



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
DRAFT MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING
25 February, 2020**

Board Members in Attendance: Councilmember Brian Haynes (Chair), Vice-Mayor Gwen Wisler, Councilmember Sheneika Smith.

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** The minutes from the 1/28/20 committee meeting were unanimously approved on Sheneika Smith's motion and Gwen Wisler's second.

2. **Introduction to Police Chief David Zack and Overview of Workplan**

David Zack introduced himself as the new Chief of Police for the City of Asheville. He has been communicating with his staff for the last three weeks to assess what the APD does well and what they need to work on. There are issues that immediately jumped out to him that are of great concern and high priority: community engagement, gun violence, and homelessness. They will prioritize these issues first.

Chief Zack said there is also concern regarding the written consent policy to search, which exclusively covers vehicles. There's concern from the community to extend that policy to pedestrians and cyclists. Chief Zack has been reviewing the current policy and its effectiveness. The policy went into effect on October 30. In the first quarter, APD conducted 2,582 vehicle stops. Written consent to search was achieved on 17 occasions: 13 were for persons who were white and 4 for persons who were black. In the second quarter, APD conducted 2,904 stops with only three consent searches requested. All persons searched were white. They want to judge the current policy and its effectiveness before looking into expanding it to cover pedestrians and cyclists. They need to make sure supervisors are reviewing properly and thoroughly.

Gwen Wisler asked about the status of the anti-crime task force that was dissolved by the APD and Buncombe County. Chief Zack said there were conversations before his arrival between the interim chief and sheriff, as well as between himself and the sheriff. The decision to dissolve the task force was arrived at mutually. They still have the same number of officers and personnel conducting drug investigations.

3. **Update on Request to Allow Archery Hunting of Deer at Asheville School**

Aarin Miles, Assistant City Attorney, presented information in response to a request during last meeting's public comment to amend the City's firearm ordinance to allow deer hunting for population control within city limits. This came before council in 2018 during public comment by a farmer with a similar request. It was not granted due to public safety concerns. It was then brought up at January's Public Safety Committee meeting, and legal was asked to research other municipalities and their regulations.

Aarin provided information on the current ordinance and the other cities she has researched. Chapel Hill currently has a deer management program that was put in place in 2010 that does allow for hunting within city limits on private property only. There is currently a petition that went before Chapel Hill's council in January 2020 to remove the deer management program or add limitations for public safety concerns. Carrboro decided against a deer management program in 2010, but offered education on preventative measures, such as fences and repellents. Carrboro passed a deer feeding ban ordinance. Durham allows deer hunting within the city during the regional season with certain limitations. Winston-Salem does not currently allow deer hunting within city limits.

In regards to public safety, Aarin reached out to the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission and the regional biologist. The biologist's only concerns would be vehicle collisions and lyme disease. She also asked the regional biologist about other forms of population control, in particular capture and relocation. The biologist said this would cause more harm to the deer and is very expensive; and the Resource Commission would not allow this method. The Commission also said archery is safer than guns for deer hunting because it's done at a closer range.

Aarin provided considerations for Council: whether or not to allow any exceptions to the current firearm ordinance; the duration; how often to allow it; the permit process; limitations or requirements for public safety purposes; property regulations; notice requirements; depredation permits.

Sheneika Smith asked who provides depredation permits. Aarin said the Wildlife Resource Commission would issue the permits. Sheneika also asked if the depredation permits would override the ordinance. Aarin said they would work in relation to each other. The Commission enforces the permits and the City would enforce the local ordinance.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Arbor, an employee of Asheville School, said they had 9 cases in 2019 of lyme disease on Asheville School campus. In 2018, there were 21 cases in the county as a whole. He has found studies in Connecticut that show lowering deer populations decreases ticks. He said lyme disease is not their only concern and that deer are overgrazing the forest. This is harmful to both the forest and the deer because the deer are starving. Chris also said hunting provides the added benefit of feeding the hungry.

Steven Beltram of Balsam Gardens said they brought this issue up in 2018 (as mentioned by Aarin Miles). He said there is a high risk to farming production if this situation isn't handled properly. Steven said they reached out to the Wildlife Commission and the Commission said they could not get a depredation permit because it conflicted with the city ordinance. He would like to come up with a holistic plan that works with the environment, and not in a reactionary way. He said due to new housing units being built, open space is being destroyed, and the only place for deer to go is on the farms.

Gwen Wisler would like staff to look more into property size, depredation permits, and work with APD on their concerns. She would also like to know how many deer they are looking to eliminate. Aarin will reach out to the Wildlife Commission to see how to put numbers on it.

Sheneika Smith said she would like to look more into other forms of population control. Aarin Miles said her research suggests fertility treatments are expensive and don't always work. Repellents are not that effective and they are a short term fix and not a long term fix. Sheneika asked about fencing the perimeter of the school. Chris Arbor thinks it would be cost prohibitive.

A representative from the Neighborhood Association for Hillside Terrace said their houses are on the perimeter of Asheville School. She said they did not think there are any public safety concerns using archery for hunting and that fencing is currently not effective for deer. She thinks the neighborhood would support this approach.

Joe Lasher, founder of Backyard Bow Pro, said he started Bow Pro because of issues like this. He said his program takes public safety seriously. All shooters carry proper identification. They donate deer meat to local food banks. They use safe and ethical means to get food back into the community. He offered Bow Pro as a solution to the current deer problem.

5. ADJOURN