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www.attorneysforanimals.org

February 7, 2022

Ann Arbor City Council
Mayor Christopher Taylor

Via email: CityCouncil@a2gov.org, ctaylor@a2gov.org

Re: City Council Meeting, February 7, 2022: Oppose DC-1 22-0235 Resolution on Deer Management to Resume Funding for Vegetation Studies and Consider Resuming Funding for Regular Population Management

Dear Council Members and Mayor Taylor,

Attorneys for Animals, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) organization of attorneys, law students and animal advocates, founded and headquartered in Michigan. As advocates for animals who provide resources for attorneys and other advocates, we oppose the deer cull and ask the City Council to defeat this resolution.

Our opposition is based on reasons of ethics, efficacy, the divisive nature of this issue and fiscal irresponsibility. The issue is not deer. These are complex, multifaceted problems, namely the impact of human development on the natural environment; and how best to address urban wildlife. Ann Arbor's efforts over the better part of a decade can be called scapegoating of deer – to the point of killing them – as a fix for these thorny problems.

To shoot deer year after year, rather than devise a comprehensive plan to assess the severity of the issue and implement a non-lethal program (not as an afterthought to the cull), is unsound policy and, we believe, unethical. Whether there is an overpopulation of deer is uncertain. The “damage” deer cause to vegetation cannot be properly assessed absent a concerted effort to educate the public and engage in real non-lethal management efforts. The statistics do not support the assertion that the deer cull resolves deer/vehicle collisions. In short, the Council has grown accustomed to a “quick” (although not so much now¹) fix to appease vocal interest groups, rather than engage in the much harder assessment of the role that human behavior and increased development contribute to deer population.

The “4 year” cull occurred for 5 years (2016-2020) but was dropped from the 2021 and 2022 budgets. Instead of letting it go, it's being resurrected.

The program has deeply divided the City (the City has acknowledged this fact) while continuing to accede to the wishes of a “portion” of its residents, over the objections of a “segment” of its residents.² The Mayor has called this the most divisive issue he has seen, and one that goes against the City's “ethos.”³

¹ Although perhaps inadvertently, the name of this Resolution – “Consider Resuming Funding for **Regular** Population Management” (emphasis added) – itself supports the claim that there is no plan to end the deer cull despite the original plan.

² <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/community-services/Pages/Long-Term-Objectives.aspx>

³ https://annarborobserver.com/articles/the_biggest_cull.html#.YJAE_LVKJIU

Continuing the cull is also irresponsible from a fiscal perspective. The most recent proposal (which failed) allocated \$240,000.⁴ Nor does the one-time influx of cash from the American Rescue Plan justify renewing the cull.⁵

We have reviewed materials from the early years of the deer management plan. With respect, it appears that the City would not address this as a regional issue, and instead listened to a small group of vocal (and connected) citizens to make their problems with deer browsing on private property, into a city-wide issue. It appears the City used a time-honored procedure of determining the desired outcome and then amassing data to support it.

We see no reasonable end in sight to the annual deer cull and urge you to look at the bigger picture and ask where your decision to begin the process of resuming the deer cull by a series of “studies” actually is leading the city.

Very Truly Yours,



Beatrice M. Friedlander, JD
President



Margaret M. Sadoff, MPH, JD
Ward 5 Resident and Attorneys for Animals Member

We are residents of Ann Arbor, Members/Supporters of Attorneys for Animals and oppose the Resolution:

Jeri Schneider, Ward 1
Maria Comninou, Ward 2
Michelle Barnett, Ward 1
Lorraine Fig Shapiro, Ward 2
Sivana Heller, Ward 5
Barbara Smuts, Ward 2

⁴ Over \$1M if \$66,788 in “other sources” of revenue are included, <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2020/01/you-created-culture-of-hate-deer-cull-protesters-tell-ann-arbor-city-council.html>

⁵ It does not appear that resuming the deer cull is high priority for the City which instead has proposed projects such as bridge replacement, homeless and affordable housing, water service line replacement, Vision Zero plan, and Universal Basic Income, <https://www.a2gov.org/news/pages/article.aspx?i=849>