

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
February 11, 2014

The regular meeting of the Fish and Game Council was held on the above date.

The meeting was called to order at 10:12 a.m. by Acting Chairman Burke.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Acting Chairman Burke read aloud the following notice: In accordance with P.L. 1975, c. 231 notice of this meeting was filed with and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on January 27, 2014.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman Dave Burke
Councilwoman Blumig
Councilman Brodhecker (arrived at 10:14 a.m.)
Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Puskas (arrived at 10:23 a.m.)
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilman Link

Division employees included Director Chanda, Assistant Director Herrightly, Assistant Director Nelson, L. Barno, M. Chicketano, T. Petrongolo, D. Golden, A. Ivany, D. Jenkins and K. Korth.

There were several members of the public in attendance.

Minutes of the January 14, 2014 meeting were reviewed with minor discussion. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to approve the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor and one abstention from Councilwoman Brummer.**

(Councilman Brodhecker arrived at 10:14 a.m.)

Acting Chairman Burke noted that there was quite a bit of opportunity available now, including the special fox and coyote permit season, light goose season and ice fishing. Many outdoor and recreational vehicle shows are also occurring.

The Batsto Freshwater Fisheries Forum will be held on February 22, and the Pequest Open House is scheduled for March. The turkey permit application period is currently open.

Acting Chairman Burke commented that the cold weather conditions may help with the Southern pine beetle problem.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He gave a brief review of the recent Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation Board of Directors meeting he attended.

With no agenda items to be voted on today, Acting Chairman Burke advised that the public comment period would be at the end of the meeting.

Committee reports began. Councilman Brodhecker reported for the Agriculture Committee, noting that there is quite a bit of snow in his area. Deer have not been moving much.

Councilman Van Mater had no new Federation information to report for his area, noting that all has been quiet.

(Councilman Puskas arrived at 10:23 a.m.)

Councilwoman Blumig distributed copies of a letter she received regarding a request for residents to be able to obtain free hunting and fishing licenses at age 65.

At the State meeting members talked about the Convention in June.

Questions came up about obtaining metal detecting permits for wildlife management area properties. Assistant Director Herrighty advised that the current policy needs to be redone. There was additional discussion on this, including areas that may have historic artifacts or munitions. Assistant Director Herrighty noted that Chief Petrongolo has been asked to look in to this further.

Councilman Gudmundsson noted that the banquet season is starting. He has also been receiving many calls regarding Furunculosis. Councilman Gudmundsson questioned some shooting that was heard in the area, and Assistant Director Herrighty advised it was most likely an end of season deer drive.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Cumberland County Federation is preparing for their annual wildlife management area trash hunt, adding that the local Board of Public Utilities helps out with the cost of providing dumpsters. Councilman Gudmundsson noted a similar activity is done on the Musconectcong River. Councilwoman Blumig shared information on the students at the Barack Obama Charter Green School and the impact the trout in the classroom program had on one student with regard to proper trash disposal.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that the Atlantic County Federation meets this Thursday evening.

Councilman DeMartino had no new information to report.

Councilman Puskas reported for the Agriculture Committee in his region. He noted that the snow, ice and cold weather have been hard on livestock. Geese continue to be a problem, and the Farm Bureau newsletter advises farmers to call in and report problems. He also noted that they are waiting for a summary of comments from the Agriculture Convention on goose problems.

Acting Chairman Burke referred the Finance Committee report to Assistant Director Nelson. She noted that license sales are on track with past years, but the budget is tight.

Councilman Gudmundsson had nothing new to report for the Fisheries Committee, but did note the public trout meeting date has been changed to March 8.

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Game Committee, who last met on January 28. He advised that they had a good meeting, but will need to meet again after the deer season results are available.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee, noting that they are at the beginning of a new session. Most bills noted on the printout today have been seen before, and she is still reviewing some of the new ones that have been presented which are summarized below:

A 670, A 1305, A 2374 and S 275 - all of which deal with vegetation management

A 2107 - pigeon

S 691 - shark fins and striped bass

S 939 - Black Swallowtail butterfly – State butterfly

Acting Chairman Burke inquired about the beaver permit bill that was introduced during the last session, which Assistant Director Nelson noted has been introduced again. Acting Chairman Burke added that he has had requests to the Game Committee to consider more permits with a smaller bag limit. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

The next meeting of the Legislative Committee will be April 8, at 11 a.m.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee. At their last meeting two weeks ago, they had a review of the Weldon Brook forest management plan, which they supported as presented.

A special meeting will be held next week on the no-net loss habitat review project being done by an outside group.

The Committee also asked that the Fish and Game Council consider having a joint meeting in September, and requested that the Council consider moving their meeting date to the Committee's date of September 17. After some discussion, **a motion was made by Councilwoman Brummer, seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson to change the September 9 meeting date to September 17 in order to hold a Joint Council's Meeting. A vote was taken with all in favor.** There was some additional discussion regarding agenda ideas and other topics that both groups may want to keep each other advised of.

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee which last met on January 14, 2014. The Committee recommended the purchase of three acquisitions totaling 212 acres, at a cost of approximately \$92,000. He also noted that a representative from the Green Acres Program was in attendance, and they advised that their program is low on funds, but they can review property offers and refer them to the Waterfowl Stamp Committee if they feel it is something the Committee would be interested in obtaining.

Councilman Brodhecker reported that the next meeting of the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee will be February 26, but he will not be able to attend. Councilwoman Blumig will attend if her schedule allows.

Division reports were given. Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She noted that ice fishing opportunities have been good for anglers, and the Spring thaw will help with the river flows.

The Batsto Fisheries Forum is scheduled for February 22. The public trout meeting date has been changed from March 1 to March 8 and will be held at Centenary College. More information is forthcoming.

Chief Barno advised that the Freshwater Fishing edition of the Digest was available in time for the regulations to take effect, and acknowledged the work of Digest Editor Kuenstner for making this happen.

Regulations for striped bass may change again next year. The Bureau of Marine Fisheries will keep Chief Barno and her staff advised. She noted that the Freshwater Fisheries Bureau tries to match the regulations for Marine Fisheries regarding striped bass. Further information should be available by this Summer.

There was some additional discussion regarding the upcoming public meetings.

Principal Biologist Ivany reported for the Office of Information and Education. He noted several events, including the Suffern Outdoor Show February 27 through March 2, the Governor's Annual Surf Fishing Tournament which will be May 18 and the New Jersey Wildlife Conservation Conference and Meeting which will be June 6 through 8 and will incorporate the Outdoor Writer's Workshop on June 6.

Plans to open the Pequest Education Center on weekends are still moving forward. He hopes to be able to start with the open house and continue through October, and also increase the amount of programs that will be offered.

Acting Chairman Burke noted the Division display at the Atlantic City Boat Show. Principal Biologist Ivany advised that this was the Clean Vessel Act (CVA) display, run by R. Dodge, who provides Division information as well as CVA information at events he attends.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. A total of 169 acres were added to the wildlife management area system this past month, including the 52 acre Rohrbacher acquisition at the Ken Lockwood Gorge that he noted last month.

The Turnpike Authority contact Chief Petrongolo regarding properties they obtained as part of the Garden State Parkway widening project as required by the Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA) permit. He noted the similarity to the project he previously reported at the Great Bay Boulevard WMA. The current property is 85 acres in Burlington County that attaches to the Bass River, and offers good fishing, crabbing, birding and public access. A pier was constructed at the area that leads to a tidal pond on the property. An additional property offering of 155 acres next to the Manahawkin WMA is also coming to the Division.

Changes to the current policy for horseback riding on wildlife management area properties are being considered. A previously scheduled internal meeting had to be cancelled due to weather, but Chief Petrongolo hopes to have an update of proposed changes available next month. There was additional discussion on this matter, and Director Chanda suggested that Chief Petrongolo reach out to the Division of Parks for information on their horseback riding program.

The forestry project at the Weldon Brook WMA is due to start soon. Additionally, a forest stewardship plan is being developed on the Trout Brook WMA. Chief Petrongolo commented that cooperation with the Bureau of Forestry is at an all-time time high, and they now have a State lands stewardship group who have been very helpful.

Within the next week a demolition project at the Belvidere boat ramp on the Delaware River is due to begin. Chief Petrongolo noted that four derelict buildings were existing at this site when the property was acquired years ago. The demolition will result in expanded parking and an additional ingress to the parcel which will allow a better traffic flow.

Acting Chairman Burke inquired about the metal detecting policy. Chief Petrongolo advised that a few years back it was changed to mirror the policy used by State Parks. There are standards as to where someone can go,

and each permit required time and effort for the Regional Superintendent for the requested area to review. He noted that years ago very few requests were received, but last Summer they were coming in by the dozens. In December he made the decision to stop issuing permits until the policy could be reviewed, and the program is on hold for the foreseeable future.

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. At the last Fish and Game Council meeting, Council approved three Community Based Deer Management Permit Applications, and he briefly updated the status of each of those for the Council.

Per Acting Chairman Burke's request, preliminary information on the deer season was distributed. Results for today were as of February 2, and Chief Golden noted that the final numbers should be available in April.

Chief Golden noted deer problems in Bergen County. Staff spoke with the Director of Bergen County Parks, but were met with great resistance from them regarding hunting on their properties. The Director felt that the deer were not an issue relative to forest health or damage to residential properties, which is contrary to reports that they have been receiving. Staff are gathering information from the residents if they are having a problem with deer damage, and also on deer/vehicle collisions. The DEP liaison to Bergen County will also lend assistance.

Chief Golden reported that deer are a Statewide problem, and staff are now doing an evaluation of all county properties whether they are open to hunting or not, and will work to have a strategy in place to prioritize areas that should be opened if it seems to be a necessity. Future information will follow on this matter.

Staff are moving forward with discussion on possible changes to the pheasant program, however, recent meetings have been cancelled due to the weather. Many internal e-mail and telephone conversations have been shared, and Chief Golden noted that an objective approach to the pheasant distribution program to maximize hunter satisfaction and safety needs to be developed. He hopes to have ideas summarized within the next two months.

Final approval is pending before the bid packages for the new catch building at the Rockport Game Farm can be sent. The new building should be in place by the start of the 2014 season. It was further noted that this building will also serve as a backup brooder house.

A review of the beaver permit allocations was given. Currently, 200 permits are available but twice as many applications are received for them. Chief Golden reviewed the work being done with the Geographic Information System (GIS) staff to develop a beaver population model. There was additional discussion related to this matter, including public and private land issues and over the counter permit issuance concerns.

Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed several highlights as listed in the monthly report. There were no additional questions for Chief Chicketano today.

Acting Chairman Burke noted the presentation scheduled for 1 p.m. by staff from the Endangered and Nongame Species Program. He invited anyone wishing to make a public comment today to do so now if they were not able to stay until the end of the meeting. There were no comments at this time.

Assistant Director Herrightly noted an upcoming stakeholder's meeting on the readoption of Fish and Wildlife rules. Due to the predicted bad weather, the date has changed from this coming Thursday to Friday.

Councilman DeMartino inquired about correspondence that was previously discussed where a letter was to be sent to the Marine Fisheries Bureau with regard to snapping turtle permits and the salt water line. There was additional discussion, and Assistant Director Herrightly advised he would look into this further.

The meeting broke for lunch at 12:00 p.m. and resumed again at 1:06 p.m.

Chief Jenkins from the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee addressed the Council to introduce Principal Zoologist Korth and the program she was reviewing today.

An update on re-adoption of State Wildlife Action Plan and the people and work involved was given. It was noted that the last approved plan was from 2005, and this next one is due October 1, 2014 after review and revision for Calendar Year 2015. After review and some discussion Chief Jenkins noted that the finalized plan will be presented to the Commissioner, after which it will be available to the public and updates can be posted on the Division website.

(at 1:29 p.m. Councilman Gudmundsson left for the day)

There was no Old or New Business to discuss.

The public comment period was opened, with those choosing to speak reminded that they would have three minutes to do so.

Barbara Sauchau addressed the Council. She commented that she finds no transparency here, that the public is left out, and that the Division's pals are called in and referred to as stakeholders. Ms. Sauchau also questioned why the public can't address those experts who are making presentations at the Fish and Game Council Meetings.

There was no one else wishing to make public comment.

With no further business for today **a motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilwoman Blumig to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 1:32 p.m.