

To: Honorable Councilmembers Beier, Stephens, Babcock, Gregg, and Meadows

January 21, 2020

My name is Ray Vlasin. I have been an East Lansing resident since 1971. I am one of many who love my City, its government, and my many friends and neighbors. I come as a friend of Council to speak about the city-wide ballot proposal regarding a deer cull.

I was pleased to be a technical member of the Financial Health Team that addressed the over \$100 million and growing legacy deficit three years ago. I also served on four of its subcommittees. The six subcommittees and other members of the Team were all technically competent and skilled in their fields, and brought their best competencies to the serious problem and threat posed by the large and growing legacy deficit. At no time prior to the analyses or during the analyses did anyone call for a city-wide vote by largely uninformed voters to determine whether the technicians should recommend courses of action or whether the City government should act. Instead, we created a subcommittee to help keep the public informed through forums as we proceeded and provided a pipeline for their suggestions.

The damages and threats from deer are NOT a city-wide problem. Therefore, they should be treated as a severe, but localized problem. If our City is confronted with a localized water or sewer system problem, a local contamination problem, a localized flooding problem, or a limited wind-damage problem, it does not institute a city-wide vote about whether it should analyze the problem and take action to remedy the problem. **Instead, our City identifies its technicians and others it draws upon for technical consultation to quickly analyze the problem, develop a plan for its remedy, and institute preventive measures to preclude its recurrence.**

The problem in question is an unchecked growing deer population in specific parts of East Lansing when the damage is major, and threats to near-by residences and the public are localized and severe. It is logical that the problem be addressed directly by city government through the best technical consultations, and then take remedial action based on those technical consultations. **And, it need not, and should not, create potential roadblocks to its remedial actions to check deer herd growth and its increasing damage and threats.**

As deer specialists may have told you, the deer population is growing unchecked in this **unnatural environment** where there are no predators to diminish deer herds and keep the remaining deer population healthy. The prohibition of a deer harvest by licensed hunters only adds to this growing and severe problem. Residents in the impacted areas will tell you of the large number of deer including the large number of young deer that will be reproducing in the coming seasons. Master gardeners who live in the impacted area will tell you that the deer are eating and destroying native plant and tree species and landscape materials that previously were thought to be deer resistant. And the deer increment on lawns, sidewalks and driveways

are causing some families to prevent their grandchildren from playing outside. The growing number of health and accident related incidences only adds to this serious situation.

Since the problem is not a city-wide problem, a majority of the voters outside the impacted areas likely will see the problem as, “not affecting me”, as a “trivial matter”, or as a “simple species protection issue” and vote NO. A No vote, by citizens not understanding the severity of the problem experienced by a few thousand of their community members, likely will constitute a huge barrier to further technically-based action by the Council.

My strong recommendations are:

- 1. Do not treat this unchecked growing deer population as a city-wide problem.** Instead treat it as a public localized and severe problem requiring technical consultation by people knowledgeable in the fields of wildlife management, environmental impacts, property damage, and health and accident threats.
- 2. Identify a small group of technically applicable persons from MSU Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan’s DNR, possibly Meridian Township, plus specialists in environmental impacts, property damage, and public health to be invited to undertake a quick analysis of the situation and recommend remedial actions.** I believe persons that would be ideal for this group could be identified in a week or two at the most. Assembling those available from the group could follow immediately thereafter.
- 3. Have the assembled group consider the various direct impacts and threats of the current situation, and the unintended future consequences of not taking action to limit the deer herd size. And they could recommend technically-based actions to deal with the problems and prevent their growth.**
- 4. Stand ready as a City Council to take the technically-based remedial actions that are necessary, along with the accompanying educational and informational efforts to be successful.**
- 5. Please do not proceed with a city-wide vote on deer herd culling. The majority of city voters likely will be unaware of the severity of the localized problem and vote No, creating an unnecessary barrier that will greatly complicate future remedial actions. The problem is real and substantial. The City Council has responsibility for the problem’s remediation.**
- 6. And, please avoid placing our City Council and the rest of City Government in position where they would be viewed as simply kicking the problem down the road and appearing to seek cover for not acting.** I strongly fear that any approval of a city-wide advisory vote on culling would do just that.

I want my City Council and City Government to be viewed and respected as practicing trust enhancing behavior, not trust diminishing behavior. The problem is real and growing, and the courage of a City Council to over-ride a citizen No vote would be severely tested.

I thank you for the opportunity to address you, and I stand ready to respond to any questions that you might care to raise with me.

Thank you. Ray Vlasin, 1854 Cricket Lane. East Lansing, MI 48823