

**TOWN OF HARVARD
DEER MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
ZOOM Meeting 7:00 -8:00pm
Thursday February 18, 2021**

Attendees:

Ben Urquhart (DMS member, Meeting Lead)
Bob Douglas (DMS member, Chairperson)
Joe Pulido (DMS member, Minutes Taker)
Dave Pinard (Harvard hunter)
Daniel Tracey (Harvard Resident)
Michelle Grzenda (Conservation Director of Weston/Lincoln)
Kristin O'Brien (Sudbury Valley Trustees)

Ben U. started the meeting at 7:04PM and welcomed everyone then jumped into the agenda. The first point of discussion was the Hunter Survey questionnaire that would be distributed to all the Harvard hunters for feedback and lessons learned from Harvard's first Conservation Land deer hunt.

Dan T. asked to modify a question to: "Would you be in favor of fixed or rotating assignment for hunting locations?"

Bob D. asked to modify a question to "How many deer did you take this season on town conservation versus other properties?"

Ben U. made a motion to approve and publish the Hunter Survey with the newly modified questionnaire. Bob D. second the motion and Joe P. concurred with the motion. The motion was carried.

Ben U. recognized and welcomed Kristin O. from Sudbury Valley Trustees to the meeting.

Kristin O. began discussing their Deer Management Program and the success they had on last year's deer hunting season. Questions from the group were interleaved during her discussion.

Kristin O. stated that their Program had been in existence for 9 years and have 7 properties. The combined acreage of their huntable properties is estimated at 300 acres. 4 are located in Zone 10 and are in Zone 9. She also stated that 6 does and 7 bucks were taken mainly from one property (Framingham) in last year's Program. They had 15 hunters. Hunters are assigned to specific properties. They are weeded out if they are not reliable or committed to the Program. They started conducting surveys to understand deer densities and deer impact to their properties. It takes about 5 seasons to see deer impact. Owners that are giving permissions to allow hunting on private property next to small parcels of conservation lands are also being approved to hunt on those smaller parcels.

Kristin O. stated that their Program is being less managed. Hunters are running program.

Ben U. recognized and welcomed Michelle G. as the Conservation Director of Weston and Chairperson of Lincoln's Deer Management Program to the meeting.

Michelle G. began discussing her Deer Management Programs and the success they had on last year's deer hunting season. Questions from the group were interleaved during her discussion.

Michelle G. stated Weston has 10 properties with a guestimate of 100s of combined acres. Their hunters harvested 45 deer. They had 41 hunters that they assigned specific properties to hunt on last year. Hunters are given choices and preferences. Hunters are grouped together to work out schedule and specific location on the properties. They found an illegal hunting stand and left a note on stand. The hunter called back and apologized and asked to join Program. Their hunters volunteer to help out the Program as their eyes and ears. They also help fill in holes and clear areas on the properties.

Michelle G. stated they just started setting up monitors (seedling surveys, deer tick counts/per area) to gauge deer impact. They are early in gathering data. They have determined archery hunting is the most effective way to reduce deer population. They are trying to stop from becoming another NY. At the earlier stages of their Program, significant time was required to get their Program going. Hunters are now self-regulating. Returning hunters gets preference allowing only few hunters join. The hunters are selected and ranked resident first, then experience on other conservation lands, and then their success rate in 3 yrs. Town of Lincoln will start their Deer Management Committee utilizing inputs from Weston's hunters. Weston has hunter logs but no calls to police dispatch is required. They share hunter's license and license plate with the police.

Ben U. thanked both Kristin O. and Michelle G. in sharing their Deer Management Program experiences and lessons learned.

Ben U. brought up the next topic for discussion which is Recommendations for 2021.

Ben U. revealed that Tom Cotton (DMS member) generated maps of new proposed parcels with setback areas annotated on them. The next step is to ask hunters to scout and survey the new parcels for hunting viability. Ben U. made a motion to get hunters' opinion to scout and eval properties and rank them. Bob D. second the motion and Joe P. concurred with the motion. The motion was carried.

Bob D. want to see if access from neighboring properties would be possible.

Bob D. mentioned that there is a student volunteer interested in setting up an array of cameras to monitor deer activity on Conservation Land as part of a study

Ben U. asked for approval of draft minutes and made the motion to approve all prior minutes. Bob D. second the motion and Joe P. concurred with the motion. The motion was carried.

Ben U. recapped agenda and opened the floor for other questions or comments.

Dave P. asked what the format of the Hunter Survey was in? He offered to put it in PDF format.

Ben U. responded it was in google docs and easily accessible from anywhere.

Bob D. recommended having the next DMS meeting in two weeks (4 March). Ben U. and Joe P. agreed.

Ben U. Motioned to adjourn the meeting. Bob D. second the motion and Joe P. concurred with the motion. The motion to adjourn the meeting was carried.

