

Task Force Facilitator Cynn timer Gaasch called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Present	-	Cynn timer Gaasch, Facilitator Jonathan Brotka Sheri Courteau Mary Earsing Robin Foster James Hinton Saundra Mercado
Excused	-	Joseph Cantafio, Councilman Amanda Escobar
Absent	-	Peter Holdsworth

Welcome

Deer Task Force Facilitator Gaasch opened the meeting and asked Jim Hinton and Mary Earsing to introduce themselves.

Jim Hinton is a former businessman and is interested in looking at all options regarding the deer conflict.

Mary Earsing is from a family that has been farming in West Seneca since 1917 and would like to help people being affected by the deer.

Ms. Gaasch reminded all that Ryan Rockefeller from the NYSDEC will join the group at the October meeting and the public will be given time to ask questions.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- July 20, 2021

Presentation: Community Deer Management

Jonathan Brotka gave the attached presentation addressing the Town Board resolution "Whereas, there is a lack of community knowledge about the complexity of addressing deer in suburban environments."

What information should be shared with the community and how:

- Deer behavior
- Problems of overpopulation – review statistics
- How it affects the Town of West Seneca – community interest, property damage, health concerns
- Possible solutions and timeline – no action, culling, fertility control, community education, habitat conservation
- City of Batavia has been working for 6 – 7 years but have not reached a firm resolution
- Joint involvement with Hamburg, Lackawanna, and Orchard Park

What the community can do:

- Do not feed the deer – illegal in NYS
- Leave fawns alone
- Use deer resistant plants when landscaping, repellent use, fencing

Methods for sharing information:

- Task force meetings
- Press release
- Local newspapers
- Website and social media platforms
- Mailer
- Informational sessions could be scheduled, possibly in schools

Mr. Brotka stated he spoke with the Supervisor of Batavia and Irondequoit Police Department and will share the links. The towns of Elmira, Mendon, and Ithaca have community deer management and resources available, also.

Ms. Gaasch opened the meeting for questions and comments on the presentation.

Ms. Mercado stated Orchard Park had a task force and brought in a gardening expert that seemed to resolve the problem and nuisance calls have decreased in residential areas. Ms. Gaasch asked what year this was done and stated Ryan Rockefeller pointed out hunting is allowed in Orchard Park and Hamburg which is part of the reason the population is somewhat more limited there. Ms. Mercado stated it was 2009 when Orchard Park's task force was active. Ms. Gaasch stated there must have been a culture shift as well.

Ms. Courteau stated her research involved reaching out to local municipalities as well and her presentation could be shared with Orchard Park.

Mr. Brotka stated a long term solution is the desired goal and it is an ongoing community involvement solution. Mr. Hinton stated the Cornell Cooperative Extension has an excellent program about deer resistant plants.

Ms. Earsing questioned when West Seneca ended the nuisance permits. A member of the audience is a nuisance permit holder for the Buffalo Airfield and understood a few other nurseries may still hold them. Another member of the audience confirmed businesses may apply for them with the DEC.

Ms. Gaasch stated they could work with the DEC to determine the nuisance permits assigned to West Seneca and their status.

Ms. Mercado stated she has data from greenhouse and farmers growing produce professionally who have joined an initiative of putting up special fencing around their crops this year which has mitigated the problem.

Dr. Foster addressed the nuisance permits and stated the DEC will assess the number of deer that can be taken and any additional must be approved.

Ms. Earsing stated she believes the nuisance permits apply to other animals, also.

Ms. Gaasch stated the press release will be issued after the October meeting to incorporate information learned from Mr. Rockefeller.

Review of Communications Received

Ms. Gaasch stated there was a well-rounded group of emails received.

Public Comments

- ✓ The health of the deer suffers from overpopulation and keeping the herds healthy down does involve culling
- ✓ Erie county fishing advisory board member stated the deer population is huge and getting bigger
- ✓ Chose West Seneca for the abundance of nature, proactively safeguarded her landscaping by contacting experts, and observed other towns have used education to mitigate nuisance problems; is in Favor of non-lethal methods first
- ✓ In favor of education and non-lethal methods
- ✓ Would like his email shared with Mr. Rockefeller; would like the DEC to shorten the hunting season for apex predators
- ✓ Is there legislation that would penalize those feeding deer
- ✓ Is there a gardening education campaign
- ✓ If a bait and shoot is held, can there be a guarantee that only professional hunters would be used

Ms. Gaasch stated she is encouraging people who email about neighbors feeding the deer to report them to the DEC. The DEC will follow up and issue a warning followed by a ticket if necessary. Mr. Rockefeller has also suggested asking the town to create legislation locally to empower the police department to enforce the law.

Mr. Brotka addressed the suggestion of introducing apex predators and stated residents in West Seneca would not be supportive of this.

Additional Public Comments

- ✓ Cited a Town Board meeting from 2016 and Chief Denz's comments that deer do not present a public safety issue
- ✓ Referred to Orchard Park's use of the "Deer Doctor" Sandy Baker and the success they experienced and would like West Seneca to use her also
- ✓ Development is taking too much land from the deer
- ✓ Are there statistics on Lyme disease in Erie County
- ✓ How are disease and injured deer handled
- ✓ What is the number of deer collisions compared to other types of motor vehicle accidents
- ✓ Watching the deer population grow and their food source is dwindling; culling would be helpful
- ✓ Would the DEC require proof of people feeding the deer

Mr. Hinton stated there were 66 cases of Lyme Disease in Erie County in 2020.

Ms. Mercado stated animals such as squirrels, raccoons, and birds also carry ticks. With regards to assisting injured deer, Ms. Mercado explained deer can cut off pain receptors to injured limbs. Capture myopathy occurs when deer are captured to try to help them, and they end up dying because of this.

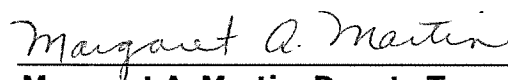
Ms. Gaasch stated three friends have Lyme Disease that did not contract it in New York state.

Ms. Mercado recommended an all-natural plant based repellent called Wondercide which is safe for people and animals.

Ms. Courteau addressed the concern that only professional hunters would be used for any culling and stated the DEC requires the hunters must be licensed and specially trained. Additionally, the number of car accidents in 2019 and 2020 may have been affected by COVID. Ms. Courteau thanked the audience for attending and stated there are many different habitats within West Seneca and it is important to keep an open mind.

Ms. Gaasch agreed that looking more closely at the accidents would be a good idea.

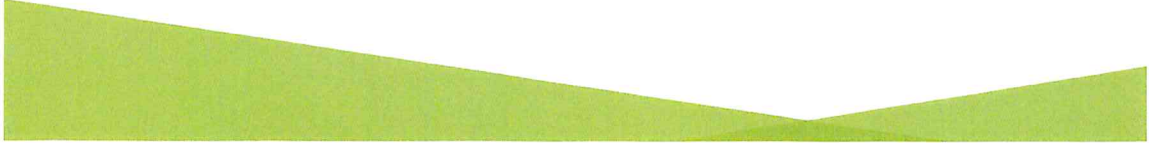
Ms. Gaasch adjourned the meeting at 7:05 P.M.



Margaret A. Martin, Deputy Town Clerk

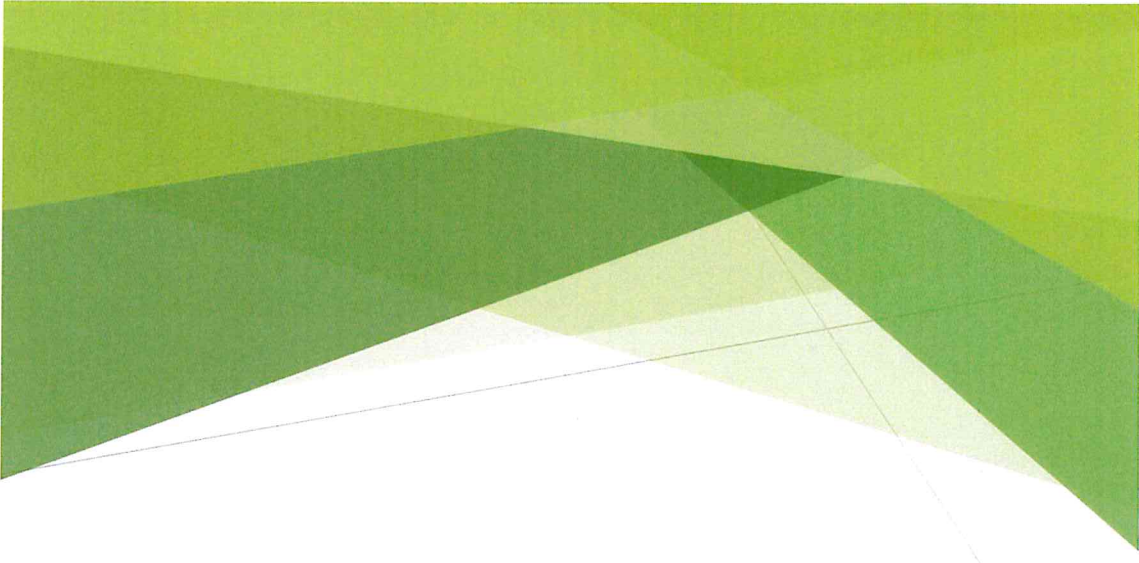
Community Deer Management

West Seneca, NY



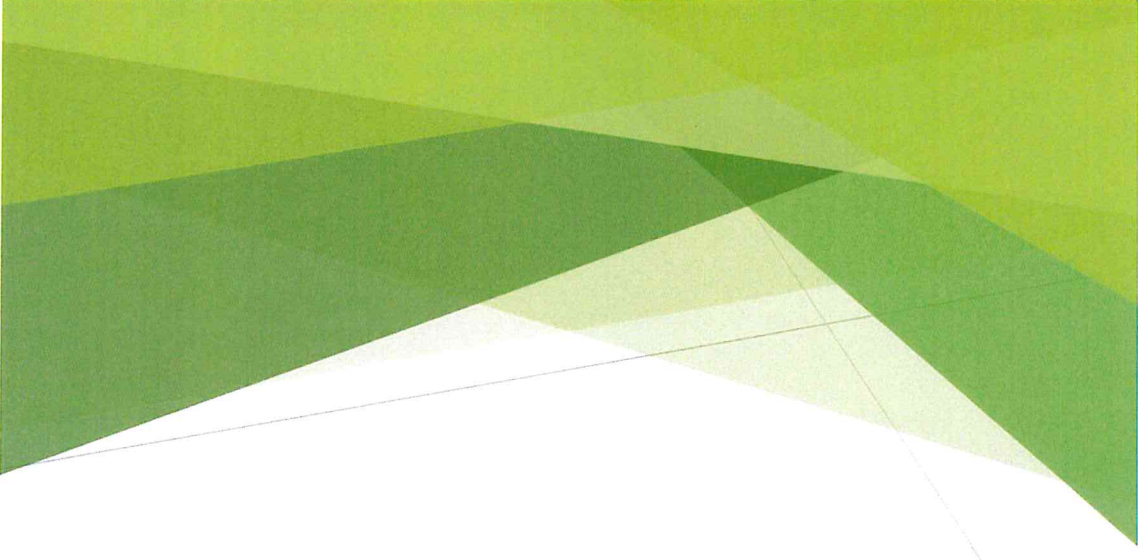
Problem Statement:

- ▶ WHEREAS, there is a significant lack of community knowledge about the complexity of addressing deer in suburban environments.



What Information do we want to share with the community?

- ▶ Brief description of white-tail deer anatomy, behavior
- ▶ Local deer population information
- ▶ How the community feels about the deer issue
- ▶ The problems associated with deer overpopulation
 - ▶ Clarification on the problem West Seneca is facing
- ▶ What the West Seneca Deer Task Force is addressing
- ▶ What are some possible solutions or community options for deer control
- ▶ What the community can do to help
- ▶ What is the timeline

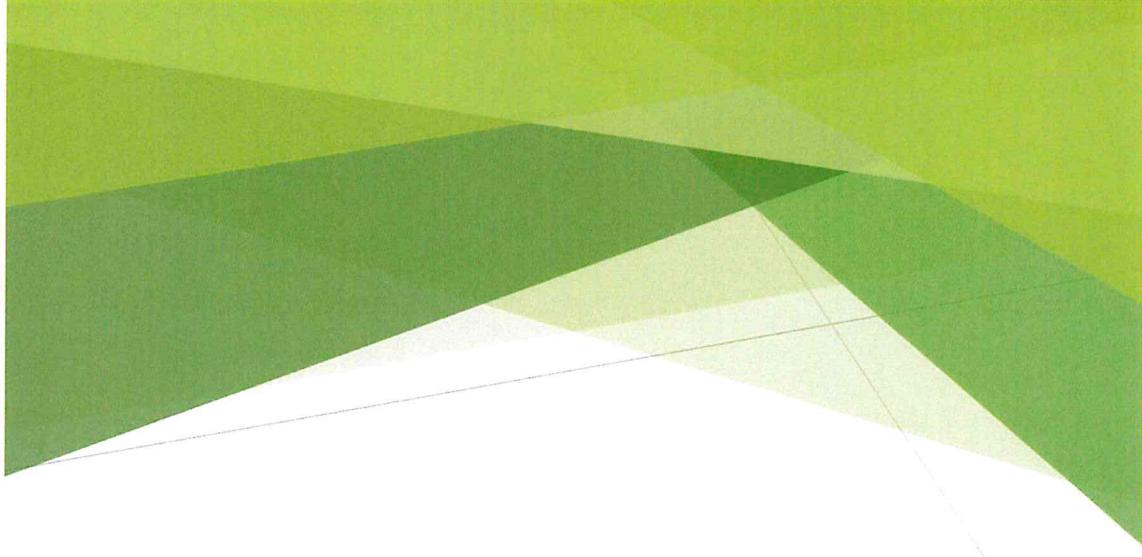


White-Tail Deer

- ▶ Brief description of White-tail deer anatomy
- ▶ Deer diet and behavior
 - ▶ Deer feeding on landscapes, gardens, and crops
 - ▶ Breeding and seasonal tendencies
- ▶ Impact of deer to the community and ecosystem
 - ▶ Positive and negative impacts

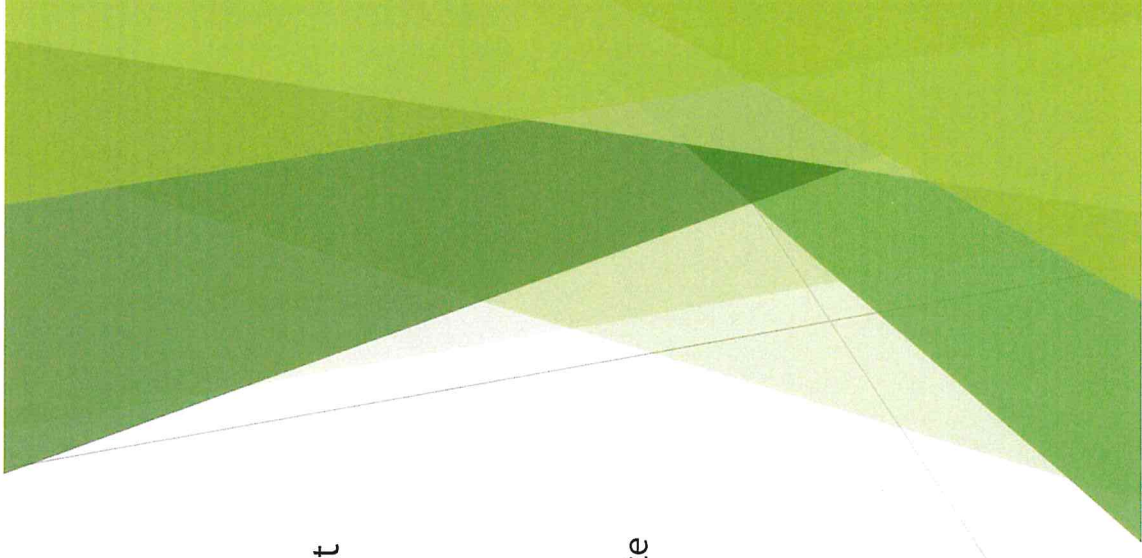


[Managing White-tailed Deer in Suburban Environments - Cornell](#)



Local Deer Metrics

- ▶ Share with the community what we know about the deer population in West Seneca.
- ▶ Why conducting a survey of total population is difficult and expensive.
- ▶ Number of accidents/calls made to local law enforcement.
- ▶ Some of this information has already been shared on the Deer Task Force Website for the Town of West Seneca.



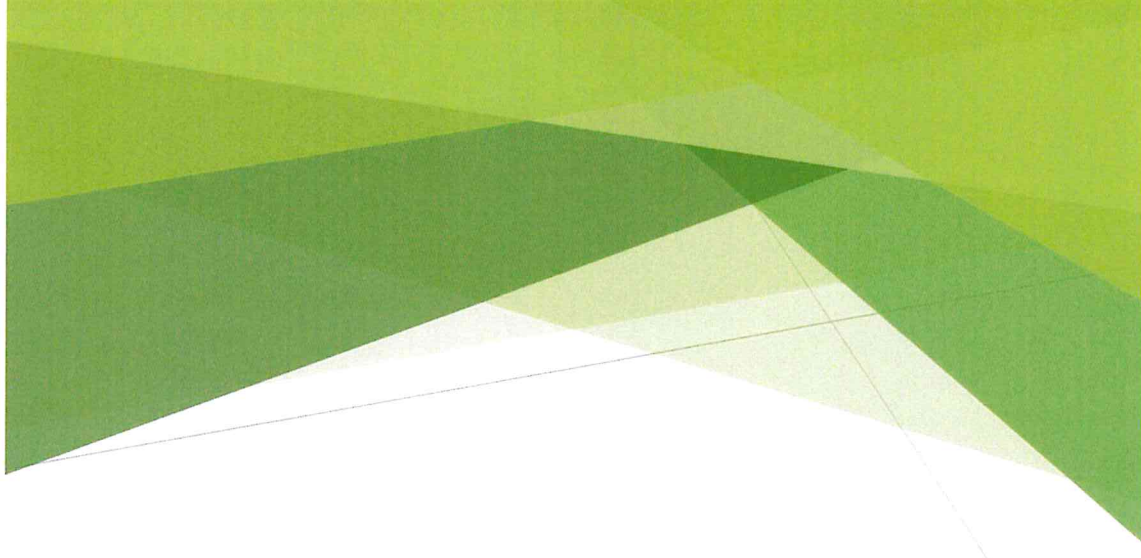
Community Interest

- ▶ Deer Control Survey performed in W.S. between March 2, 2021 and March 9, 2021.
 - ▶ 1,466 total respondents
 - ▶ 642 responded: “Deer are a serious nuisance that require action to reduce the herds”
 - ▶ 664 responded: “Deer are part of the natural world and should be left alone”
- ▶ Overall, the community is split on the deer population issue and how to proceed. Sharing this information with the community should help to at least draw attention to the issue being divisive in nature. It should be noted however that the number of respondents to this survey represents roughly 3% of the population of West Seneca.

[West Seneca Deer Task Force Webpage](#)

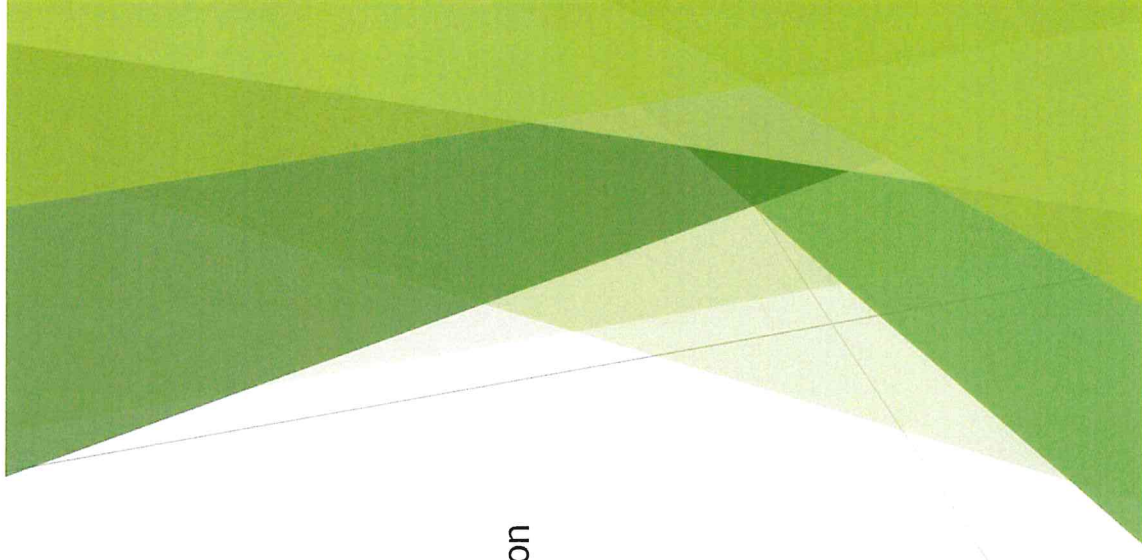
The Problems of Deer Overpopulation

- ▶ Damage to crops, gardens, and home landscaping
- ▶ Fear of increased risk for Tick related illnesses
- ▶ Deer related accidents with motorists
- ▶ Increased risk of diseased and unhealthy deer
- ▶ Damage to the natural ecosystem



West Seneca Deer Task Force

- ▶ Explanation to the public about how the Deer Task Force started, our role, how often we meet, and what our goal is.
- ▶ We are here to provide information and a recommendation to the Town of West Seneca.
- ▶ Explaining possible recommendations that may result from our determination
 - ▶ Do nothing
 - ▶ Culling - bait and shoot
 - ▶ Fertility Control
 - ▶ Community Education
 - ▶ Habitat Conservation



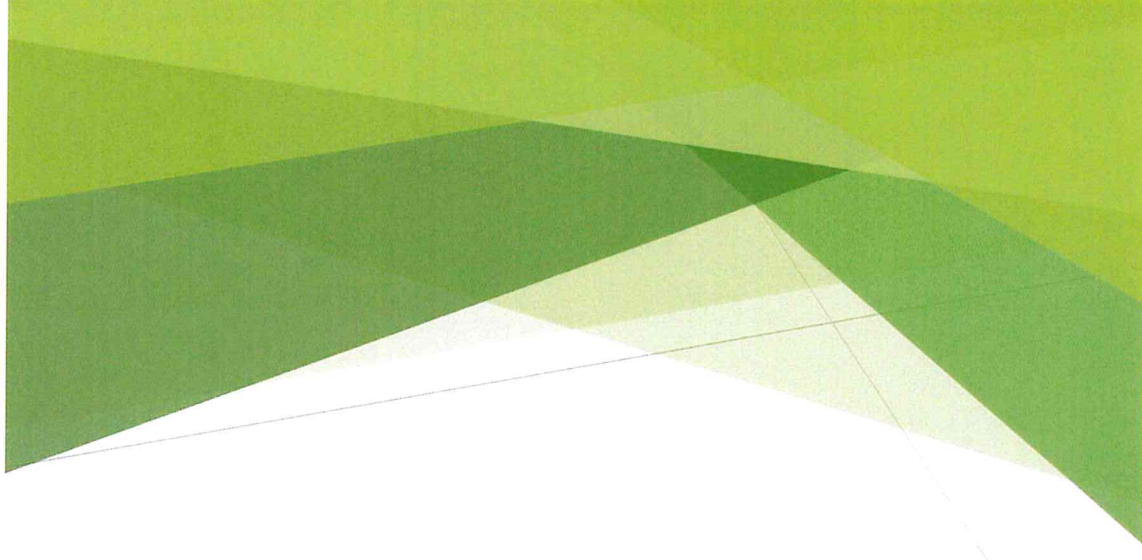
What Can the Community Do?

- ▶ **DO NOT FEED THE DEER.**
 - ▶ Not only is it illegal, feeding increases nuisance behavior and causes deer to congregate in unnaturally high numbers, putting both deer and people at risk.
- ▶ Leave fawns alone
 - ▶ It is normal for does to leave their fawns unattended for long periods each day. Taking in fawns that appear abandoned is illegal and unwarranted.
- ▶ Plan landscapes that are deer resistant
- ▶ Repellent use can be effective but must be well maintained
- ▶ A physical barrier such as a fence can help reduce damage to landscape
- ▶ Report an injured deer or an immediate threat to public safety or animal welfare to local law enforcement.



How Do We Share the Information We have with the Community?

- ▶ Press Release - Local Television/News
- ▶ Local Newspaper (i.e. West Seneca Bee, Buffalo News)
- ▶ Webpage
- ▶ Social Media
- ▶ Mailer/Flyer
- ▶ School Involvement
- ▶ Educational Meeting / Forums



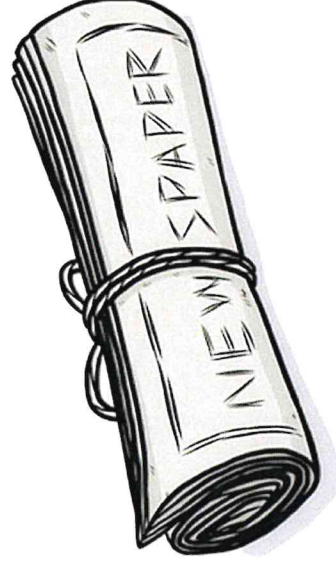
Press Release

- ▶ Relatively brief interview with WS government / task force
- ▶ Get the pertinent information out to the public explaining what we are and what the issue is.
- ▶ Include major talking points and resource for the public to comment
- ▶ Limited audience based on viewership.



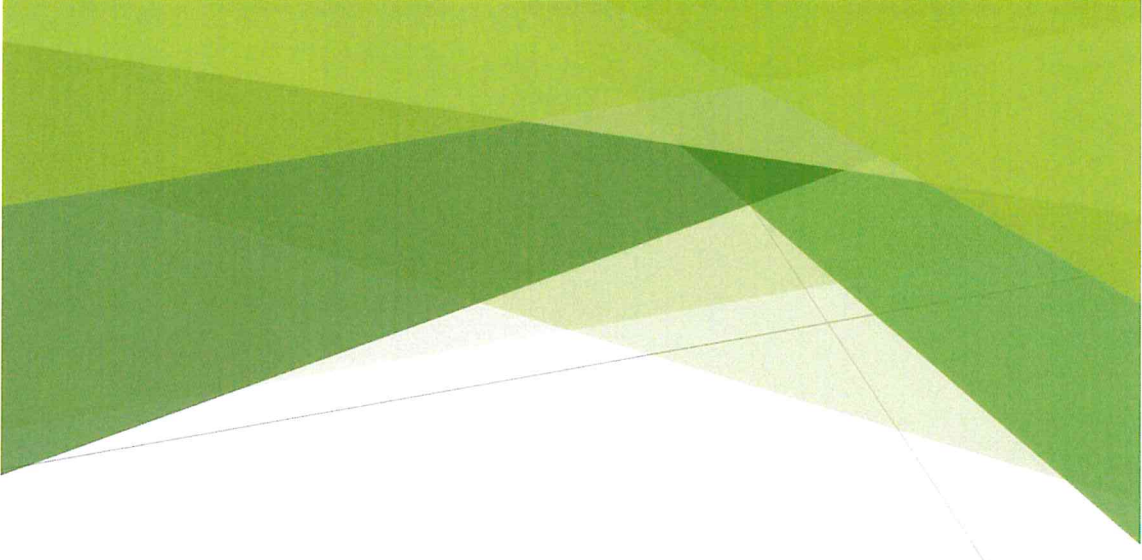
Local Newspapers

- ▶ Article can be somewhat detailed.
- ▶ Include as many facts as possible while being succinct.
- ▶ Include resource for public opinion and concerns.
- ▶ Limited audience based on readers/subscribers to local newspaper.
- ▶ Will require interest from the publication to print the story.
- ▶ Typically article will also be posted online for major publications.



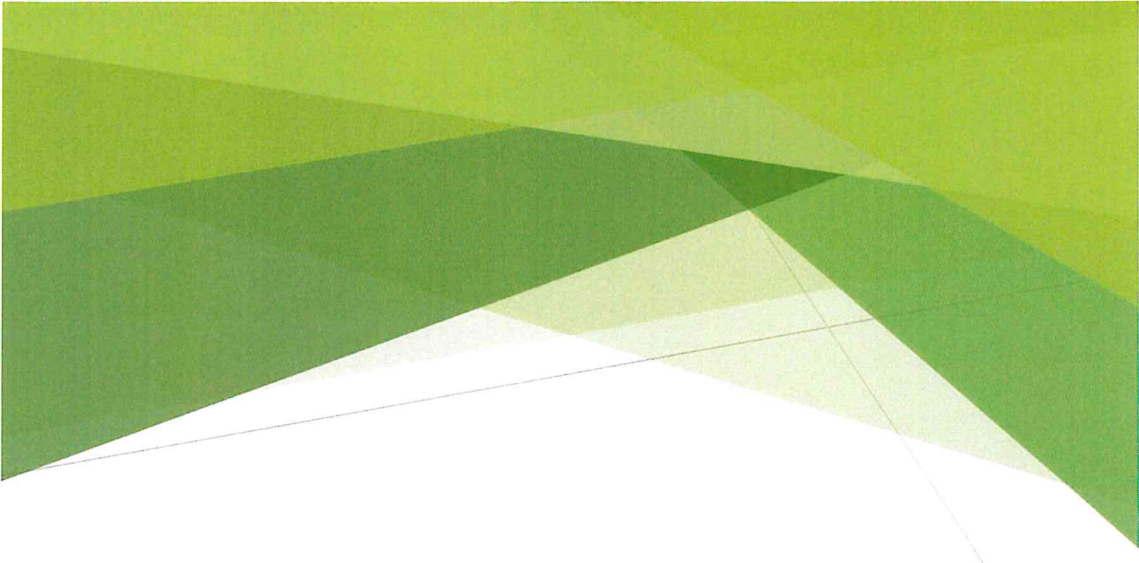
Website

- ▶ Option with the most detail
- ▶ Can include links to sources
- ▶ Can contain a link or resource for public opinion and concerns
- ▶ Searchable on the internet - can be a resource for residents looking for information on the subject
- ▶ Accessible to anyone who can use the internet
- ▶ Some set-up and maintenance required.
 - ▶ DTF already has a webpage set up on the Town of West Seneca



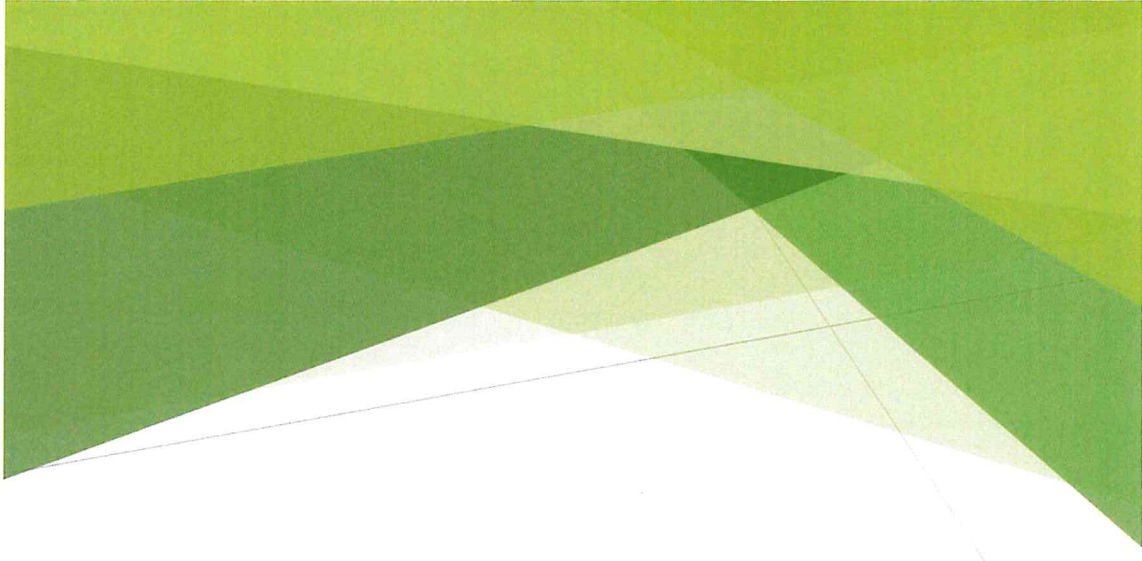
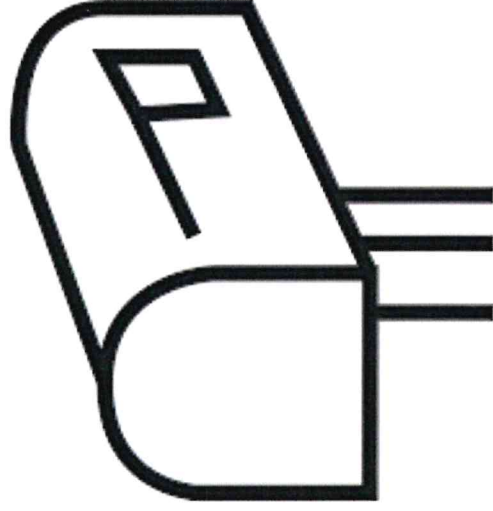
Social Media

- ▶ Effective towards a younger audience
- ▶ Limited viewership based on followers/interested parties
- ▶ Easily Linked to online content like a webpage
- ▶ Easily updated



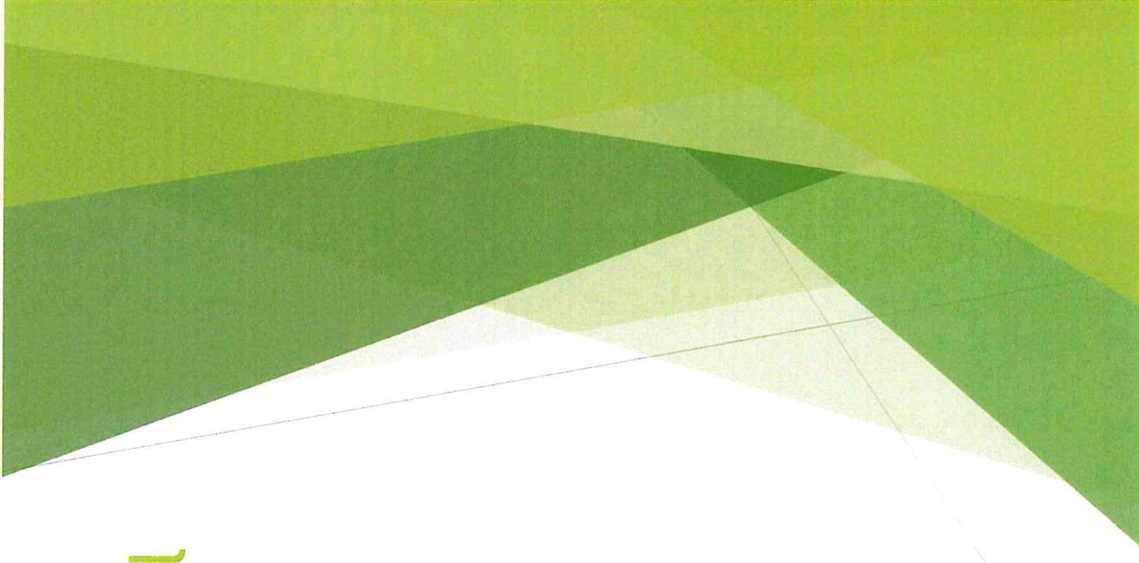
Mailer / Flyer

- ▶ A flyer or informational can be sent out to residents on the deer topic
 - ▶ Not everyone may be interested in reading the flyer
 - ▶ Cost associated with printing and postage



Educational Meetings / Forums / School Involvement

- ▶ Forums or Informationals can be set-up by the town to educate interested individuals in person on the issues.
- ▶ Information is limited to those attending / interested.
- ▶ Can set-up small sessions in local schools to get information to school aged children.



Links

- ▶ [City of Batavia Deer Management Website](#)
- ▶ [News Article Irondequoit Deer Bow Hunt Program - \(Program\)](#)
- ▶ [Town of Elmira Deer Management](#)
- ▶ [Town of Mendon Deer Task Force Webpage](#)
- ▶ [Town of Ithaca Deer Management](#)
- ▶ [West Seneca Deer Task Force](#)

