

Woods Committee Minutes
Monday, January 7, 2019 – 7:30 PM
McCathran Hall Council Room

Approved February 4, 2019

Attendees: Patrice Klein, Joan Mahaffey, Georgette Cole, Jay Everhart, Larry French, Tom Land, Joli McCathran, Meghan O'Connell, Virginia Quesada

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM.

Additional Agenda Items/Agenda Approval

The Agenda was approved as presented (Jay 1st/Tom 2nd).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved as written (Georgette 1st/Tom 2nd).

Public Appearances

None

Informational Meeting and Town Survey Results

Joan reported the survey results from the Informational Meeting on 11/13 and the results from the December Bulletin. (See results attached.) Both surveys showed overwhelming support for the Woods Committees Plan for forest health. Joan will share the combined results with the Town Council at their meeting on Monday, January 14. With Town Council approval, we will publish the combined results in the February Bulletin. Bill Hamilton has stated that we need the support of Town officials before we engage in a deer population control plan. Bill has also suggested that we get the deer population under control before we begin work on enclosures. There was a point of clarification that Dorsey, at one time, went through to the trail near the bridge off Cherry. However, the Woods Committee wants to abandon the section of Dorsey Trail between Maple and Cherry.

WC Strategic Plan for Forest Health Restoration

- Our Strategic Plan for Forest Health/Restoration should include the following points:
- Action points for deer population control including a demonstration enclosure to monitor progress
- Continued work on Non-native Invasive Plant Control with extension of activities along the trails in the West Woods
- Reforestation once deer populations are under control
- Community Engagement
 - Raise awareness of the complexity of the problem
 - Get people into the woods for a first-hand experience
 - Continue work parties

Deer Population Control Plan for the Town

Forest Health/Restoration Plan Survey results show that 37 of 44 respondents to the survey support control of deer populations by harvesting. The Woods Committee needs the support of the Town Council in order to proceed. The WC plan should include: changing the Town Ordinance concerning hunting; contacting cooperators; and writing a plan. Suggested language for the Town Ordinance change should specifically mention deer harvesting. Our goal is to begin harvesting in October. Archery season runs from September to January. Tom volunteered to back map actions the WC needs to take in order to meet the October deadline. The WC will sponsor educational meetings to keep residents informed about the deer harvesting process. It was suggested that we invite Ryan Butler to speak. If a special Town Meeting occurs, the vote would be non-binding. We also need to work with the Town Attorney.

Joan will present survey results to the Town Council at their meeting on January 14. Pat will combine results from both surveys, the informational meeting and the Town Bulletin. Talking points will include: Deer culling is occurring throughout Montgomery County; Montgomery County's guidelines are very stringent; estimates based on the decline in deer vehicular collisions indicate that the Montgomery County plan is working.

Several questions were raised.

How will we measure success? It will take more than three years to see any noticeable reduction in deer over browsing. It was suggested that we have a control enclosure in the woods with a similar open area to compare for monitoring purposes.

How do we keep deer from over browsing in Town? We need to seek expert advice on the ripple effect of deer harvesting in the woods and investigate if Montgomery County has any data on the impact in surrounding neighborhoods of deer harvesting in MC parklands. Joli has a meeting with the Senior Arborist of MC Department of Parks and will ask him.

What role will cooperators have in community outreach? This question cannot be answered before we have an Ordinance change. The Ordinance must precede formal contact with cooperators. However, Pat will begin informal contact with MC recommended cooperators.

Meghan, Greg, Jay and Joli volunteered to draft an enclosure proposal with an identified demonstration area in the East/West Woods. There is funding for enclosures in the current budget. The enclosure should be approximately 50' by 50' in a location where there is good soil, canopy cover, no attractive nuisance, and at least 50 yards from any building. Consideration should also be given to archer sites in both the East and West Woods.

There was a suggestion that we coordinate with Montgomery County on deer control in the Conservation Meadow. Darrell is the TC liaison.

Other Items

The Dog Park area in the West Woods has been cleared. The Request for Proposals went out on January 5.

The question was raised about separating recyclables. Any woods clean-up project should separate recyclable items from trash items. This should also be done at Town Hall functions. The question was raised about why the Town refuse contract does not include the Town Hall.

Action Items for Next Meeting

- Report on Town Council response to the Forest Health/Restoration Survey
- Develop a Strategic Plan for Deer Population Control
 - Back map a timeline with October as our goal
 - Develop an exclosure plan for metrics purposes
 - Begin informal contact with MC recommended cooperators

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 (Larry 1st/Meghan 2nd).

Respectfully submitted: Patrice Klein and Joan Mahaffey, Woods Committee Co-chairs