

December 1, 2019

To the Chapel Hill Town Council:

I am petitioning the Town of Chapel Hill to revise the Deer Management Program to ban hunting within the city limits and would like to speak at the January 8, 2020 meeting.

I have lived in Parkside subdivision off Weaver Dairy Road Extension for 17 years. It is a neighborhood of single-family homes on 0.10 to 0.27 acre lots, many of which back up to Town of Chapel Hill owned land utilized for Homestead Park and the proposed Upper Booker Creek Trail. Parkside is not the sort of place one would expect hunting to occur, but it does. Hunting—both legal and illegal—is occurring in unexpected places and reflects a need for the town to revise the Deer Management Program adopted in 2010.

This fall, a Parkside property owner installed a pop-up hunting blind in their backyard. Under current town policy, it is legal for this property owner to bow hunt deer on their lot, even though it is listed at only 0.21 acres, with the footprint of the house taking up most of the lot. No notification of neighbors or the town was required; therefore, residents never know when they walk outside if active hunting is taking place mere steps away.

Last year, a hunter installed a tree-stand and baited deer with corn on town-owned land abutting the Parkside neighborhood—this was along a foot path of the future Upper Booker Creek Trail often used by residents as a cut-through to Homestead Park. The issue was resolved by NC Wildlife Enforcement Officer Forrest Orr, who cited the hunter for not wearing blaze orange and having permission of the property owner. The hunter removed the stand at Officer Orr's request.

Photos documenting the two above incidents are attached. Please note the housing density in which this hunting is taking place.

Current hunting rules were formed in response to Mt Bolus neighborhood residents who in 2009 petitioned the town that deer were eating their landscaping plants. The current Deer Management Program was implemented after a public forum and went *against* the written recommendation of the Chief of Police, the Director and Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation, and the Director of Public Works who said there were "*limited portions of Town on which an urban hunt could be safely conducted*". (copy of memo attached)

The Deer Management Program allows property owners with a state hunting license to hunt with a bow and arrow during Central North Carolina deer season, the extended Urban Archery season and anytime of year with a Depredation permit by showing more than \$50 of property damage.

In calendar terms, this means deer are legal to take with bow and arrow in Chapel Hill (including crossbow) from:

- September 7, 2019 to January 1, 2020 (Central NC season, see attached regulation)
- January 11, 2020 to February 16, 2020 (Urban Archery program season)
- anytime of year under a Depredation Hunting Permit

Unfortunately, the town's Deer Management Program did not contain common sense restrictions which many other towns have chosen to include for urban archery hunting---such as establishing minimum lot sizes, minimum distance from property lines and occupied dwellings (such as houses, schools and day

cares), verifying hunter skill and qualifications, use of tree stands instead of ground blinds and so forth. At the moment in Chapel Hill, *any property owner of any skill level on any size lot can hunt with a standard state hunting license and no notification of neighbors or the town is required.*

The Deer Management Program also contains a weak enforcement mechanism. When I first encountered a deer stand behind my house on town land (which is against the rules) no one I contacted knew who had jurisdiction. I was bounced from the town's Parks and Recreation department to the county Animal Services to state Wildlife Resources Commission before finally being able to connect with a state enforcement field officer. Most people are probably not going to take the time I did to find a resolution.

Additionally, there is only one state wildlife enforcement officer assigned to cover the three county region which includes Orange, Alamance and Caswell counties. Currently, this is Sgt Justin Mathis. Since violators must be caught in the act of hunting, finding and citing violators is challenging and time-consuming. Even when violators are caught, state penalties are mild such that they do not necessarily discourage repeat offense.

With increasing development density, I fear it is only a matter of time before a hunting accident occurs.

Furthermore, I feel my beliefs as someone who loves animals is being infringed upon when I can be sitting in my own home and yet I can see a hunting blind and have no choice but to hope I don't happen to see a deer slaughtered and field dressed.

I respectfully ask the Council to ban hunting in the city limits until such time as the Deer Management Program can be revised.

While I prefer to see no hunting at all, I recognize the town may feel the best way to manage deer is to kill them. If that is the case, I suggest at a minimum the town may wish to consider restricting deer hunting to private property consisting of a certain number of acres, not near an occupied dwelling, from a stand rather than a blind, require notification of neighbors, permit the harvesting of deer only by professionals during pre-approved culls etc.

A petition with the names of town residents supporting a hunting ban will be submitted at the January 8 council meeting. You may view the petition in advance at: <http://chng.it/M6pQymzFQp>

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Beth Waldron
104 Caitlin Ct
Chapel Hill, NC 27516
bethjwaldron@gmail.com
919-636-1569

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Documentation of hunting in Parkside subdivision and town owned land
- 2) Hunting seasons in Chapel Hill under NC Wildlife Resources Commission regulations
- 3) 2010 Memorandum from Town Staff recommending against hunting due to safety concern

Attachment 1: Hunting examples in Parkside subdivision provided by Beth Waldron

November 2019: A backyard hunting blind on a 0.21 acre lot as seen from the proposed Lower Booker Creek Trail (top) and my backyard (bottom). The trees are a strip of town utility easement land between my yard and the yard with the blind shown. The woods are *not* the homeowner's property. Please note the density of development and the lack of an arrow backstop.



November 2018: Hunting tree stand and baiting of deer with corn on Town of Chapel Hill owned land abutting Parkside subdivision and Homestead Park. Hunting on town owned land is not permitted under existing rules, but there is a weak enforcement mechanism. This stand was in view of my house along a path utilized by residents as a cut through between the neighborhood and Homestead Park.



Attachment 2: Hunting seasons under Chapel Hill and North Carolina Wildlife Regulations

There has been some confusion among both residents, hunters and the Town as to the legal times of year in which hunting can occur in Chapel Hill.

North Carolina Wildlife Regulations permit the use of bow and arrow during all portions of the central deer season, *including the gun and blackpowder portions of the season*. Archery season in Chapel Hill opens September 7, 2019 and closes January 1, 2020 and since Chapel Hill participates additionally in the Urban Archery Program, this also includes January 11 to February 16, 2020.

- **In sum, deer are legal to take with bow and arrow in Chapel Hill (including crossbow) from September 7, 2019 to February 16, 2020, except for January 2 to January 10, 2020.**

Additionally, a property owner can hunt deer *any time of year* under a Depredation Permit issued by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, showing at least \$50 dollars in property damage due to deer.

Season info can be found on page 62 of the 2019-2020 NC Wildlife Resources Commission Regulations Digest available at the following link, with relevant section copied below for convenience. http://www.eregulations.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/19NCAB_LR9.pdf

NORTHEASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN DEER SEASON	
Archery	Sept. 7 – Sept. 27, 2019
Blackpowder	Sept. 28 – Oct. 11, 2019
Gun	Oct. 12, 2019 – Jan. 1, 2020
CENTRAL DEER SEASON	
Archery	Sept. 7 – Nov. 1, 2019
Blackpowder	Nov. 2 – Nov. 15, 2019
Gun	Nov. 16, 2019 – Jan. 1, 2020
NORTHWESTERN DEER SEASON	
Archery	Sept. 7 – Nov. 8, 2019
Blackpowder	Nov. 9 – Nov. 22, 2019
Gun	Nov. 23, 2019 – Jan. 1, 2020
WESTERN DEER SEASON	
Archery	Sept. 7 – Sept. 29; Oct. 13 – Nov. 24, 2019; Dec. 15, 2019 – January 1, 2020 (antlered deer only)
Blackpowder	Sept. 30 – Oct. 12, 2019
Gun	Nov. 25 – Dec. 14, 2019

enhance its aroma or taste. This includes: food products enhanced by sugar, honey, syrups, oils, salts, spices, peanut butter, grease, meat, bones, or blood; candies, pastries, gum, and sugar blocks; and extracts of such products.

- The placement of commercially available mineral supplements specifically and exclusively marketed for attracting or feeding deer is allowed anywhere in the state, except on game lands.

Weapons and Dogs

Archery

- During the archery season the following are legal weapons: bows and arrows and crossbows (both described on page 56).

Blackpowder

- During the blackpowder season the following are legal weapons: bows and arrows, crossbows (both described on page 56), and blackpowder firearms as defined on page 56.

Gun

- During the gun season the following are legal weapons: bows and arrows, crossbows, blackpowder firearms, shotguns, rifles, and handguns (all described on page 56).



ATTACHMENT 3: Town of Chapel Hill Staff Memorandum

Relevant sections copied below. Entire memo is available at https://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/agendas/2010/01/11/7a/7a-staff_memorandum-deer_population.pdf

Page 1

MEMORANDUM

TO: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager

FROM: Ray (Butch) Kisiah, Parks and Recreation Director
Lance Norris, Public Works Director
Bill Webster, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director
Brian Curran, Police Chief

SUBJECT: Response to Petition for an Urban Deer Hunt in the Mt. Bolus Neighborhood

DATE: January 11, 2010

PURPOSE

This memorandum provides information on growing urban deer populations. We have included information on deer control techniques used or attempted in other locations throughout the country. We recommend that the Town approach the issue from the perspective of deer management by providing homeowners with information to assist in minimizing damage from over-browsing. The attached Resolution would authorize the Manager to distribute information to the public related to deer management for gardens and landscaping.

Page 7

Staff Recommendation: Based on the limited portions of Town on which an urban hunt could be safely conducted, combined with the issues outlined above, we do not believe that an urban hunt is a viable option for the Town. We recommend that the Council adopt the attached Resolution, which authorizes the Manager to develop an information packet for residents interested in protecting their landscaping and gardens from deer.