



January 4, 2019

Geoff Fruin, City Manager
City of Iowa City
410 East Washington Street
Iowa City, IA 52240-1826
Geoff-Fruin@iowa-city.org

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CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Dear Mr. Fruin,

I am writing to thank you for your interest in managing Iowa City's current deer population. As you know, this is a complex issue that has many nuances and variables to consider.

This letter is to provide you information regarding the denial of the special sharpshoot request and to keep the dialogue open to explore resolutions in relation to the management of Iowa City's deer population.

In regard to the presentations made before the Natural Resource Commission on May 10, 2018, and December 13, 2018, I would like to compliment Assistant City Attorney Sue Dulek and Captain Bill Campbell. They presented the City's position professionally and were open to discussion. We also appreciate the City's efforts to re-engage their deer committee and seek public input regarding this issue.

With that being said, concerns expressed by members of the Commission regarding the special request include the length of time since Iowa City's last management effort and the limited long term plan for future management, a plan that was requested by the Commission during the petition review on May 10, 2018.

As you may know, a number of Iowa's urban areas annually utilize the Department of Natural Resources' deer population management zone hunts (under Iowa Administrative Code [571] 105.3) with the guidance and assistance of the Department's depredation biologist. The purpose of these hunts is to "ensure the harvest of an adequate number of deer to reduce economic and biological damage caused by high deer populations." These types of hunts allow cities to regulate the season dates, type of weapons, license types, and quotas.

Although, there are aspects within sharpshooting that are not ideal as a method of take as noted in comments by individual commissioners, we understand there may be an occasion to accommodate this effort to reduce the deer population, especially as an initial management tool. We highly encourage you and the council to explore and familiarize yourselves with other proven, cost effective, and scientifically sound methods of take. As noted before, the Department's depredation biologist is available to assist you with a long term plan in whichever methodologies you choose to consider. Feel free to contact Iowa DNR's Greg Harris, Depredation Biologist (319-330-5578) or Dr. Dale Garner, Division Administrator (515-238-3181) with any questions.

In review of the City's immediate plan with the Department, as outlined in your December 13, 2018, request, the Department is acceptable to items #1 and #3-#8 with the caveat that the City works with the Department to coordinate details, such as with contracting under #5. Regarding #2, the reason for 25 deer per square mile is unclear. Dr. Dale Garner, IA DNR, notes that, biologically, if you are looking to reduce deer density to reduce vegetative/native fauna destruction, then the density will need to be much less than 25 deer per square mile. In your long term planning, we encourage you to re-evaluate this number in regard to the end results you seek to achieve.

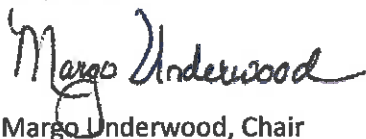
Also, in your long term planning, we would like to ask for a five year deer management plan that includes continuous annual evaluations and actions that include:

- Identify how the City will evaluate and manage the population after the current density is reduced.
- Continue to engage the deer committee, including members from various interest groups, to provide a broad and comprehensive perspective of the issue, and,
- Seek continuous education in deer population management tools to use for internal and public education.

The NRC would be open to reviewing the City's request if it includes a more robust and continuous long term management plan as noted above. If the City is interested in pursuing a shoot or hunt, I invite you to present at our February 14, 2019, Commission business meeting. Once your request has been received, we will review it for any need of additional information prior to the meeting.

As noted before, this is a complex issue with many nuances and variables and they cannot all be addressed in this letter, but I wanted to make sure you were aware the door is open for continued dialogue and encourage you to seek assistance from your City's own biologists and deer management experts and/or the Department's depredation biologist in creating a long term and sustainable deer management plan.

Respectfully Submitted,



Margo Underwood, Chair
Natural Resource Commission
Margo.Underwood@dnr.iowa.gov

Attached: Letter from Geoff Fruin, City Manager, City of Iowa City, dated 11/28/18

cc: Susan (Sue) Dulek, Asst City Atty, 410 East Washington Street, Iowa City, IA (Sue-Dulek@iowa-city.org)
Captain Bill Campbell, 410 East Washington Street, Iowa City, IA (Bill-Campbell@iowa-city.org)
Natural Resource Commissioners (Marcus.Branstad@dnr.iowa.gov, Kim.Francisco@dnr.iowa.gov,
Laura.Hommel@dnr.iowa.gov, Tom.Prickett@dnr.iowa.gov, Phyllis.Reimer@dnr.iowa.gov,
Dennis.Schemmel@dnr.iowa.gov)
Dr. Dale Garner, IA DNR, CRD Division Administrator (Dale.Garner@dnr.iowa.gov)
Greg Harris, IA DNR, Depredation Biologist (Greg.Harris@dnr.iowa.gov)



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February 7, 2019

Ms. Margo Underwood
Chair, Iowa Natural Resource Commission
Henry Wallace Building
502 E. 9th St.
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Chair Underwood:

Thank you for your letter dated January 4, 2019. I greatly appreciate your willingness to assist the City of Iowa City with our deer management efforts. As you noted in your letter, we appeared before the Iowa Natural Resource Commission (NRC) twice in 2018 in order to try to restart our deer management efforts. Our staff has also spent significant time engaging Department of Natural Resource staff and soliciting and processing input on this topic from our community.

Because our request for a sharpshoot was denied in both May and December of 2018, we are now contemplating how to move forward with our management efforts in a manner that aligns with the expectations of our community and that will also be acceptable to the NRC. Based on the feedback received from the NRC at the December 13th meeting, we were previously of the understanding that continuing our community's history of sharpshooting would not be an acceptable option under any circumstance. However, upon receipt of you January 4th letter, it is now our understanding that a sharpshoot can indeed be supported by the NRC. Your letter states that the "*Department is acceptable to items #1 and #3-#8*" in my December 13 request. Item #3 in our request states: "*The deer management program will be conducted solely by professional wildlife biologists trained as sharp shooters.*"

Your letter was very helpful in identifying the steps Iowa City needs to take in order to gain the approval of the NRC for our preferred management tool of sharpshooting. I now understand that a five-year deer management plan is needed that includes "*continuous annual evaluations and actions that include:*

- *Identify how the City will evaluate and manage the population after the current density is reduced.*
- *Continue to engage the deer committee, including members from various interest groups, to provide a broad and comprehensive perspective of the issue, and,*
- *Seek continuous education in deer population management tools to use for internal and public education."*

Your letter also questioned the deer density level of 25 deer per square mile contained in item #2 of the City's request. When Iowa City made its first request to the NRC in the late 1990's, our goal was 35 deer per square mile. Our City Council lowered the goal to 25 in 2005 after our Deer Task Force concluded that 25 deer per square mile to be the level at which irreversible environmental damage occurs. Thereafter every subsequent request to the NRC has been to

sharpshoot a sufficient number of deer to achieve a goal of 25 deer per square mile. I provide this to you by way of background only. The City is very willing to lower this number to satisfy the NRC. Your guidance that our current target goal is too high is much appreciated. Per your suggestion, we will seek direction on a revised figure with Department of Natural Resource staff that have significant expertise on this subject matter.

Prior to further engaging our elected officials and the residents of Iowa City, I respectfully request that you confirm that my understanding of your letter is correct. It is very important to our community that we develop an acceptable plan in a timely manner so that we can restart our deer management efforts in 2019. In short, our understanding is that the NRC is open to approving a plan that only includes sharpshooting if Iowa City develops a five-year plan as described in your letter and if we reduce our previously submitted goal of 25 deer per square mile. On the latter topic we will seek expert guidance from Department of Natural Resource staff.

If this understanding is incorrect it is vitally important that the NRC provide us precise parameters for a plan that will meet your approval. If for instance, sharpshooting will not be approved as either a one-time reduction strategy or an ongoing management tool than we need to know that in no uncertain terms so we can appropriately advise our elected officials and guide local public discussion.

Again, thank you for reaching out and offering assistance. We truly view the NRC as a partner on this issue and we graciously seek your assistance and direction so that we can address a rapidly growing public safety concern in our community.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Geoff Fruin
City Manager

Via U.S. mail and email <Margo.Underwood@dnr.iowa.gov>

Copy to:

Natural Resource Commission via email to <Kim.Rasler@dnr.gov>

Dr. Dale Garner via email <Dale.Garner@dnr.gov>

Jody Matherly, Chief of Police

Bill Campbell, Captain Iowa City Police Dept.

Susan Dulek, Assistant City Attorney