

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

ROLL CALL:

Present	-	Cynn timer Gaasch, Facilitator
		Joseph Cantafio, Councilman
		Sheri Courteau
		Amanda Escobar
		Robin Foster
		James Hinton
		Saundra Mercado
Absent	-	Britney-Bay Croyle
		Jonathan Brotka

Welcome

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- June 15, 2021

Presentation: Issues faced by residents

Amanda Escobar gave the attached presentation, an analysis of the initial survey conducted by the town to evaluate public opinion on whether deer control is needed.

- Conducted March 2 – March 9, 2021
- Total survey respondents 1,466 with 543 in favor of a deer control program
- Areas of Concern – based on 201 respondents expressing a total of 294 concerns
- Solutions and Ideas - 456 comments that offered solutions; highlighted the need for public education
- Safety of residents and the use of humane methods for hunting/culling emphasized in comments
- Possible Next Steps - Public perception should be addressed and reassure residents the initial survey was a starting place

Ms. Escobar questioned if bow hunting is allowed in West Seneca. Ms. Martin stated only nuisance permits are issued in West Seneca.

Presentation: Local Communities' Deer Management Programs

Sheri Courteau shared the attached information about deer management programs in the following municipalities: Lackawanna, Cheektowaga, Amherst, Clarence, and North Tonawanda.

- Lackawanna considered birth control but found it to be cost prohibitive and extremely challenging
- Nuisance permits (hunting) are issued by the NYSDEC, towns decide if the Police Department or residents can apply for the permits
- Clarence allows the use of crossbows and property owners may give permission to allow bait and shoot
- North Tonawanda conducted extensive research before determining the number of deer to cull
- Ryan Rockefeller is the common contact from the NYSDEC

Ms. Gaasch stated Ryan Rockefeller will be attending an upcoming meeting.

Discussion of presentations

Ms. Gaasch referred to Ms. Escobar's presentation and cautioned stating "results" for questions that were not specifically asked in the survey. Ms. Escobar reiterated the survey was a diagnostic tool and can make any modifications needed before the survey is posted on-line.

Slide 14, Opposed to lethal thinning methods: Results reflect unsolicited comments left on survey

Slide 4, Initial Deer Control Survey: Actual results

Slide 17, Use of taxpayer dollars: Reflects comments written in the "Comments" section of survey only

Ms. Escobar stated many residents have expressed concerns that they were not able to participate in the survey and a second survey would allow them to weigh in. Ms. Escobar read one of the emails received by the Deer Task Force in which a resident expressed their concerns about the number of hunters appointed and hopes all residents' interests are considered by the group.

Ms. Gaasch stated some members have dropped off the task force.

Ms. Gaasch asked Ms. Courteau if any of the towns have contracted with the DEC to perform deer culling or if they are all done by the Police Departments. Ms. Courteau responded most towns utilize their Police Department but they all must coordinate with and abide by DEC guidelines. Ms. Mercado questioned if the DEC would give West Seneca the money charged for permits to offset costs for culling. Ms. Courteau stated NYS pays for the processing of the deer and the meat is donated to food pantries.

Dr. Foster suggested the group prepare a list of questions for Ryan Rockefeller.

A resident stated to his knowledge there are no fees collected by the DEC for nuisance permits and The Deer Shop on Genesee Street processes about 1,500 deer and donates the meat. Ms. Mercado stated she knows they do not charge the state or towns.

Review of communications received

- Two people have dropped off the task force: David Lavango and Charles Sardo

Action items and assignments set for future meetings

- Provide contact information on the shared google document
- Consider having a working meeting in August to prepare questions for the Ryan Rockefeller
- Notify Facilitator Gaasch and Secretary Martin of any absences prior to meetings – Ms. Mercado suggested bylaws regarding attendance of members

Public Comments

Comments and questions received by public comment at the meeting:

- ✓ Shares the concern that the public will not have the opportunity to give input
- ✓ The website is "unsecured" – this is not something the task force can address
- ✓ When was the survey conducted and what were the questions – see Town website
- ✓ Will any additional surveys be conducted – the task force will be considering future actions
- ✓ Will the website be updated – yes, the meeting minutes and research materials will be added

- ✓ Rick Rickert, a nuisance wildlife control operator guest at the meeting (NWCO):
 - Introduced himself and offered to assist with any culling that should happen
 - Receives reimbursement from Clarence, \$35 per deer
 - Holds nuisance permits in many surrounding municipalities
 - Food banks always welcome venison donations

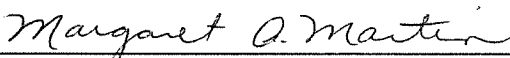
Ms. Escobar asked Mr. Rickert, how a nuisance permit is obtained, the requirements, and restrictions. Mr. Rickert stated an applicant must have a good hunting record, take a course, and pass a test; restrictions vary per municipality.

Ms. Mercado asked Mr. Rickert if he was paid for every deer. Mr. Rickert stated he is only paid in Clarence as they only use volunteers; most municipalities use their police departments.

Further Public Comments:

- ✓ Encouraged the task force to focus on education- Ms. Mercado stated education will be a focus of the task force
- ✓ The survey was conducted at the end of winter and the results may be very different when deer are more active
- ✓ The presentations covered many areas of concern
- ✓ Orchard Park brought in an expert to discuss landscaping which was beneficial to their residents and deer-car accidents are down
- ✓ Hunting coyotes, natural deer predators, needs to be halted
- ✓ Deer feces and ticks have caused health issues for dogs
- ✓ Does not agree that introducing coyotes is a safe option
- ✓ Deer tick population is worse than usual

The meeting was adjourned by Facilitator Gaasch at 7:30 P.M.



Margaret A. Martin, Deputy Town Clerk

WEST SENECA DEER TASK FORCE

INITIAL SURVEY COMMENT REVIEW

Presented by Amanda Escobar

For the task force meeting on 7/20/2021





AGENDA

1. Premise / introduction
2. Process of reviewing public comments
3. Findings
 1. Key concerns
 2. Suggested solutions and ideas
 3. Taxpayer interest
 4. Opinions on culling & lethal methods
4. Location supplement*
5. Conclusions and next steps



INTRODUCTION

An initial survey was conducted by the Town to evaluate public opinion on whether deer control is needed in West Seneca (WS). It should be noted that the survey was non-scientific and was only conducted online. During the survey, respondents were allowed to answer more than once and no controls were in place for participants to prove residency.

The survey was not intended to be a full representation of public opinion for the approximately 45,000 residents living in the Town of WS but only to assess a need for additional steps to be taken to research the issue. This is the reason the Deer Task Force exists.

The following presentation is an analysis of the open-comments submitted by survey participants. Each of the 646 comments submitted were read and accounted for in this presentation. Some comments were determined to be duplicates and were removed, resulting in 642 total survey comments. It should still be taken into account that unknown duplicates may have been included.

This analysis is not intended to be a final data set regarding public opinion but is a useful tool in helping the Deer Task Force identify and address specific public concerns and suggestions raised regarding deer control methods and to take those under consideration for the next steps.

INITIAL DEER CONTROL SURVEY

Conducted on March 2, 2021 – Closed March 9, 2021

Total survey respondents: 1,466

Total self-identified residents: 1,374

QUESTION RESULTS:

642 agreed that “Deer are a serious nuisance that require action to reduce the herds” .

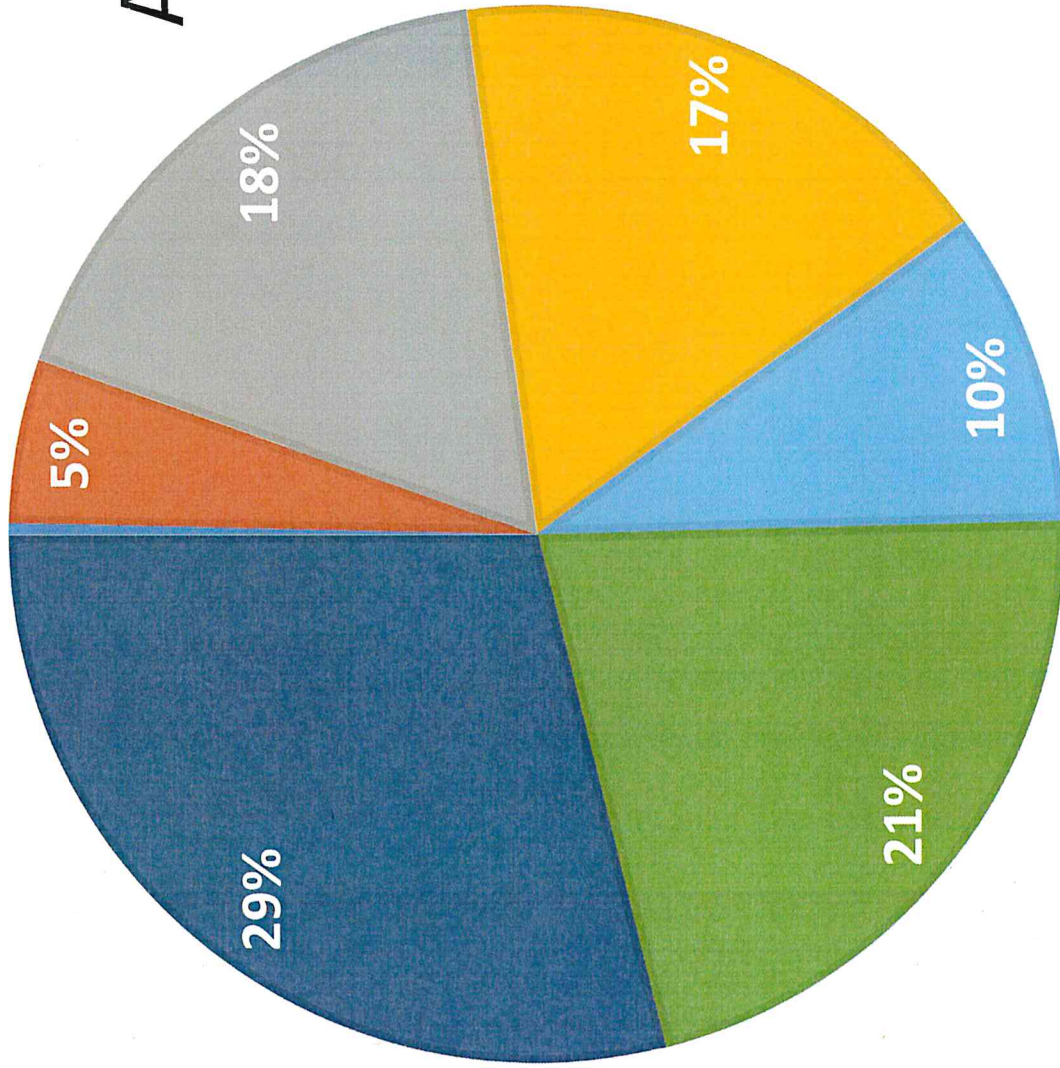
664 agreed that “Deer are a part of the natural world and should be left alone” .

543 agreed that “There should be a deer control program in WS, even if it involved culling 50-100 deer per year at taxpayer expense” .

KEY CONCERNS



AREAS OF CONCERN



other

safety

causal concerns

auto related

disease

landscaping

loss of natural habitat

AREAS OF CONCERN, CONT'D: POSSIBLE CAUSES

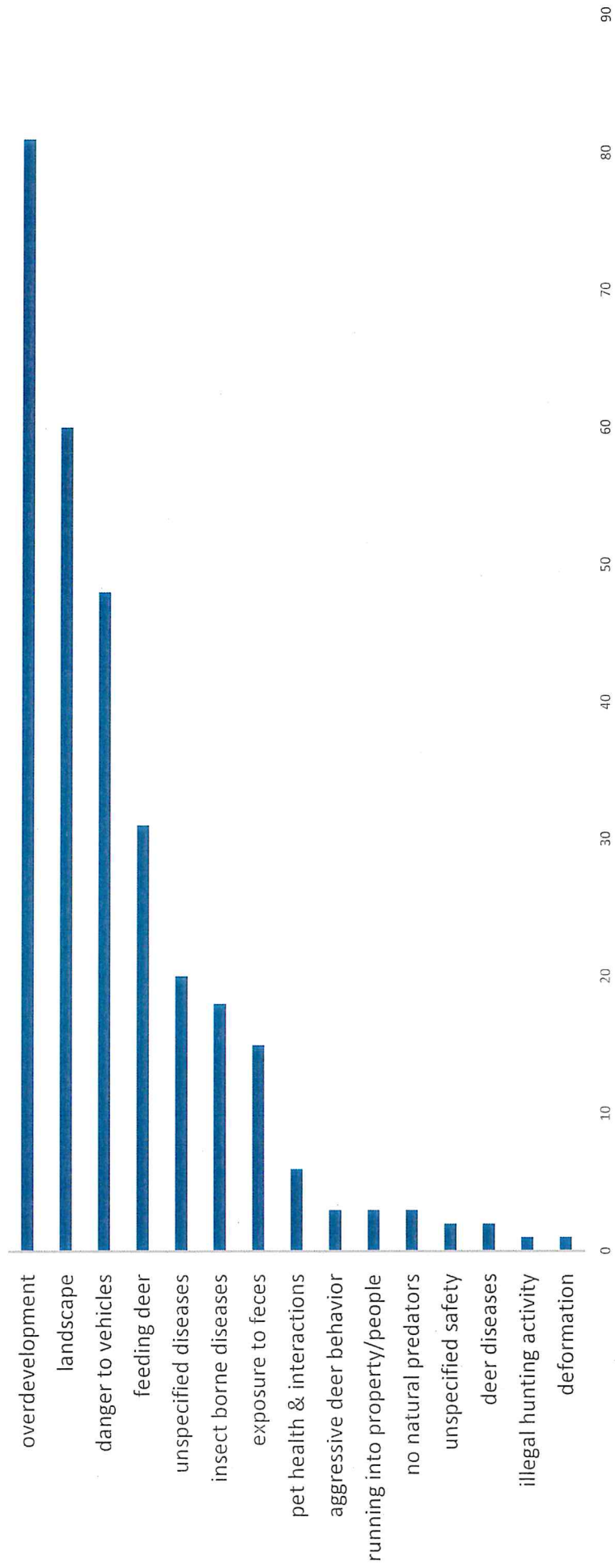
OVERDEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• destroying or encroaching on natural habitats• unnecessary development• lack of conservation sites
FEEDING DEER (intentionally or unintentionally)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• many residents openly feed deer• people visit neighborhoods they don't live in to feed deer (Lein Rd)• fines not enforced• complaints to the town are treated dismissively• resident complaints stated that birdseed gets eaten by deer (public education?)
LACK OF NATURAL PREDATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• killing off of natural predators (i.e. coyotes, wolves etc.)• some residents questioned this is an issue based on the deceased deer and fawns they find• deceased deer a result of starvation?
CULLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• may cause population explosion

AREAS OF CONCERN, CONT'D: CONCERNS

LANDSCAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• damage to landscape (deer eating plants/trampling lawns)• expensive to repair or replace damaged plants• inability to operate small businesses that rely on the land (ex. farms)• poor curb appeal• unable to use yard due to deer waste
DISEASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• insect borne illness (i.e. ticks, Lyme etc.)• Deer diseases from overpopulation (i.e. chronic wasting, blue tongue etc.)• deformation• exposure to deer feces
AUTO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• auto crashes (human safety)• cost of repairs, increased insurance cost after deer-related damage• general road safety for walkers, bikers, and kids at play• deer carcass laying in the road• cost of cleanup after deer are hit
SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• specific risk to kids and pets at play
OTHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• illegal hunting of deer near residential areas• comments alluded to both hearing gun shots and also that "no one would know" if they hunted on their land

CONCERNS IN THE COMMENTS

(CONCERN COUNT: 294)



**SOLUTIONS
AND IDEAS**



SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS

("MENTIONS" COUNTER, NOT COMMENTER COUNTER)

■ hunting-related suggestions ■ other ■ prevention ■ thinning methods

thinning methods	hunting, 84	unspecified culling, 56	bow hunting, 125	hunting-related suggestions		
				special/nuisance permitting, 56	donate meat, 50	priority given to WS residents of any hunting or resulting bounty, 10
prevention	birth control, 55	stop overdevelopment/ preserve land, 29	enforce/increase fines for feeding, 18	relocate deer, 28	sterilize, 9	large lot hun... 5
				enlist expert(s), 7	natural predat... introd... 5	hunters' lottery, 22
					fence ordinanc...	public education, 11
					deer resistant...	

SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS, CONT'D

PREVENTATIVE

- stop overdevelopment
- review legislation on land preservation
- birth control/sterilization
- stop feeding deer
- allow increased height, fences/ordinance
- use deer resistant gardening techniques and deer repellent

HUNTING

- bow
- bow and cross-bow
- Gun (least popular)

CULLING

- hire outside professionals or specialist org
- by WS law enforcement
- option for putting animals "to sleep" via chemical/medication drop?
- bait and shoot

RELOCATE

- bait to another area
- tranquilize and move

COMBO

- initial cull and then maintenance another way (i.e. hunting, birth control, sterilization etc.)

OTHER

- contact experts and/or work with experts
- see what has been successful in other towns and implement similar plan
- reintroduce natural predators
- spraying areas of WS for pest control
- public education needed to inform residents why deer management is needed

SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS, CONT'D: HUNTING

HUNTING

during hunting season OR extended season

by special "nuisance" permit

by lottery

by property owners on their land, large acreage properties only

on town land at set time/location

set restrictions on distance from residential areas/buildings

BENEFITS

reduce costs to taxpayers

generate revenue by charging for license/special permit

taxes cover administration and deer processing fees where hunters don't get to keep meat

WS resident hunters benefit from natural resources

donate meat to food-insecure families (some commenters thought meat should first go to WS residents in need and then to Food Bank)

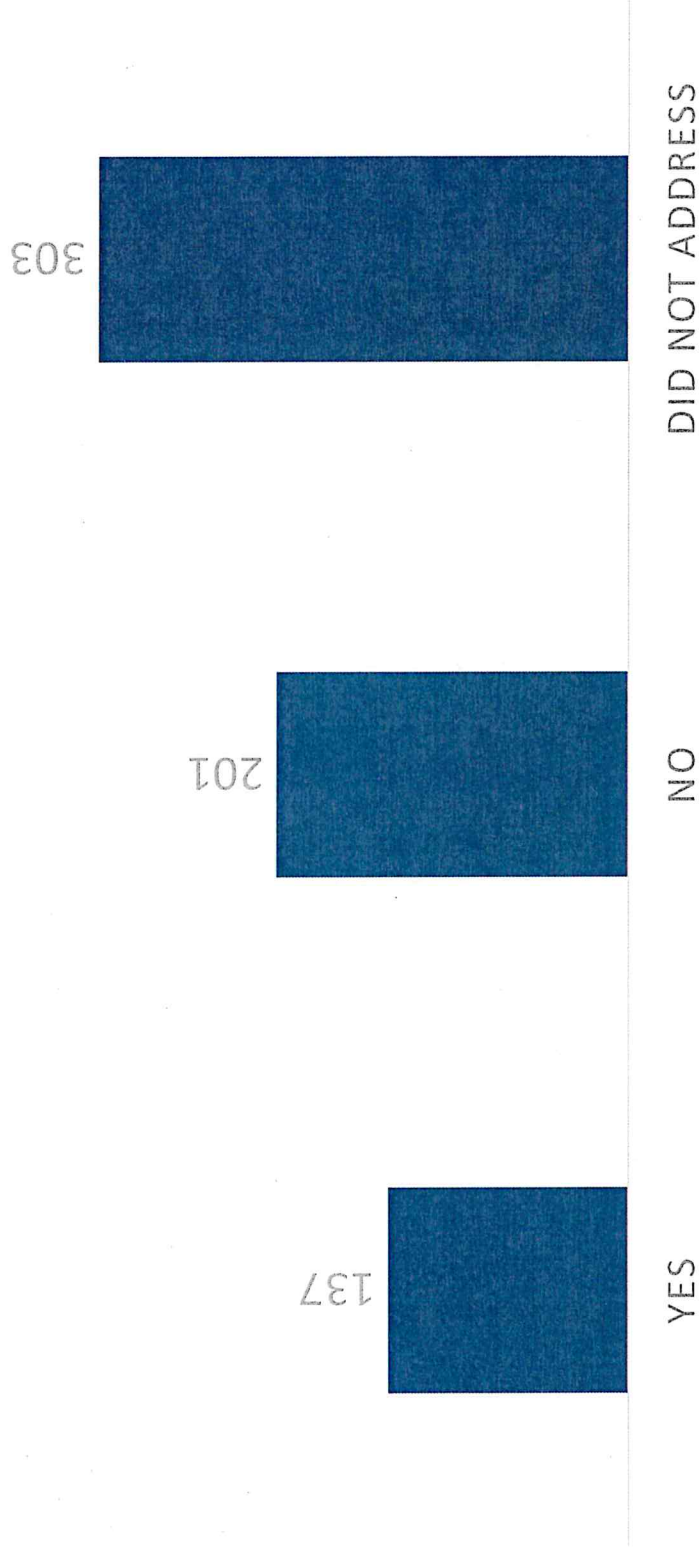
FOR HUNTERS

by special permit must take certain number of does before allowed a buck

must have meat sustainably processed and/or donate what they don't use for their own family

must have proven track record of achievement to be renewed the following year

OPPOSED TO LETHAL THINNING METHODS? (YES = OPPOSED, NO = NOT OPPOSED)



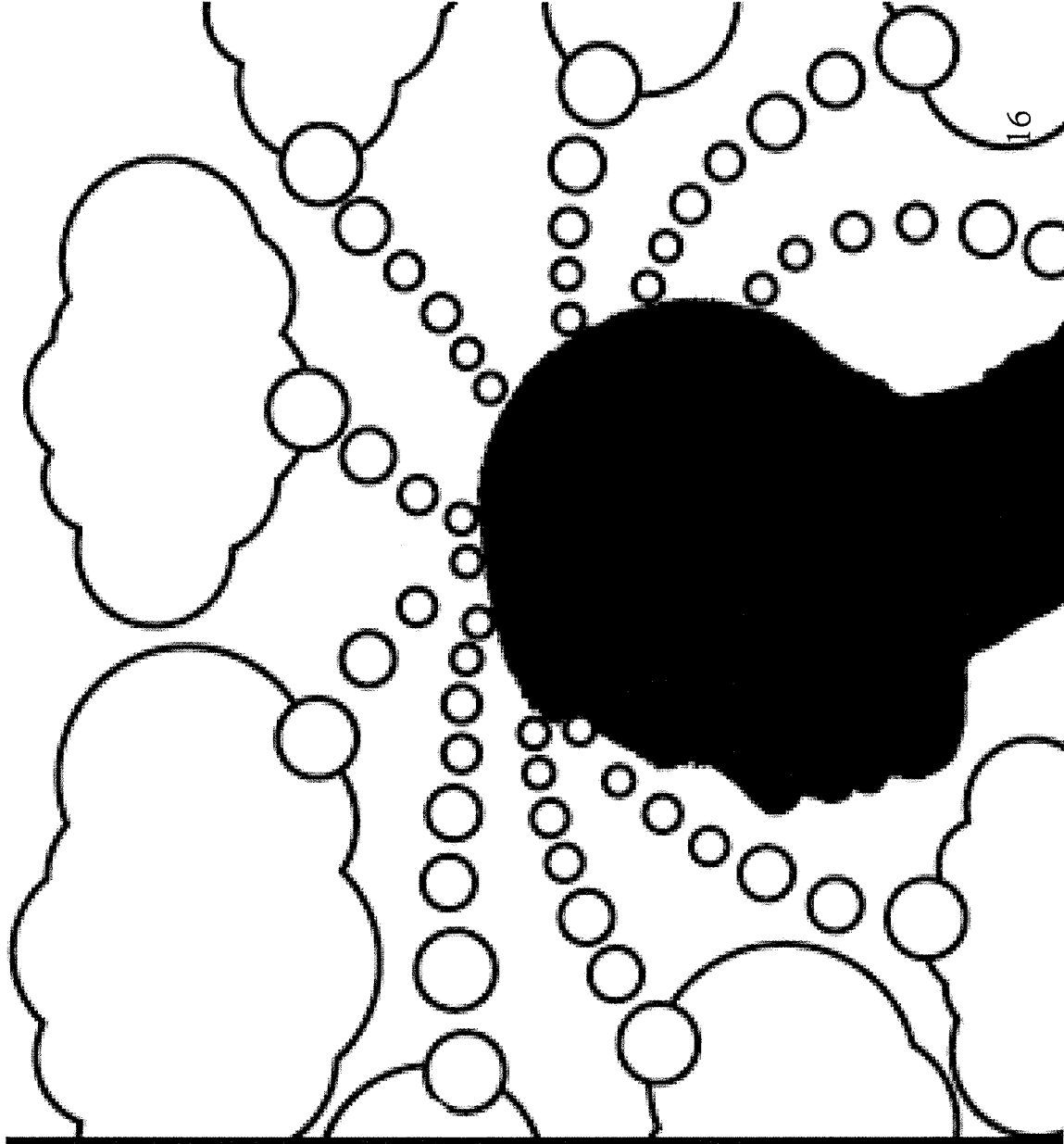
THESE RESULTS REFLECT UNSOLICITED COMMENTS LEFT ON SURVEY

SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS, CONT'D

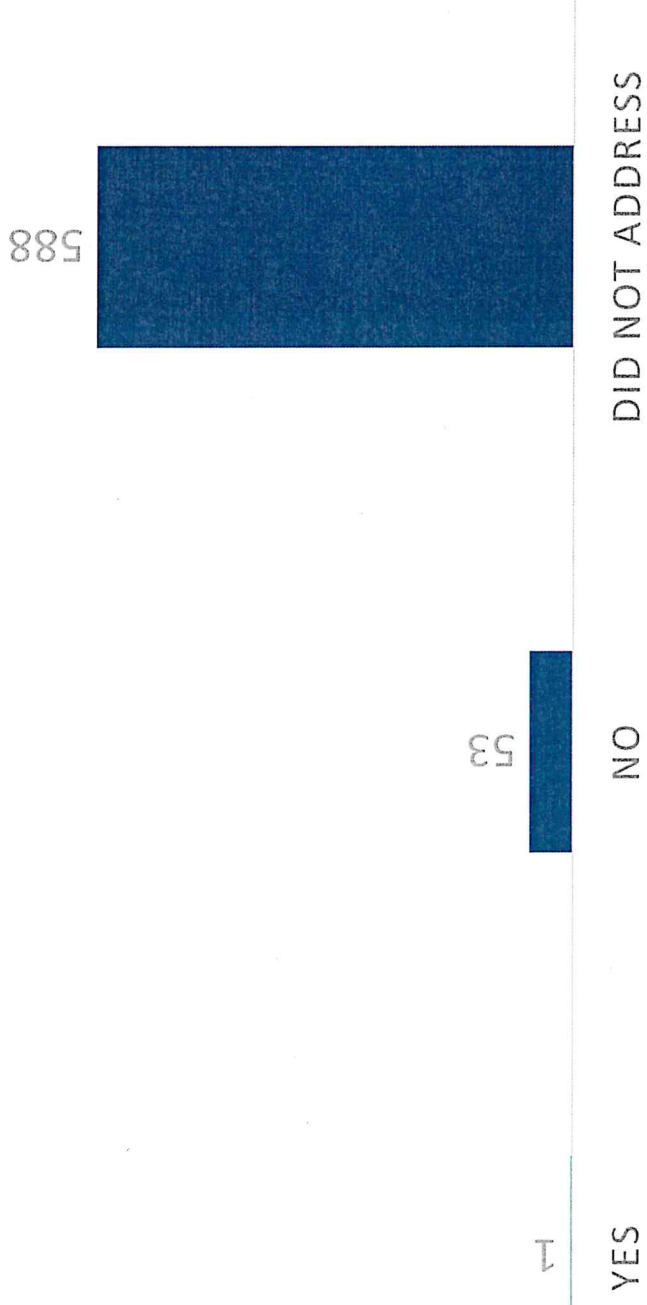
REASONS TO LEAVE DEER ALONE

- we have destroyed their natural habitat and need to focus on being better stewards of the land and nature
- they are innocent
- they are a beautiful part of nature and were here first
- many residents love the deer; they are the reason people choose to live in WS
- damage to landscape isn't a reason to kill deer
- people should exercise more caution when driving
- opposed to lethal animal control methods

**OPINION ON
TAXPAYER
INTEREST**



**SHOULD ANY ACTION OR ONGOING MANAGEMENT BE PAID
FOR WITH TAXPAYER DOLLARS?**



THESE RESULTS ONLY REFLECT COMMENTS WRITTEN IN THE "COMMENTS" SECTION OF THE SURVEY

THOUGHTS PERTAINING TO TAX DOLLARS AND DEER CONTROL

- Tax dollars would be better spent on other improvements
(town drainage, increasing recycling again, use it to help with management of rats or geese etc.)
- Tax dollars shouldn't be spend on something residents have had no input in
(i.e. new development destroying natural habitat etc.)
- Taxes are already excessive should not be increased

LOCATIONS
SUPPLEMENT

West Seneca



NY



LOCATIONS SUPPLEMENT

Abbott Road	Elmsford drive	Old French
Almont Ave	Fisher Road	Pinewood Drive
Berg Road by Heritage Farms	Former Morin Post	Princeton Estates
Borden	Indian Church, off Seneca near creek	Reserve Road
Center Road	Iris Ave	Seneca Creek
Chancellor Drive	Lein Road	Seneca Street
Cheektowaga/French and Towers	Lena Court	Sunset Creek
Clinton	Leydecker Road	Union Road
Commerce Drive	Lind Road	Orchard Park Road
Covington	Mill Road Park	Willowdale drive
East and West Rd, Development Center	North America behind Bison foods	WS Soccer Complex
Tampa, Tudor streets	Milton	

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Further community engagement

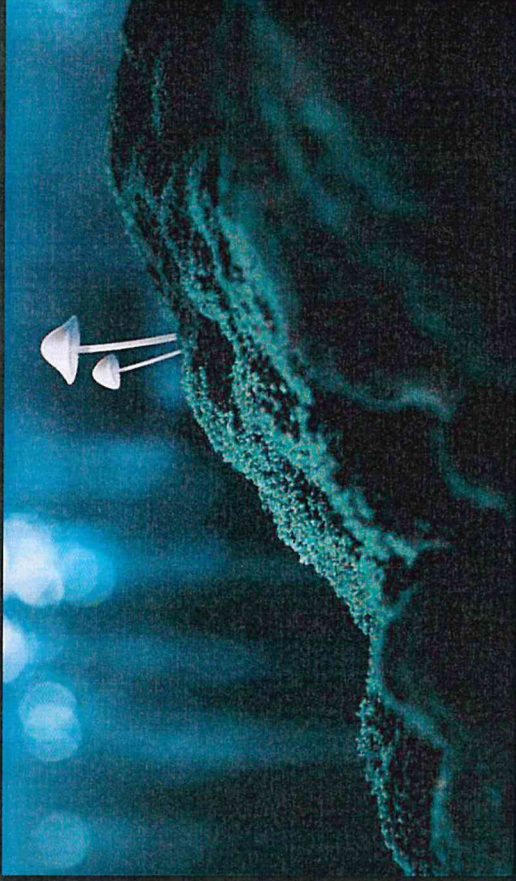
- Enhanced survey
- Public events
- Public education (for the website?)

Review town and surrounding conservation sites

- Locations?
- Mapping?

Review legislation

- Fencing
- Hunting (bow?)
- Development
- Preservation of land



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS

West Seneca Deer Task Force | <http://www.westseneca.net/government/deer-task-force#gsc.tab=0>

Deer Task Force Meeting

7/20/21

Sheri Courteau

Local communities who have a Deer Management Program

Lackawanna –

- Anthony Catuzza – Police Dept. contact
- Program started in 2010
- Usual dates for bait/shoot are 9/1 – 3/31 – but they wait until cold out
- Ice Fishing sleds are used to ensure no blood left or trail left behind
- Elevated positioning
- Started with 100 deer per year, now maintain with about 25-50.
- 2 locations used to process deer – state pays for processing and meat is donated to local food pantries
- Cross Bows are also accepted to be used.
- Ammunition cost comes out of police/swat team budget

Cheektowaga –

- Police Department responsible
- Bait (corn) and shoot (rifles) – all from elevated position
- DNP required – must apply through DEC
- Ammunition cost comes out of police/swat team budget
- Use larger locations and parks for stands and suppressed rifles

Amherst –

- Police Department responsible
- Bait (corn) and shoot (rifles) – all from elevated position
- DNP required – must apply through DEC
- Start with over 100 a year, have lessened since then for maintenance
- Main reason was the huge increase in car accidents – along with a study done that showed the amount of deer present was much higher than the surrounding area was able to support
- Additional reasons were: tick illnesses, chronic waste disease, diseases were spreading to other animals.
- Ammunition cost comes out of police/swat team budget
- <https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1070&context=belj>

Clarence –

- Dennis Londo – contact
- Anyone can apply for the DMP through the DEC.
- Agreements can be filed between DMP agents and property owners if the property owner agrees to allow bait and shoot on their property. Must follow all DEC guidelines for size of lot, how far away from structure, etc.
- Cross Bows are also used
- All meat is donated (state pays the fees to process) to the food pantry.

North Tonawanda –

- Lt. Lea Balzar – contact
- Program in effect the last 10-15 years – Car accidents were main reason to start program
- 3 Police Officers apply for permit (DMP)
- While assessing, helicopters were used to see how many deer there were vs. what the area could support – it was well beyond that limit.
- Started with 75-100 deer, now 25-30 to maintain
- Elevated stands, climber stands, bows can be used
- Donate meat to Buck and Doe – state pays and food goes to pantries
- Ammunition cost comes out of police/swat team budget
- Female Deer only

Common contact - Ryan Rockefeller – Allegheny DEC – permits and other assistance with program

Batavia –

“After careful review, the Deer Management Committee recommends reduction of the deer herd through an archery-only hunting/culling during regulated hunting seasons (October – December), followed by an extended archery-only option (January – March), if necessary, for additional removal of deer. This recommendation is not designed to permit unlawful recreational hunting within the City”

https://www.batavianewyork.com/sites/g/files/vyhliif286/f/uploads/deer_management_plan_-_city_of_batavia_final_9.25.20.pdf

General consensus amongst the towns I spoke with is that the Deer Management Program was necessary for need of curbing disease, car accidents, plant destruction and aggressive deer/human/animal interactions. All of the towns that I spoke with found the bait and shoot program an overwhelming success in their towns.