



FREMONT Michigan

"NOW AND ALWAYS -- A Fine City • A Great Community"

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: July 27, 2007

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City of Fremont Deer Management Task Force

SUBJECT: MANAGING THOSE "DEER LOITERING IN THE CITY"

The above quote was the caption below a picture in the July 25th edition of the Times Indicator showing six white-tailed deer near Oak Street and Lake Drive in the City of Fremont. What a prompt for the first article regarding the efforts of the City's Deer Management Task Force. The picture by homeowner Steve Crandell captures a natural moment for some and defines the deer problem for others.

In a simple statement, deer have invaded the City. This has not happened overnight, but has become a problem due to habitat change around the City that has occurred over the last 20-30 years. About this time a year ago, one property owner in the City had finally said, "enough is enough" as far as deer damaging her landscape plantings around her home. She asked the City what could be done to protect her yard from the four-legged friends turned foe.

The property owner circulated a petition, which was signed by over 200 citizens, asking the City Council to address the growing number of deer within the City limits and the resulting damage to plant life around homes and within City parks. The petition was presented to the City Council at its October 16, 2006 meeting.

Unfortunately, the petition was received at a time when "immediate" action could not be taken to solve the complex problem. However, much has been accomplished since that time and a program will be initiated as part of the upcoming deer-hunting season to help reduce the number of deer in our community to a sustainable but manageable herd. This would help reduce the amount of damage to plants and the environs on both public and private property.

Following an extensive review by City staff of the options available to the community to help manage its deer herd, the City Council appointed the Fremont Deer Management Task Force in January 2007. The Task Force met numerous times over the ensuing months to review the available deer management techniques and strategies and form a policy recommendation to the City Council.

The Task Force worked very closely with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to determine a deer population density per square mile that our natural habitat could support that would minimize deer browse damage. The MDNR estimates the current deer herd size in Newaygo County at approximately 35-45 per square mile. The Task Force had planned to conduct an actual aerial deer count of key habitat areas in and near the City. Unfortunately, suitable weather conditions and necessary snow cover were not available during the late winter, early spring.

On June 19th, the Task Force issued the final draft of its Long-Term Deer Management Plan. The Plan was presented to and approved by the City Council at its July 2nd meeting. A copy of the Plan is available at City Hall and has been posted on the homepage of the City's website at www.cityoffremont.net. The Plan includes seven recommended solutions or measures toward managing the Fremont area deer herd:

1. The City, in cooperation with the Task Force and the MDNR will develop an educational program that will provide property owners with information on deer habits and guidelines for limiting localized deer damage using screening, alternative plantings and other techniques. These materials would present information such as:
 - Efforts of property owners to help determine deer estimates & locations of significant numbers of deer.
 - Listings of landscape plants (bushes, trees, annuals, perennials, etc.) that are susceptible to deer browse and those that are typically not attractive to deer.
 - Challenges brought about by the recreational feeding of deer, including the artificial support for increasing deer numbers, transient browsing, disease transmission & damage to adjoining properties.
 - Describing the many other types of deterrents or protective devices that could be used to protect property.
2. Evaluate the need for and, where appropriate, install warning signs and/or reflectors that may reduce the likelihood of vehicle/deer collisions (VDC's).
3. Monitoring the deer density to maintain it at approximately 25-35 per square mile of deer habitat (currently estimated by MDNR at 35-45 per sq. mile.)
4. Coordinate a regular program to contact & encourage farmers with documented animal crop damage to secure MDNR "Deer Management Assistance" permits (formerly "crop damage block permits") for lands within the Deer Management Areas, but mostly outside the corporate limits of the City.
5. Combine the efforts of the City, the Task Force, local sportsmen, the MDNR and the Fremont Police Dept. to implement long-range deer population and density limits to better manage the deer herd. The initial goal would be to reduce the deer herd by ten antlerless deer per square mile over an eight-square-mile area in and around the City (see accompanying DMA map.) The DMA includes property in Sections 25, 26 & 34-36 in Dayton Township as well as Sections 1-3 in Sheridan Charter Township. The Task Force offered the following recommended steps to implement the deer management goals:
 - The City would acquire & coordinate the issuance of the proper "Damage & Nuisance Animal Control" permit from the MDNR for up to 80 antlerless deer. Permits would have to be used in accordance with all State hunting laws and used by private hunters hunting on private lands (or public if open to hunting) to reduce the number of deer in each DMA to the population threshold.
 - Duration of the controlled hunt would be from October 1, 2007 (beginning of bow season) through January 2, 2008 (end of late archery season.)
 - The Task Force would solicit interest from local hunting enthusiasts to include their name, address, proposed hunting location and the number of deer they desire to remove.
 - The City would notify those local hunters chosen to receive the special permits to be used with the proposed eight-square-mile DMA or immediately adjacent lands. The City would issue the permits for a limited time of 14 days, in blocks of no more than two permits per applicant or property owner at any one time. Applicants able to fill their permits could

- request additional ones. Those unable to fill their permits within the 14-day limit would have to return them to the City where they could be re-issued to other interested participants.
- All permits would be returned initially to the City with a designated form that outlines the bio-data of deer killed, the date & location of the kill and the shooter's information & permit number. All data would, in turn, be forwarded to the MDNR for their databank records.
 - All deer killed by the permitted hunters must be used for human consumption.

Should the initial actions of the sportsmen with special permits and the nearby farmers with crop damage permits fail to remove the desired number of antlerless deer, then the City may consider the possible use of Police Dept. sharpshooters to complete the removal. All meat would be donated to a local food bank.

6. The Task Force would convene each spring to review educational materials, deer population numbers (current & projected) and management options and to recommend methods to eliminated deer if necessary.
7. To aid in the implementation of the Long-Term Deer Management Plan, the Task Force would submit an annual plan to be adopted by the City Council following a public hearing. Annual plans as approved by the City Council would be forwarded to the MDNR for authorization to implement.

There will be additional upcoming articles regarding the deer management program with more details about other aspects of the issue in both the Times Indicator and on the City's website. Anyone with questions regarding the Task Force may contact James Breinling at home at 924-5740 or Fremont City Manager Chris Yonker at City Hall at 924-2101.

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**8-SQUARE-MILE INITIAL
DEER MANAGEMENT AREA**