

**TOWN OF HARVARD
DEER MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES**
*Harvard Town Hall – Second Floor
Thursday MARCH 5 2020 6:45 - 8pm*

In attendance:

Jason Cole

Bob Douglas

Ben Urquhart

Tom Cotton

Meeting called to order 7pm

Note: Harvard Cable made a video of this meeting and permission was given for a private copy as well.

The subcommittee reviewed the Feb 27,2020 minutes. Tom voted to approve, Ben seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Bob discussed Conservation Commission's order of 5 cameras, SD cards, tape and batteries for the DMS. They should be in next week.

Jason gave report on Tree Stand ladder removed from Great Elms site. The lower portion of the ladder had been removed, and he and Bob removed the upper portion. The tree remained tagged with our removal notice from late 2019.

Jason and Bob gave report on today's deer pellet transect training provided by State Deer Biologist David Stainbrook and Susan McCarthy from DFW. Training was attended by Jason and Bob, and deer and conservation managers from Carlisle and Andover and by Margaret Kushner from the press. During the training, the group surveyed transects 128D and 128E in the area of Murray Lane; Bob and Jason surveyed transect 128C after the training. Jason described the training and methodology, including learning pace length in order to measure 100-foot distances in the woods. Four-foot radius survey plots are located at 100-foot intervals along transects, and any deer pellet groups within the plots are counted. Transects can be performed through April as long as the ground is clear of snow.

Bob asked if the second half of the transects could be done and asked for available manpower and availability. The next set of field studies would be done on Sunday 8am.

Bob brought up his thought that the sites needed to be prioritized, and asked for opinions on site preference. Willard Poitras was mentioned. There was some discussion on the reasons for the monitoring. Bob said this is our best chance to set a base line. Ben mentioned he would like to do a few sites and do them well. Jason stated that the survey area ("Area 128") is mostly on town land but that the transects we have, which were designed by David Stainbrook, were

designed to also include private land and a variety of land types (forested, open, etc), in order to obtain data from a representative variety of lands in town. Jason spoke on the good success obtaining permissions for the Great Elm property.

Jason discussed the need to survey control properties, potentially including Holy Hill and Bowers Spring. The “Small” land area near HES would also be potentially useful since it would provide information on a more densely developed area in the heart of the town.

Tom moved to prioritize properties to survey. We agreed on this prioritization:

Willard/Poitras

Holy Hill

Daman-Stephenson

“Small” land area near HES

We agreed to discuss/revise #s 2-4 above as needed. Our next survey will be Willard/Poitras.

Public Comment:

Daniel Tracey asked about our approach and whether we would survey hunted and controlled (non-hunted) properties. Ben replied that the pellet surveys would supplement our browse surveys and hopefully show outcomes on hunted vs. control properties.

Eve Wittenberg asked who will analyze the data from pellet surveys. DMS responded that David Stainbrook

of DFW would do this.

Daniel Tracey asked what use the pellet surveys would be if they show, for example, a 5% change in deer density, with a density estimate with a range of +/-25%. In this case, how could we judge the effectiveness of the program? Bob replied that we will use the best data from this survey that we can get. Jason replied that we expect the program to show results over the long-term and that we hope to see definitive results in that timeframe.

Discussion of GPS units:

Jason reported that we have three GPS devices, including one on loan from David Stainbrook. One of the town's units has battery compartment corrosion and might not be usable. Jason will report on the cost of a unit similar to David's.

Bob asked whether a rangefinder would be a useful purchase. Jason replied that a rangefinder would only be useful on occasion and that a GPS unit would be more useful.

The next pellet survey was planned for 8am on March 11. Jason suggested meeting at Williams Pond at the intersection of Stow Road and Murray Lane for the survey of transects 128A and 128B. The group agreed.

Public Comment:

Daniel Tracy asked whether DMS has a budget. Bob replied that we do not have a budget, but that the Conservation Commission can allocate funds for our use.

Eve Wittenberg asked whether the surveys would be open to observation and/or participation from people outside DMS. DMS replied that the surveys should be open to observation by the public.

Ben asked what the results of the survey of transects 128C, 128D and 128E had been. Jason replied that no pellet groups had been found along these transects.

Next meeting: March 19, 2020, 645pm

Eve Wittenberg mentioned that DMS minutes and agendas are hard to find on the town web site and suggested that we have a link on the DMS page to the location where minutes and agendas for town subcommittees are posted.