



CITY OF IOWA CITY

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April 19, 2018

Natural Resource Commission
Henry Wallace Building
502 E. 9th St.
Des Moines, IA 50309

In re: May 10, 2018 Business Meeting
Urban Deer Management Zone—Special Harvest/Request to Sharp Shoot Deer

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the placing this request by the City of Iowa City on the agenda of your May 10, 2018 business meeting. The following City staff will be appearing at your meeting: Captain Bill Campbell of the Iowa City Police Department; Liz Ford, who is the Supervisor of the Animal Care and Adoption Center (i.e., the “shelter”); and Assistant City Attorney Sue Dulek.

Request.

Pursuant to 571 Iowa Admin. Code 105.5, the City of Iowa City (the City) is requesting NRC approval of an urban deer management zone during the winter of 2018-2019. Additionally, the City is requesting that the special harvest be conducted under the following conditions:

1. The deer management area is defined as all public and private land within the corporate limits as designated by the City Council. Property owners will need to provide the City with permission.
2. No limit is placed on the number of to be killed.
3. The deer management program will be conducted solely by professional wildlife biologists trained as sharp shooters.
4. Bait may be used to attract deer to select sharpshooting locations.
5. Deer sharp shooting activities may occur from December 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019.

Previous NRC Action/Historical Background.

The City began its deer management just over twenty (20) years ago with discussions in 1996 with the DNR. As recommended by the DNR, the City formed a committee in 1997 to determine the best methods for the City to manage the deer population consisting of representatives of a variety of groups, such as a resident living in areas heavily populated with deer, resident in areas not heavily populated with deer, animal rights, science/biology background, and Iowa Wildlife Federation. After spending 5 months deciding whether to reduce the number of deer and how to do so, the committee recommended to City Council reduction by sharp shooting and trap and kill, but not bow hunting. The NRC approved the request to sharp shoot, and the City entered into a contract with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to sharp shoot, but in February 1999, a lawsuit was filed against the USDA alleging a violation of the National

Environmental Policy Act. The Court entered a temporary restraining order which terminated the sharpshooting that spring and ended the City's relationship with the USDA.

Beginning the following winter of 1999-2000 and continuing annually through 2009-2010 (with the exception of the winter of 2002-2003), the City contracted with White Buffalo, Inc. to sharp shoot. In each of those winters the City applied for authorization from the NRC to shoot, and in each year, the NRC granted the application.

Because the numbers of deer were at a reasonable population level, the City notified the NRC in May 2010 that it was not seeking authorization to sharp shoot the following winter. The City's Deer Task Force was also dissolved that spring.

For your information, attached as Exhibit A is a copy of the report by White Buffalo, Inc. from the operation of the winter of 2009-2010, which includes a summary of the number of deer harvested in each of the winters the City engaged White Buffalo, Inc.

Current Deer Population.

Unfortunately, the deer population in the City has grown since 2010 and has returned to the level of twenty (20) years ago. I am attaching as Exhibit B a copy of the report by White Buffalo, Inc. entitled "Iowa City White-Tailed Deer Population Estimate January 2018."

City Council Discussion/Direction.

On March 6, 2018, the City Council discussed the issue of deer management at its work session and directed staff to: a) Request NRC authorization to sharp shoot deer during the upcoming winter; and b) Prepare a Council resolution to establish a deer task force/committee similar to the previous one. Given that the work of the task force/committee will take some time and given Council's direction to proceed with a hunt this winter, this request is being made prior to the task force/committee being created.

White Buffalo, Inc.

White Buffalo, Inc. is a nonprofit organization with considerable experienced in deer management in urban and suburban settings by means of professional sharpshooting. Its web site is <https://www.whitebuffaloinc.org/> As I said earlier, the City contracted with White Buffalo, Inc. for 10 years without incident and will do so again this year if the NRC approves this request. I am attaching as Exhibit C the sharpshooting protocol employed by White Buffalo, Inc.

Bow Hunting.

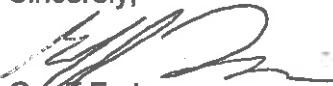
I anticipate some commissioners may want to see the City offer bow hunting as an option to manage the deer within the City limits. I also understand that bow hunting is successful in many communities. The current City Council, as did previous Councils, prefers to manage the deer population in Iowa City by means of sharp shooting. As we did previously, the City will contract with a local locker to package and freeze all the deer meat to be distributed free of charge at the Crisis Center that operates our local food bank. The locker will be allowed to keep and utilize the hides.

Conclusion.

City staff looks forward to the opportunity to meet with you, answer your questions, and address your concerns. If you find that you need additional information, we will provide that to you either in writing and/or in person. If authorization to proceed with sharp shooting is approved, I will provide the NRC with a report next spring summarizing the operation.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Geoff Fruin
City Manager

Enc.

Copies w/enc. to:

Jody Matherly, Chief of Police
Bill Campbell, Lt. Iowa City Police Dept.
Liz Ford, Animal Services Supervisor
Susan Dulek, Ass't. City Attorney