

12/6/10

Ten years ago I served on the Cayuga Heights Deer Committee which mostly consisted of people who wanted deer reduction. We met for two years every other week and worked closely with Paul Curtis and other people at Cornell's Dept. of Natural Resources to develop a plan that was sanctioned by the community and privately funded by one of its members.

Two extensive surveys were done during that period to determine what residents actually wanted. The final survey was sent to every one of the approx. 800 stakeholders and the response rate was high. While, like now, the majority of residents wanted deer reduction, only 1/3 were willing to kill deer. No such survey has been done since then to determine whether the community as a whole now favors killing. Without this information, it is difficult for the community to know that it is properly represented by its policies and that it is not being bullied and taxed to serve the needs of a minority interest.

2006 was the last time that the deer population was studied and the number was determined to be 147. This number is close to what was determined by Cornell 10 years ago using night cameras on bait sites--and indicates that the herd has not grown. Without an scientific update there is no way to state that the herd is growing. The current deer management budget proposal is based on a population of 170 deer--this may or may not be the right number. The issue on the table has not really been the number of deer, the issue is whether a minority of residents who perceive deer to be an intolerable problem can determine the policy and budget that serves their interests but not that of the whole.

If deer are allowed to live in this community, and the present proposal allows 30 or so to be neutered, those 30 deer may still be the ones who visit on the gardens of the people who most vehemently want them removed. Deer migration will continue to fill the spaces left by killing. Also not being considered are the people who actually enjoy deer or who will tolerate their presence as a pesky neighbor but who consider paying more for their removal an exorbitant, unacceptable or immoral solution. These same people might prefer to see their \$1000+ that will be gathered by taxation used for improved roads and other community services.

The present administration has been elected to serve the interests of this community as a whole but without a survey (with the compilation process including a member of Cayuga Deer) it appears that only their private interests are being served at the expense of the majority who clearly expressed that killing was unacceptable--and as we know now, costly. Clearly the needs of those who cannot tolerate the presence of the deer are not being addressed and that is why this problem has raised its ugly head again. However, the solution proposed is likely to create a greater problem for our community than the one caused by the deer.

Submitted by:

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