

Safety, Health, and Service

March 23rd, 2015

The Safety, Health, and Service committee met March 23rd at 6:30 PM in Council Chambers. Present were committee members Rob Maurer, Dan Lanzer, and Cheryl Ramos. Also in attendance were Jim Zucal, Mayor Dave Johnson, Rod Miller, Darrin Lautenschleger, John Zucal, Patti McKay, Sam Hitchcock, Marvin Fete, Sandy Cox, Winnie Walker, Tom Gerber, Beth Gundy, Greg Popham, Thomas Contini and Media.

The purpose of the meeting was a request by Mayor Dave Johnson and Service Director Jim Zucal to review the issue of the overwhelming geese population at Tuscora Park.

Comments from Mayor Johnson:

We have a major geese problem at Tuscora Park and waterworks area. The problem is that people feed them and put down straw. The straw then gets caught in the drains that allow water from lagoon retention pond to drain. Asking from committee and council something with teeth that would make it an offence to feed or put straw down. He is not asking that any harm be done to the geese.

Comments from Park Director Rod Miller:

Feels that the fecal matter creates an unhealthy environment and harvests germs. Reported that there may be fewer geese that populate the park compared to a few years ago. Oak Shadows golf club only has problems with the geese at night. Miller knows the geese at Tuscora Park migrate from New Town Mall area. Miller felt that something needed to be done because people wont stop otherwise. Educating the public should be part of the program.

Comments from Service Director Zucal

Keep it simple. Recommended prohibiting feeding from November to April. The geese can take care of themselves and will not starve if not fed. Felt strongly that geese issue will resolve itself if feeding is stopped. Agreed that straw should never be put down and takes city employees resources to unplug the gates that allow drainage. State of Ohio is willing to work with the city providing brochures etc. Zucal said they used a loud bird banger and it chased 100+ geese away instantly. Zucal explained a bird banger was a loud pyrotechnic type tool that is used to scare them away. Handed out an ordinance from Canton that prohibited feeding of geese in park system. Asked that an ordinance of some sort be in place by October.

Comments from Council Member Maurer

Asked Jim Zucal if Canton enforces there ordinance because McKinley Park is a mess with geese fecal matter. Felt that education, signs, and brochures is a good start.

Comments from Thomas Contini

Mr. Contini explained that he is a leading nuisance wild animal control officer. Although geese have very small brains, they can learn to associate humans with food. He explained that controlling them would be a large undertaking due to the many years of neglect. He said that it would be humane and his employees respect the geese and would use a mild form of maintenance. It may take a more aggressive approach if that wouldn't work but

did not offer what that may be. He estimated that the geese population is 1-2 years old. They go to the river by New Philadelphia Buehlers to nest.

Comments from Council Member Dan Lanzer

Mr. Lanzer wanted to know what Jim Zucal was looking for when he said he needed something with legal teeth. Zucal suggested an ordinance similar to Canton but have the enforcement period run from November to April. This is when the geese are a problem at the park.

Comments from Council Member Sandy Cox

Wanted to know if Oak Shadows shakes eggs? Jim Zucal said they do have permits from State of Ohio for various ways of reducing the population. Cox felt that we should go ahead with an ordinance because it probably won't work without.

Comments from Lee Montgomery

Wanted to know if city has done any research on holistic methods? Jim Zucal said swans can be used but several lawsuits filed because they can be aggressive.

Comments from Cheryl Ramos

Feels that educating the public should be our approach. She commented that the senior center will take their leftover bread from meals to the park to feed. She was in favor of front end education versus punishment. Ramos wanted to know who would enforce the ordinance and law director Marvin Fete said it's the police dept responsibility.

Comments from John Zucal

In favor of a nice sign that explains the reasons on why the geese should not be fed. People think they are doing the geese a favor but are actually perpetuating the problem. Felt that a problem is that Ohio doesn't have predatory animals such as bears that scare geese away. Sustainable education is important.

Comments from Darrin Lautenschleger

Former employer dealt with this issue. They thrive in the park due to the pond and is a natural habitat for them. Need to encourage control measures using service directors expertise. Felt scare away techniques could be helpful.

Comments from Greg Popham

Has been an ongoing problem for a long time and wont go away easily. The smell at park was horrible. Was in favor of proper signage. The Division of Wildlife gave Oak Shadows tools and are available to the City of New Philadelphia. Mentioned that straw is only an issue in the winter.

Committee Decision:

A motion was made by Dan Lanzer to have an ordinance drawn up by law director to make it a minor misdemeanor first offense to feed geese from the period of October 1st to April 1st. A second offense would be a 4th degree misdemeanor. Motion was seconded by Rob Maurer. It was passed by all three (Maurer, Lanzer, and Ramos) voting in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned at 6:35 PM.

Sincerely,

Rob Maurer, Chair

