



Legislation Text

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Urban Deer Management

Presenter:

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Cody Wigner, District Wildlife Manager, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Summary:

During the summer of 2017, representatives of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) approached City Council to discuss their concerns relating to the large populations of deer within the City and in the surrounding region. Consequences of such overpopulation include vehicle damage, injuries due to deer-vehicle collisions and (rarely) attacks on people by aggressive animals; damage to public and private property from overgrazing, and animal diseases that result from hers that exceed the carrying capacity of the available area.

Councilmembers, City and Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) staff members have met for a number of months with representatives of CPW to explore the magnitude of the problem and potential solutions. Ms. Stiver and Mr. Wigner of CPW will discuss their concerns and explore possible solutions, including increased public education regarding illegal feeding of wildlife, various approaches to reducing the size of the local herd, and potential costs and benefits of those approaches.

Previous Council Action:

N/A

Background:

The working group includes representatives of City Council, CSU, Planning & Community Development, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, the Colorado Springs Police Department, Public Works, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, and other local stakeholders. They have explored topics including establishing the actual herd size within City limits; various methods of deer population control (i.e. hunting, culling, relocation, birth control); the number and nature of vehicle/deer collisions based on Police and Public Works records; and approaches used by other local governments in Colorado and throughout the United States. The group also discussed the long-term results of deer culling operations on the grounds of the United States Air Force Academy in northwest Colorado Springs.

CPW provided the working group with a number of studies and scholarly articles relating to this issue, some of which are attached to this item. Of note is a finding from a 2006 Colorado Springs Deer Movement Management Study which found that, of 23 deer that were radio collared for study, 11 died during the one-year study period, with causes including auto collisions (6 deer), mountain lion predation (2 deer) and unknown (3 deer). An additional two deer from the study group were hit by

vehicles during the year but survived (page 7).

As a result of early discussions on this topic, a number of citizens contacted Councilmembers to express their support for a hunt or culling operation, or their opposition to any operation resulting in the killing of local wildlife. Constituents expressed concerns relating to vehicle safety, safety during hunting or culling operations, ethical treatment of animals, and property damage caused by urban deer.

In early 2018, City staff issued a Request for Information (RFI) requesting information from qualified contractors about the costs and requirements associated with conducting “culling” operations within the City limits. Three companies responded to the RFI, providing information relating to costs, constraints, safety, and timing of hunting/culling deer in order to reduce the herd to a healthier, safer size.

This item supports the City’s strategic goal relating to building community and collaborative relationships by collaborating with other governmental agencies and neighborhoods to solve a public safety issue of concern to many citizens.

Financial Implications:

Financial implications of any effort to control urban wildlife are as yet undetermined.

Board/Commission Recommendation:

N/A

Stakeholder Process:

As this issue is still in the exploration and research phase, Council has not yet conducted a comprehensive stakeholder process. Councilmembers Pico and Knight have discussed the issue at their own district town halls and have received a variety of input from their constituents.

CPW staff conducted public meetings throughout El Paso County in 2016, and results of those discussions showed that participants ranked urban deer problems as their most important wildlife-related priority, with most participants ranking urban hunting and culling as their preferred method to address.

Alternatives:

N/A

Proposed Motion:

N/A

N/A