

**CITY OF CUSTER CITY
COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS- PUBLIC HEARING
DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN
DECEMBER 17, 2007**

Mayor Harold D. Stickney called to order the public hearing held at 7:10 p.m. Present at roll call were Councilpersons Starr, Pischke, Murphey, Schleining, Culberson, Boyer, and Chris Beesley, City Attorney. The Mayor thanked everyone for coming and stated that the Council does want to hear the community's wishes.

John Steed wondered about getting legitimate data from the Sheriff's Office as to how many deer accidents happened in town. He also questions how many houses are in town, which he was told are about 850 which means 8.5% returned newspaper surveys. He doesn't feel that this justifies a plan and requests that this be on the election ballot; or at least have a committee do a survey. There are other communities like Jackson Hole and Yellowstone that keep the animals as part of their charm; they don't kill them.

Jerry Hale is against the plan and would like the Council to consider that deer spread out naturally, the State need to control the deer around the City.

Rex Harris, Community Development Director, clarified that the City does not want to do away with all the deer; they are just talking about thinning. The Council was requested to implement a plan and that is why we are here. This draft plan will still have to be sent to the SDGF&P for their approval. There are problems with accidents, road kill in town, property damage, and the possibility of disease.

Joe Boise, who lives on Upper French Creek Road, believes that this is his town with wonderful people, great skies, and absolute beauty. He loves this community even though he had to go out of town to shop. People love to see the deer in town. He also doesn't believe that this is a problem and there should not be a kill zone.

Roeck stated that it is a "catch 22" situation; there's a place for all god's creatures which is on a plate next to the mashed potatoes. Betty Ann Fagler responded with "you son of a b_____". He then discussed the problems with eating flowers, fencing or not, tourists love them, too much poop, and yet you have to be aware of disease or in-breeding problems. He also mentioned that dogs are leashed or fenced so the deer don't worry about them either.

John Bissell thanked the Council for being the Council and thanked Rex for putting this together as directed. He wondered if this was requested by the people, health issues, damage issues, and the amount of inconvenience. John also submitted a written dissertation on the subject for the Council to read.

Councilperson Murphey wondered how many had read the draft plan which only 2 had; several copies were given out. Councilperson Boyer commented that the worst thing to do is to feed the deer which we have adopted an ordinance regarding this matter.

Dave Coppess commented that the GF&P needs to do their job and have a buffer zone around the City. We are a "salad bar" for them and they will continue to feed in town. Also, once you start the reduction, you will have to continue it year after year as the deer continue to come.

Betty Ann wondered about the liability involved, fines for the deer feeding, how much can be fed, and how many miles out, 1, 2, 3.

Gerald Scott discussed his fence for his garden, his 12 resident deer, and that leashing of dogs doesn't help.

Brandon Roetzel, who lives outside the City, stated the deer do like to go into town for their food source; there is an abundance of deer surrounding the City limits which need harvested, and then the deer could move out of town with some help. Also, when a deer is shot, the rest of the deer leave that area. What about paintball guns or big bangs as other options.

Discussion was held on guns, bows, moving the deer by hauling them, transition herds versus resident deer, and if two deer are killed by vehicles a week, then that would be an elimination of 100 deer per year. The Mayor stated that the last meeting had the citizens who were for the program; tonight it's the ones against.

Terry Reitz felt there were voids in the plan with the following: The tourists love them and they are a main attraction along with Mt. Rushmore and Crazy Horse. Don't kill the Golden Goose as they say. People talk about the nuisance of poop, flowers eaten, so on, but oh well. The deer killed in town are caused by people driving too fast and not paying attention. Thank god it wasn't a kid. He has no sympathy for these people. The deer counts were done when the deer congregate in the fall. What about the spring time or winter? With the deer disposal of approximately 50, it would be out of line to shoot the bucks but also shooting the does there would be a multiplying factor due to the pregnancies. What about the liability if someone were shot, there's not enough money to cover that kind of lawsuit. Overall, Terry doesn't believe the plan is ready and it needs to be explored for a year.

It was also discussed that house bound people get a lot of enjoyment out of watching the animals and after all, the deer were here first. If we aren't careful, the animals will become extinct if people go too far.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Attest:

Harold D. Stickney, Mayor

Christine Redden, Finance Officer