

Dear Mayor and Council members:

I recently learned that you will soon be voting on a deer cull which, if approved, will be implemented in Grand Haven this upcoming November. I'm writing you this message to urge you to please vote against the killing and in favor of safer and more effective non-lethal alternatives.

I live near the border of Rochester Hills. At the beginning of this year, despite overwhelming public opposition, the city decided to cull deer as an attempt to reduce deer-vehicle crashes and address a few, but very vocal, garden owners' concerns. The county sheriff's snipers offered to do the job. The killing was a disaster. Not only public opposition grew and the city got blasted with a lawsuit, protests and loads of negative media, but it also created an opportunity for authorities to - willingly or unwillingly - violate peaceful protesters' civil rights. The deer were shot in a park close to busy streets and subdivisions. No matter how good the snipers, accidents did happen. A frightened deer ran into traffic on the second day of shooting, causing a crash, and the blood covered snow in the park remained as clear evidence of some of the animals' long agony. After four consecutive Wednesdays of killing, the city voted to halt the cull and create a residents/city officials committee to explore safer alternatives. Just before that, the 2008 deer-vehicle accident numbers were released showing a 30 percent decrease, without culling. Deer accidents represent less than 7 percent of all accidents in Rochester Hills and there have been no fatalities in at least 10 years. Reckless driving caused the majority of accidents and even deaths.

Regardless of the number of deer, they're not the root of the problem. High accident areas' poor conditions, reckless driving and palatable gardens enticing the animals to cross roads are. Addressing these will provide safer and more effective long-term results. Don't put your city through what Rochester Hills has gone through. Take advantage of the fact that you have residents that are willing to help educate people and find and implement better solutions. Work together to make of Grand Haven a role model city that deals with deer problems in a progressive and positive way.

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