



Office of the West Seneca Town Supervisor
Hon. Gary A. Dickson

Memorandum

To: Honorable Town Board
From: Gary Dickson, Town Supervisor
Date: March 12, 2021
Subject: West Seneca Deer Task Force

Gentlemen,

Judging from calls and emails I have received, the abundance of deer appears to be of great concern to many residents. Many people have expressed concern over the risk of car/deer collisions, their consumption of plants, deer manure in yards, and the threat of Lyme disease from ticks.

To test whether deer are a widespread concern, I created an online survey that ran from March 2-9, 2021. In that time there were 1,466 respondents, 1,374 from self-identified residents of West Seneca. To put this in perspective, the prior survey on the West Seneca Police Department received 767 responses between February 4 and 28, 2021.

Although this was not a scientific poll, it clearly showed that the abundance of deer is a hot topic in West Seneca and there are passionate opinions on all sides. Of the respondents who self-identified as residents of West Seneca, 642 responded that "Deer are a serious nuisance that require action to reduce the herds," while 664 responded that "Deer are part of the natural world and should be left alone." Overall, 543 West Seneca residents felt that there should be a deer control program in West Seneca, even if it involved culling 50-100 deer per year at taxpayer expense.

Cornell University has extensive experience with helping communities come up with deer programs through its Community-based deer management program (CBDM) (<https://deeradvisor.dnr.cornell.edu/cbdm-process>). As the CBDM says:

Community members who give input to a process that is fair, representative, and inclusive are far more likely to accept and support decisions about deer management.

It is my feeling that the next step is to create a task force consisting of residents and local experts to research the issues, listen to the public, and make recommendations to the town board. To this end, I have attached a draft resolution for your consideration.

RESOLUTION
Creation of a West Seneca Deer Task Force

WHEREAS, many community members are concerned about the impact of deer in suburban areas, including but not limited to, deer-vehicle collisions, tick-borne illnesses from deer, and damage to plants from deer; and

WHEREAS, suburban environments have created a suitable deer habitat, and many citizens, through the planting of ornamental and/or vegetable gardens, inadvertently provide an abundance of food and shelter for the deer population; and

WHEREAS, as the number of deer in suburban environments grows, so too do deer-human conflicts; and

WHEREAS, many West Seneca residents have contacted elected officials of the Town of West Seneca to request the Town take action to control the deer population; and

WHEREAS, there are also many West Seneca residents that believe the deer should be left alone without any deer population controls;

WHEREAS, the scientific research indicates that suburban areas can provide substantial carrying capacity for deer and the biological carrying capacity of some areas can approach 100 deer per square mile; and

WHEREAS, rather than the biological carrying capacity, the community must decide the social carrying capacity -how many deer are acceptable in light of the deer-human conflicts; and

WHEREAS, the Town acknowledges that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has exclusive jurisdiction over the management of deer per New York State Code; and

WHEREAS, a prudent approach to deer-human co-existence involves a partnership between citizens, local government, and the NYS DEC; and

WHEREAS, there is a significant lack of community knowledge about the complexity of addressing deer in suburban environments; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the residents of the Town to understand the impact of deer in suburban communities and exploring approaches to minimize deer-human conflicts;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF WEST SENECA, NEW YORK, THAT:

SECTION 1. The West Seneca Deer Task Force shall be established to explore ways to address deer-human conflict, educate the public on the matter, solicit community feedback on possible solutions, and make recommendations to address the matter to the Town Board.

- (1) Members. The Task Force shall be composed of eleven members.
- (2) Appointments. The Supervisor and the four Councilmembers shall each appoint one member from residents of West Seneca. Four additional members with relevant professional qualifications, not necessarily residents of West Seneca, shall be nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Town Board. One member of the West Seneca Town Board shall be nominated by the Town Board.

One member of the West Seneca Environmental Commission shall be nominated by the Town Board.

- (3) Vacancies and Removal. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner that member who caused the vacancy was appointed. Members of the Task Force may be removed by the authority that appointed them at any time, without cause.
- (4) Qualifications. Members shall include a variety of community representatives and expertise. Preference for Task Force members shall be given to concerned residents, those with a background in biology (wildlife and/or ecology), veterinarians, gardeners, and animal welfare representatives. Members should be open-minded and capable of working in collaboration with members of differing opinions.
- (5) The Task Force is an advisory body and will conduct its business with transparency, seeking as much public input as possible.
- (6) The Town Clerk shall appoint a Secretary to the West Seneca Deer Task Force from a member of her staff with a stipend of \$1,000 from budget line 1.1670.0138 – PT Clerical Pool.

SECTION 2. The Task Force shall submit a status report to the Town Board six months after its first meeting and a final report twelve months after its first meeting with recommendations for review by the Town Board and the NYS DEC and, if recommended, with written material for education of the public to be reviewed by the Town Board prior to dissemination.

SECTION 3. The Task Force will dissolve following submittal of its final report unless extended by the Town Board.