

January 26, 2009

To the Cayuga Heights Trustees,

My name is Jenny Stein, and I have attended all but one of the publicly held deer committee meetings. I have witnessed how virtually every person who speaks in opposition to a deer killing program is asked by the mayor whether they are a village resident. The implication seems to be that if you live outside the village, your opinion doesn't count.

I was born in Ithaca and have lived in this community for 39 years. I was educated in schools alongside the children of Cayuga Heights. I attended Cornell, which employs a large number of village residents. And I now own a home in the City of Ithaca, so my tax dollars contribute to the quality of life we all enjoy in this special community. The last line of my address reads the same as yours: "Ithaca, NY 14850". And I imagine that when Ithaca was named the most enlightened town in America, Cayuga Heights residents felt proud -- as they should have -- because *our* community is also *your* community.

While there are a few local governments that comprise Ithaca as we know it, we all work, drive, shop and socialize across these municipal boundaries, never giving it a second thought. Therefore, I am disheartened to witness a persistent lack of concern or interest in how an annual bait and shoot program will affect anyone other than residents of Cayuga Heights -- a number of whom have already spoken out against it. Should the proposed program be adopted, mass slaughter and the discharge of guns in our community will not be a one-time event, but an annual tradition, to be carried out for at least 10 years, according to the chair of the deer committee, and possibly even longer. In other words, it will become part of our community culture.

Children naturally look to the adults around them as they undergo moral development, and I'm deeply concerned that a publicly-sanctioned yearly massacre of human-habituated animals -- most of whom live in family groups in people's backyards -- will send a dangerous message of condoned violence. Given that the chair of the deer committee, who is one of the most vocal advocates of a deer killing program, is also co-president of the PTA, only underscores this concern.

Many non-violent alternatives have been put forward to help solve our community's conflict with deer -- alternatives which have a proven track record of success. Many of these alternatives could be partially offset by state or private funds, instead of wasting Cayuga Heights tax dollars on a risky and expensive deer killing program. I have yet to see serious consideration given to any of these alternative options. This seems a disservice to your constituents and those in the larger Ithaca community.

Sincerely,
Jenny Stein, Ithaca, NY 14850