

11/10/21

To: West Seneca Town Board Members

I'm writing in with concerns regarding recent activity related to the Deer Task Force. I originally wrote a letter after attending the first meeting in May of this year due to concerns about what appeared to be an imbalance of members and their personal beliefs on deer management

Since attending several meetings since, it appears that situation has not only changed but due to people stepping down and being removed, that imbalance has become worse, confirming past concerns about the bias and actual solutions being researched. At the time the task force was created there were four expert task force members accredited in dealing with deer and conservation. Now there is one. There are questions about recruiting tactics specifically targeted toward hunters by the facilitator of the task force, Cynnne Gaasch which are completely unethical. It appears even though the community favors (according to past surveys) non-lethal methods, this task force has been constructed to give them the false idea that research is actually being done when in reality, that isn't the case.

Not only have minutes been incomplete from many of the meetings but I've also witnessed time given to hunters advertising their deer processing, members making inaccurate statements about deer behavior and disease, and information from the DEC that shows no actual count on the number of deer in WS or how to determine an overpopulation other than by complaints. There have been no numbers provided on whether other towns culling have been successful at bringing and keeping numbers at an acceptable level or numbers from neighboring towns using non-lethal methods. As I stated in my original letter in May, I can't help but wonder how self-serving some of the efforts are when constructing solutions.

Instead of searching for short term solutions to an ongoing issue, it may serve the community better by discussing how we play a role in these problems and consider developing solutions that not only serve us but also our environment to build a connection with our natural systems.

The idea that killing off a certain number of deer is going to solve any of the issues being brought up is completely misguided and, as of yet, unproven from the meetings I've attended. Unless you kill every last deer, they will still eat gardens, still wander into yards and defecate, and still cross roads leaving the same unhappy residents. The only ones here benefitting from culling seem to be the hunters. To believe that these animals are merely a means to an end is utterly unjustified.

Instead of using common sense and critical thinking to figure out solutions, the board seems to want to appease hunters and kill animals for sport under the false notion of conservation. There is literally zero consideration for the animals or that these animals have inherent lives of their own that are valuable to them and the world around them and they deserve equal consideration. I hope that you will look into the conduct by the facilitator of the task force as well as the imbalance of members on the board so that the community doesn't just see this as a false attempt to actually find solutions.

Respectfully,

Leslie Just – East and West Road