will be needed.

Jim Burchfield stated that the optimum number of deer is a social question. He also stated a need for a large toolbox. The University wants to support the City in implementing a deer management program.

Jon Wilkins stated that a deer count should be the first order of business. He asked if Montana has any experience with deer contraception. He feels that it may be cheaper to go with contraception, but it takes a long time to have noticeable results.

Mack Long stated that he is only familiar with his region. He has no direct knowledge of deer contraception in Montana.

Jon Wilkins stated that the next step is to conduct a deer count.

Dick Haies agrees. The City needs to figure out how to finance the count.

Dave Strohmaier agrees. More data is needed in order to make an informed decision.

Jim Burchfield cited the good working relationship between the U of M and FWP.

Jon Wilkins discussed this issue with Mayor. Mayor Engen is interested in addressing this issue. Any type of grant to help finance would be considered.

Dick Haines described his experiences with deer trapping and collaring. Tracked deer traveled more than 60 miles away in the winter. He discussed public relations issues.

Rita Johnson, a 35 year gardener, uses repellent for the deer. She would like to find middle ground. She is adamantly opposed to trapping deer in net and shooting with a nail gun. She would like to see more humane methods of deer control.

IV. Ongoing and Held Committee Business

- A Police Department update.
- B Fire Department update.
- C Health Department update.
- D Eat Smart Coalition information.
- E Air quality issues related to railroad operations in and through Missoula.
- F Discussion with Crime Victim Advocate Office.
- G Revisit cell phone restrictions.
- H Sign the award documents for FY12 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG VIII) to be used for the purchase of equipment and supplies for the City of Missoula.

V. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Gregg Schonbachler
Administrative Secretary