

Environmental Board Meeting Minutes for December 11, 2013

Meeting called to order at 7pm

Members Present: Ruth, Martha, Catherine, Jamie, Christin, Spencer, Tim

Excused Absences: David, Genevieve, Bill

Motion to approve the minutes from November meeting as amended by Martha, seconded by Catherine.

Deer Predation Discussion

Mark Mills-Department of Natural Resources is here.

Portage provides good habitat for deer. Some signs of overpopulation in that you see deer eating flowers and vegetation out of people's gardens. The deer don't seem to be starving though so the problem doesn't seem to be one of extreme overpopulation.

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) traveled through the State of Michigan last year. Spread by a midge. Midges reproduce in mud flats so in warm, drought years these midges do well. Warmth also helps the midges produce more of the virus. This disease may have helped cull down the population.

Other issue is whether Portage is beyond the social carrying capacity of deer in Portage. We might be in that case.

Options to decrease population:

Deer drives (drives deer out of Portage)-problem is where you drive them to, across roads, etc.

Deer Hunt: people with bows or sharpshooters take out the deer. Problems with people protesting the hunt then potentially.

Do Nothing: Let the deer increase to a point and then let nature figure out how to reduce the population

Pfizer has actually had deer starve on them since their entire property is fenced in.

A deer harvest would most likely involve some type of food donation component

What time of year is best for deer harvests? Doing it during the hunting season is the optimal idea. Also, best for the deer since fawns can take care of themselves by the Fall.

How to determine if Portage has too many deer? Some type of poll of the city residents possibly. Might require action from city council on this issue.

City gathers statistics on number of accidents per segment of road. Certain parts of Portage have more deer-car accidents than others.

Part of our consideration especially with the potential restoration of Eliason Reserve is if we plant native species will they just become snacks for the deer.

New city employee has happened to do her thesis on deer culling in Portage, MI and will send it to Chris.

There are deer being harvested illegally in Portage right now for their antlers.

Update to City Council

They think the environmental board is doing good things. They are going to decide at the next meeting or at a meeting in the future whether to go along with the prescribed burn of the Phragmites near the consolidated drain.

Ruth reported that the morale of the Environmental Board is good.

Phragmites stand on Long Lake near a sandbar.

Purple Loosestrife Report

Sent to Chris and he sent it to the Council.

Invasive Plant Pulls

We are recommending we do garlic mustard pulls from mid-March to June every other Saturday at a few key spots: West Lake, Schrier Park, Eliason Reserve.

Next month we'll do a sign-up for the pulls as to who can be there from the board.

Discussed doing signs at the library, senior center and potentially at parks as well.

Invasive species pull article was in The Portager.

Eliason Reserve

Christin received many positive responses with regard to helping the City of Portage with moving forward on this potential restoration.

Next step is probably doing the baseline survey with regard to what plants are present and what plants are not present.

Invasive Plants

Jamie will work on signing people up next month with regard to our planned pulls.

Tim is trying to get the lake associations to purchase beetles regarding Purple Loosestrife.

Water Treatment Plant

Martha will work with Chris on maintenance bids/proposals for the planting there.

Greenathon

Greenathon is scheduled for Saturday, April 26th

Updates

SAW grant was submitted by the City of Portage to the state.

New Business

Salt/sand usage on roads during the Winter. City uses both depending on conditions. City has reduced its salt usage over the years. Both sand/salt impacts the environment and water quality adversely. City follows best practices from the state regarding salt/sand usage.

Announcements

Christmas Bird count and potluck for Audobon at People's Church on Saturday, December 28th. Different counts for different parts of the county and state. Battle Creek is having their count on Saturday, December 14th, Dowagiac on Monday, December 16th, Allegan State Game Area is on Friday, December 20th, and Gobles is on Friday, January 3rd.

The Kalamazoo River TMDL is trying to initiate a river cleanup amongst all the municipalities or townships along the Kalamazoo River either on the same weekend or on consecutive weeks.

Lake Center subgroup meeting for 2014 Comprehensive Plan update has a meeting tomorrow evening December 12th at City Council Chambers from 4pm to 6pm.

Motion to adjourn at 8:43pm by Catherine, seconded by Jamie.

/s/ Tim Winslow