

**TOWN OF HARVARD
DEER MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
ZOOM MEETING 6:30pm – 7:30pm
Thursday JULY 29, 2021**

DMS Bob Douglas, Joe Pulido, Ben Urquhart, Paul Willard.

Also attended: Don Osmer, Eve Wittenberg, Sean Bilodeau, Dan Tracey
Dr. Martin Feehan, Massachusetts State Deer Biologist.

Bob called the meeting to order.

Discussing upcoming meeting with ConCom and Distribution of hunters.

Bob greeted Dr. Feehan.

Discussed strategy of smaller number of hunters, chosen from hunters from last season that were active.

Joe: We could potentially add more hunters if we are allowed to manage more properties.

Bob mentioned that in his experience with any special hunt the amount of hunters that are successful (harvest deer) is a very small subset of the overall pool of hunters.

Martin: Looking at it academically across the country especially in special hunts 80% of the harvest will come from 10% of the hunters. A lot has to do with the scouting, ahead of the hunt. *“most of the hunting season is made before opening day”*.

Tom asked about why hunters don't show up.

Marty: A lot of different reasons come to play. Some of it is because the special hunts become secondary to sites they already have. There is also a demographic decline in hunting as there are other competing interests for everyone's time. Some hunters are only in the stands twice a year. *“Any way you can decrease barriers to hunting usually ends up helping.” “The more things you can do to make hunters feel comfortable and increase their success the better off you will be.”*

Bob mentioned last season two of our qualified hunters had new babies and that reportedly led to them not participating.

Discussed splitting properties among last year's active hunters.

Paul said the strategy may help as long as it doesn't raise too many hackles. The mission from the ConCom is to figure out a way to harvest deer.

Martin: Be sure to have a mechanism to bring in new hunters because you never know what new member may be the most prolific hunter.

Bob: That has been my experience with a different municipal hunt.

Bob: recommended all town residents or employees have priority for hunt.

Paul: that sounds fine. Gung ho, super enthusiastic hunters. The highway guys two or three we know would be good.

Joe: Great idea. Give more 'ownership' to the hunters, more motivated and be as successful if we can.

Bob: Proximity matters. Closer they are work-wise to the hunting ground the more time they can spend in the woods.

Tom: Idea to encourage residents and employees is a good idea.

Greg Arthur: I'm a non-resident that did hunt in Harvard and support vetted hunters that participated last year.

Bob: Grateful for the time you put in last year.

DMS appears to be in consensus of this.

Bob asked Dr Feehan how to best distribute hunters on the properties.

Marty: Pick gold star properties, then allow hunters to pick. Still gives power to pick properties and rewards hunters from previous years.

Tom: We need to be fair for access and priorities, and get hunters on all properties.

Bob: We and the hunters are still in the infancy of learning these properties.

Joe: Next week we meet with ConCom – the number of properties will help dictate how many hunters we will have. We may want to ask their top 3 sites and assign as best we can. Give them a chance to scout areas for preference.

Marty: This was the same way Ft. Drum did it last year. Gave all hunters one of their top 3 sites, and Ft Drum used it to open up new smaller properties.

Greg Arthur: Would like to see hunters assigned to more than one properties. Option not to be locked in to just one property.

Bob: Agrees.

Martin discussed group hunting in Ft. Drum and multiple sites.

Direction of wind makes a factor, so good to have multiple properties to give hunters options.

Bob thanked Marty and Greg as to their advice.

Discussion of trading existing sites for new sites. Bob mentioned that Susan McCarthy had previously recommended keeping as many sites as possible.

Martin: The more access/sites the better.

Paul: Stay on track. Easy to get swept up. Seems it's a real freaking hassle for the hunters. We have got to do it, but if we can make it more friendly for the hunter. Do you need a computer to hunt deer? Are you forbidden from hunting without some link to the word?

Bob: yes.

Paul: That is 100% contrary to the idea of hunting. We need to figure out a way to make it fun, even if you don't see a deer. I know I'm ConCom and we came up with all these requirements (laughing).

Bob: My preference would be that ConCom would look and see that they have a set of rules that are somewhat impeding the process. Hunters need to log in, and give all this information. It becomes cumbersome, that they don't want to do it.

Paul: Ancient sport, bow hunting. Ancient men got tired of eating berries and roots. They never needed a computer. Now you can't hunt deer with a bow –traditional method –without a fricken computer! Just doesn't make sense to me.

Bob: You have a point and I wish you would share this with Conservation Commission.

Greg: Wish you would eliminate contacting the police dispatch.

Bob: That was the leading complaint from hunters and dispatch last year. The effort did not seem productive or gain anything.

Discussion on what lands that might the ConCom open for next season; and the town meeting vote that supported the presence of the deer management hunt.

39:00 Comments? Bilodeau? Dan Tracey? Eve Wittenberg?

Dan: All Set

Eve: No Comments. Reminder to get minutes up to date.

Bob: Minutes will be presented at Thursday meeting.

Meeting adjourned.