

Meeting Minutes (Draft)

Natural Resources Citizen Advisory Committee
Friday March 17th, 2023 | 3:00 PM
MetroParks Farm – Classroom A
Prepared by Nick Derico, *Natural Resources Manager*



Committee Members in Attendance

Nick Derico ☒ | Joshua Noble ☒ | Ryan Jackson ☐ | Sean Baran ☐ | Peter Milliken ☒ | Sara Scudier ☒ | John Zimmerman ☒ | Ronald Kichton ☒ | Gary Davenport ☒ | Joshua Emanuelson ☒ |

Public Attendees:

Justin Rogers, MCMP	
Jeff Harvey, MCMP Park Commissioner	
20 Additional Members of the Public	
Reporters from WKBN and Vindicator	



I. Call to Order – 3:00 PM

Old Business

- * **Approval of Previous Meeting’s Minutes**
Nick Derico provided the meeting minutes from the previous meeting (02.14.23), members reviewed the minutes and offered no revisions or corrections. Ronald Kichton motioned to approve the meeting minutes as presented, the motion was seconded by Joshua Emanuelson.
- * **Roll Call**
Voting Aye – Scudier, Derico, Noble, Milliken, Emanuelson, Davenport, Zimmerman, Kichton
Voting Nay - None

II. **New Business**

White-tailed Deer in the MetroParks – Part II

1. Derico gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee, which was a repeat of the same presentation given to the Board of Park Commissioners on Monday 3/14 titled “White-tailed Deer in the MetroParks – Part II” which reviewed current conditions of deer

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- populations throughout the MetroParks, evaluated public input, and provided management recommendations.
2. Following the presentation, the group evaluated and discussed the current status of white-tailed deer in the MetroParks, including current survey data, environmental impacts, public input, and management methods.

Following discussion amongst the Committee and several members of the public, Derico proposed a motion to support the “Mill Creek MetroParks – Deer Management Plan” as presented, to be voted on by the Board of Park Commissioners at the April 10th meeting.

Motion – Derico
Second – Noble

Roll Call

- Voting Aye – Scudier, Noble, Emanuelson, Davenport, Zimmerman, Kichton
- Voting Nay – Milliken
- Abstention – Derico

The Motion Passes 6 to 1

Open Discussion

1. None

Public Comments

Twenty (20) members of the public were in attendance, with a large portion of the meeting being dedicated to public comments and questions – the following summarizes the topics discussed:

- III.
 - Genetics of the “white deer” found in MCP.
 - Family members of deer that would be harvested; named deer throughout the Park.
 - Ethical treatment of the deer, citing a video online, depicting management activities at Summit MetroParks in the early 2000s.
 - Concern over stray projectiles and the safety of surrounding homes, motorists, and park users.
 - Safety provision put in place during the previous controlled hunt and the success of that program.
 - Visual observations of deer and discussions of their body condition.
 - Questions concerning aerial survey accuracy.

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- The use of night-vision/thermal technology and its ability to identify a white deer vs. a brown deer.
 - Will hunters be allowed to place or construct deer stands on park property?
 - Will bait be used to aide in the harvesting of deer?
 - How will hunters know property boundaries and/or identify no hunting zones?
 - How will the park protect family groups of deer – mothers, sisters, etc.?
 - The deer in MCP and Park Property belong to the public.
 - What is the Natural Resources Citizen Advisory Committee and who chooses its members? What is the process to be appointed?
 - The Park needs to consider the bad publicity that implementing such a management plan would bring.
 - Why is there a police presence at the Committee meeting, when they could be elsewhere – especially on St. Patrick’s Day?
 - Is there a cost associated with targeted removal via USDA? If so what is that cost?
 - Carrying capacity of the land and the need for management to restore ecological balance.
 - Why is the Park cutting trees?
 - Will the white deer be protected?
 - Decreased wildlife throughout the Park – snakes, raccoons, squirrels, rabbits, etc.

Committee Questions/Comments.

Noble questioned the reasoning behind excluding the white deer from management action, noting concerns over genetic diversity within the herd. Derico noted the cultural significance of the white deer within the community, stating that the larger concern was the overpopulation as a whole.

IV.

Kichton noted the ecological damage to the understory throughout the Park, and stated that management should focus on the ecosystem as a whole. He also stated that Mill Creek should follow the example set by other regional park districts and join in the active management of the deer herd.

Scudier noted the ecological impacts caused by an overpopulation deer and the impacts caused to native wildflowers and other fauna. Scudier also added that ODNR controls deer populations at the State level on an annual basis and asked if the selected hunters would be required to take a proficiency test prior to the hunt.

Emanuelson encouraged everyone to look at the whole ecology not just one species, noting active erosion from deer trails and a lack of regrowth in native woody vegetation.

Davenport noted the differences between a recreational park such as MCP and natural areas and preserves as found in MCMP regional facilities, again stating the need for management based upon ecological concerns. He also noted, the tree planting efforts the MetroParks has completed at Collier Preserve, pointing out that the Park has planted over 2000 trees, all of which require deer protection for survival.

Milliken suggested that the Board of Park Commissioners delay the April vote until May or June to allow more time to study management options, stating that lethal means should be the last resort. He offered the project completed in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY as a case study for fertility control and suggested that public pressures could sway ODNR to change their policies concerning fertility control agents and would allow them to be employed here – he suggested the Park reach out to the Humane Society of the US. Davenport reported on research he had conducted on the Clifton project (Cincinnati, Ohio) – explaining how this citizen lead initiative could provide a blueprint for fertility control research to be employed here, assuming a similar group would take on such as task and assuming that a research permit could be obtained from ODNR. Derico, reinforced that any research permit issued by ODNR would be strictly for research purposes and fertility control is not an approved option for population management – any research proposal must have clearly defined goals, must be conducted by a legitimate research entity, and must answer a novel research question.

Milliken, also stated that he did not feel that the public input survey completed by the Park was scientific in nature and did not represent a true random sample, and did not allow the public to accurately express their concerns due to question bias.

Date of Next Meeting

V. TBD – Derico will send Doodle Poll

VI. **Adjournment** – 4:52 PM