



Date 3 June 2012

City Council Committee Report

To: Mayor Canfield & Members of Council

Fr: Karen Brown, on behalf of the Deer and Wolf Conflict Task Force

Re: Deer Hunting Season for 2012

Recommendation:

That Council hereby approves an amendment to the Discharge of Firearms By-law #148-2010 to authorize an extension to the areas in which deer hunting is allowed within City limits for 2012 for the period October 1, 2012 up to and including 15 December, 2012, with the following restrictions:

- Hunting shall be restricted to hunting of deer only south of Highway 17A (the By-pass);
- Firearms authorized to be used for hunting within City limits south of the by-pass shall be restricted to archery equipment as defined per the rules and regulations of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act;
- Hunters eligible to hunt within City limits south of Highway 17A (the By-pass) shall be restricted to those eligible to hunt under the Resident – Open Season, as defined within the Ontario hunting regulations;
- Hunters shall have all required licenses and courses and comply with the rules and regulations as set out in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act and adhere to all related Provincial and Federal statutes;
- Hunting shall only be permitted on parcels of land of an area of four (4) hectares or greater;
- Hunting shall be prohibited on all city owned land;
- Hunting shall only take place on either crown land or private property which lies within the designated hunting areas and related size restrictions;
- Hunters must obtain written permission to hunt on private land from the property owner and display written permission at request of a law or by-law enforcement officer;
- Discharging a bow and arrow within 75 metres of an occupied dwelling or roadway is prohibited;
- No bow and arrow shall be discharged in the direction of any human, roadway, structure or domestic animal within reasonable range of the weapon at an angle which might allow the projectile to strike at, or dangerously near these objects;
- Field dressing shall be done in accordance with the wishes of the property owner and remains shall not be disposed of on City property; and further

That the appropriate by-law be passed for this purpose.

Background:

In 2011, the City amended its Discharge of Firearms By-law to allow bow hunting south of the by-pass for deer only for a trial period in 2011 with certain restrictions. This amendment was based on a recommendation from the Deer and Wolf Conflict Task Force which was formed following a number of concerns expressed by various members of the public. A report was submitted to Council on behalf of that task force, and has been attached to this report for ease of reference, without the related attachments (attachment #1). The contents and justification contained within that report have not been repeated within this one, other than the specific recommendations. It is worth noting that the recommendation was amended from the original report to eliminate the section contemplating allowing feeding of deer within City limits north of the by-pass.

Since that report was brought forward, this task force has continued to be active in implementing steps that will bring the City to a longer term resolution of the current deer issue within City limits. This includes:

- A public consultation session on September 15, 2011 to allow the public an opportunity for feedback into the trial hunting season for 2011 (minutes from the meeting attached – attachment #2).
- Survey related to the fall hunt, gauging success of that hunt – the results were reviewed at the task force December 14, 2011 meeting, as well as discussion on changes that could be made in considering future hunts (minutes from the meeting attached – attachment #3).
- Recommendation approved by Council at their April 2012 meeting approving some updates to the City's Feeding of Wild Animals by-law for minor wording changes following a review which confirmed the enforceability of this by-law.
- May 16, 2012 task force meeting to update on status, provide discussion with regards to a recommendation to Council for a fall 2012 proposed hunt, as well as discuss the opportunity for a cull with representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources or MNR (minutes from the meeting attached – attachment #4).
- Continued education strategy, including public service announcements from our media partners that provide seasonal information related to deer and related strategies for minimizing deer / human conflicts, as well as extensive distribution of the "got deer?" information pamphlet with pamphlets being made available at several local businesses and other locations.

This task force is recommending to City Council to allow a fall bow hunt south of the by-pass within City limits for deer for 2012, with some minor amendments being recommended in comparison to the initial hunt approved for 2011. These amendments are as follows:

- Extension of the hunting period to the end of the hunting season for 2012. The 2011 trial period ended on November 15th. For 2012, it is

recommended that this hunt end at the end of hunting season. As in 2011, the hunt will not begin until October 1st.

- Size of parcel of eligible property to be reduced from 5 hectares to 4 hectares. In the original discussions, the recommended parcel size was 10 acres. When this was converted, it ended up being increased to 5 hectares. Four hectares is a more accurate conversion to 10 acres, and the reduction is being recommended based on that initial assessment.

In addition, the recommendation excluding city owned property from the hunt was reviewed. The City received feedback during the public consultation session in September 2011 that the City should consider opening up City owned parcels as part of this hunt. The City owns a number of properties that are recreational in nature, as well as properties representing important partnerships. These properties should not be considered eligible for hunting purposes. Once these properties were removed, there were only a few small parcels of City owned land that could be considered. As such, the recommendation is being made to continue to exclude City properties from this hunt.

All other restrictions that applied to the 2011 trial period are recommended to remain in force for the 2012 hunt. While these were discussed in the attached report, for ease of reference, they are as follows:

- Adhere to hunting regulations as strictly as possible – keep it simple
- Hunting shall be restricted to hunting of deer only south of Highway 17A (the By-pass);
- Firearms restricted to archery equipment to limit distance of firearm discharge
- Only Resident hunters eligible for expanded hunting areas
- Hunters shall have all required licenses and courses and comply with the rules and regulations as set out in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act and adhere to all related Provincial and Federal statutes;
- Hunting prohibited on all city owned land;
- Hunting shall only take place on either crown land or private property
- Hunters must obtain written permission to hunt on private land
- Discharging a bow and arrow within 75 metres of an occupied dwelling or roadway is prohibited;
- No bow and arrow shall be discharged in the direction of any human, roadway, structure or domestic animal within reasonable range of the weapon at an angle which might allow the projectile to strike at, or dangerously near these objects;
- Field dressing shall be done in accordance with the wishes of the property owner
- Remains shall not be disposed of on City property

Other suggestions from the task force for enhancements for the 2012 hunting season was the opportunity for a registry or listing of land owners who would be interested in allowing hunters the opportunity of hunting on their property.

The City would maintain the list and make it available to interested parties, however it would be a reference list only. Hunters would still be required to individually contact the homeowners and obtain written permission direct from the homeowner in order to comply with the amended Discharge of Firearms by-law.

Budget:

It is anticipated that all related preparations, with the exception of advertising in advance of the hunt, can be coordinated through internal staff time, resulting in no incremental costs to the City.

Communication Plan/Notice By-law Requirements:

The City will continue to work on its communications strategy with regards to the urban deer issue. In addition, the hunting package information and maps will be updated based on the amendments, once approved by Council, and will be made available in conjunction with the fall hunt. Advertising, and a press release, will be made available closer to the start of the fall hunt.