

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL
Central Region Office
Robbinsville, New Jersey
June 14, 2016**

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m. by Acting Chairman David Burke.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

A moment of silence was observed to remember those who tragically died in the Orlando, Florida night club massacre on June 12th.

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 on June 2, 2016 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press; published on June 8th.

Roll call was taken.

In attendance were: Acting Chairman David Burke
Councilwoman Cathy Blumig
Councilman Phillip Brodhecker (late arrival at 10:11 a.m.)
Councilman Agust Gudmundsson
Councilman James DeStephano
Councilman Dan Van Mater

Absent:
Councilwoman Barbara Brummer
Councilman Joe DeMartino
Councilman Jeffery Link

Division employees included: D. Chanda, L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, D. Golden, L. Barno, M. Brown, B. Stoff, L. DiPiano, C. Stanko, D. Roberts and S. Coltrain.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Approval of the May 10th minutes was pushed back to later so that Councilman Link would be present.

Acting Chairman David Burke reported Turkey season is now over. Chief Carole Stanko will probably report the harvest is down a little bit from last year. Fresh and salt water fishing is in full swing. The Division has had a free fishing day last Saturday, June 11th and a youth

challenge at many locations around the state as well as a lot of tournaments and HOFNOD events. Fishing has generally improved with the better weather we have had. Acting Chairman Burke noted that the children are getting out of school and encouraged all present to take them fishing and get them interested in the outdoors and conservation.

Director Dave Chanda reported the finance committee meeting was canceled this morning. Knowing this in advance, Assistant Director Nelson emailed everyone on the council draft financial information. He asked Council members if they had suggestions on other things they would like to see, let the Division know. Once the finance committee meeting is set, and a format is agreed upon, reports will start to come on a regular basis. Chief Jeff Matthews from the hatchery production has retired after 38 years. Ed Conley, crew supervisor of Pequest, had been moved into the superintendent's role in an acting capacity while Chief Matthews was still here and will give a report later. In the absence of the Bureau Chief, Craig Lemon, Hackettstown Hatchery, and Ed Conley will report directly to Assistant Director Herrighty. Mr. Conley and Mr. Lemon will rotate coming to the Council meeting. The Division will look at the feasibility of rolling the game farm into that bureau so that all production is under one umbrella and move workers around to where they are needed.

Director Chanda distributed a draft update of Archery Park, which is named the New Jersey Center for Outdoor Recreation and Education. Plans are moving forward and the final design is expected in February. The staff is developing a business plan which is not final. Information in the package does project that the Center is relatively revenue neutral and will have some hunter education federal aid. It is going to be a hunter education facility, and the Division will fine tune what the revenue and expenditures look like. When the Center is up and running it is expected to have 3 full time employees supported by 15 part-time employees. A lot of that will depend upon how we do in generating revenue. We probably will not open 7 days a week, but will open Saturday through Wednesday. As the business plans develops, the Division will look at the personnel needs. Out of the three full time employees, one has already been hired, Trevor Anderson. He has been working on range development. When the Center is built, Trevor will run the Center. The Division is excited to be in the homestretch of the design and will meet with Ikon Associates next week to get an update. The business plan was developed for Easton Foundation in order to apply for grant money. The Easton Foundation has not given less than \$600,000 for any project in the country to date and the Division is hopeful to get substantially more than that as this is a project unlike any other they have supported. The Division has also been in constant talk with the Archery Trade Association, as they have a history of supporting these facilities as well. The Division is not only hoping to get equipment support, but financial support for the first couple of years of operation. Once the Division has a design in hand, we will report back to Council with what we are expecting out of that facility. Since the facility will be more than an archery center it was decided to call it NJ CORE (New Jersey Center for Outdoor Recreation and Education).

Councilwoman Blumig asked how is the Center revenue neutral? Director Chanda explained it is based upon user fees and Federal Aid. Donations are welcomed. The Division anticipates that the Archery Trade Association will donate about \$50,000 per year for the first five years of operation. Director Chanda further stated if members recall, the original plan was to have an indoor firearms center which would have produced \$250,000 or more positive cash flow. It was

taken off the plate due the Archery Center costing more than the Division anticipated. The Division is focusing on the Archery Center first because Federal Aid can be used for construction purposes and it was questionable if Federal Aid can be used for the construction of firearm center. The Division still has plans to add the firearm center as shown in the picture (The smaller building) in the future.

Councilman Gudmundsson asked if the property was large enough for the addition later on. Director Chanda stated yes and that the Highlands Council has sent its support and approval, The Highlands Council is excited about the project and has done a thorough review. They are looking forward to the opportunity to show people the right way to build in an environmentally sensitive area. The Center is now in review by DEP and is waiting on Highlands permit and the wastewater permit approval.

Acting Chairman Burke stated the Minutes will be voted on after lunch. There will be a presentation and discussion later in the meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Agriculture Committee Report:

Councilman Brodhecker reported there are a lot of fawns up north running in fields and roads. Bears are also active getting into bird feeders and coming on to porches. Farmers are not seeing damage yet, due to the stage the crops are in at this time. Many reports have come in that people are losing chickens to foxes and raccoons. Growing season is going good. In central Jersey, geese are a problem. Acting Chairman Burke reported in southern Jersey strawberry crops are in and since the weather was really hot for a few days, things have dried up. Councilman Brodhecker noted that there has not been an excessive amount of moisture in the north and the water tables are low. Acting Chairman Burke reported that Councilman Link is not here due to busyness of the landscape business.

Dr. Sebastian Reist from New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), reported on a test burn exercise that was done to see what happens when AI infected poultry are burned in an incinerator. The goal of the Department was to make sure the different kinds of packaging scheme would be well received by the incinerator. Animals were packed in fiber barrels, Gaylord boxes (which is a big 3 x 3 x 3 corrugated box) and plastic barrels. There were some accidents getting from the ground into the incinerator. It seems like plastic barrels is the way to go so things do not get destroyed before it gets into the incinerator. All three methods burned beautifully. When combing through the ashes on the other side to make sure everything was gone, we were not surprised to find that everything was ashes on the other end. At 5,000 degrees per hour burned everything, aluminum, bins and barrel were all ashes. It was very successful. It is a small step and has garnered a lot of interest throughout the states on the East Coast to use in other jurisdictions. The incinerator is located in Warren County and considered small by the industry standard. It is an energy generating incinerator and the furnace cannot go below a certain temperature in order to keep the electricity coming out the other end. While the test burn was going on, workers were continuing to feed standard garbage as well. Acting Chairman Burke asked if there were any other facilities around the state like this one? Dr. Reist responded

there are a total of three and each one has an individual process to allow this type of burn to happen.

Liz Thompson of the Farm Bureau reported two people contacted her office about leasing land with Fish and Wildlife. One wanted to know how often the process opens up in order to lease land and the other stated he was working on an expired lease and wanted to know who he should talk to. The response was Dave Golden would be the person to contact.

State Federation Reports:

Councilwoman Blumig had questions from several counties. Union County wants to know who is responsible for clean up at the Clinton WMA rifle range and the roads. She also reported there was a complaint of a Dicks Sporting Goods running out of license paper. There was a lot of discussion with Middlesex County and other Federations concerning Round Valley drawdown of the reservoir and the challenge it would create for people to launch boats. There was talk about putting gravel down. It was also suggested to install temporary landing strips that are inexpensive, reusable and better than gravel to help launch boats. Councilwoman Blumig also reported receiving a call from Round Valley asking if she could confirm a grant from I-Boat in the amount of \$250,000 to make improvements. Assistant Director Nelson confirmed that was correct. In Central Jersey, the shearing of pine trees is going on which has to be done in the month of June. Councilwoman Blumig also reported due to her broken elbow, she has not able to attend to attend to the bees as usual and has had some swarming.

Councilman Dan Van Mater was not able to attend any meetings due to illness. Acting Chairman Burke reported Councilman Joseph DeMartino attended the Burlington County meeting and had plans to report, but he is out sick today.

Councilman Agust Gudmundsson had no Federation report but did report on Andrew Still who has been running river cleaning ups on the Raritan mainstem. During the last few weeks Mr. Still has posted pictures of striped bass in the Raritan River between New Brunswick and Bound Brook. He has taken people out and they have caught between 50 and 60 striped bass, sizes of 12 – 16 inches in an hour. Some were collected as samples for part of a study being done by Rutgers. Apparently the removal of the low head dams is making a big difference.

Acting Chairman Burke reported Councilwoman Brummer is at the Columbia Lake Dam today with a reporter doing a story on the dam removal. Councilman Gudmundsson stated there is some local resistance and he will be speaking on June 16th encouraging those in favor to attend the meetings and other local events to talk up the dam removal.

Councilman DeStephano reported he was away most of the month-and has been reading the local papers to catch up on what he missed. He noted the Bergen Record had a balanced article on Sparta Mountain work

Acting Chairman Burke reported Atlantic County members were involved in the Saturday youth free fishing event at Lake Winnipeg. Atlantic County members would like to have a fawn mortality study done. Acting Chairman Burke and Councilman DeStephano have reminded

Atlantic County members of the meetings on the pheasant stocking and redistribution and requesting them to attend the presentation. The Federal Aviation Administration Technical Center (FAATC) has made changes in their hunting program with security and personnel. Their program controls the deer population near the airport. There is a Coast Guard base there that participates in the program as well. There are no meetings in July and August in South Jersey Federations unless something comes up. Acting Chairman Burke stated he does not attend the Cumberland County but reported from their minutes that they are upset with the Federation's Deer Committee report. Cumberland County thought the resolution would be returned to the counties for discussion. Due to time constraints, they were not able to do so.

Councilman Gudmundsson stated the Pequest Education Program on the weekend has started again and he is teaching the beginners class. There was not a big turnout, but the program is just beginning again.

Finance Committee:

Acting Chairman Burke reported the Finance Committee had to postpone its meeting due to not having a quorum and is rescheduled for July 12th. Councilman Gudmundsson will not be able to make the meeting and requested the alternate be notified to attend.

Fish Committee:

Councilman Gudmundsson reported the committee has not met. He stated the rivers are really low and the committee is waiting for more input on the wild trout proposal.

Game Committee:

Acting Chairman Burke reported the Game Committee met on May 18th with Councilmen Brodhecker, DeMartino, DeStephano and himself. The Committee spent most of the meeting reviewing the deer results, strategy and goals as well as the State Federation Deer Committee recommendation proposals. The Committee also considered requests for additional coyote hunting and trapping related proposals. Next week the Committee will finalize tentative proposals to bring to the full council in July.

Acting Chairman Burke requested, as standard procedure, the secretary to send anything handed out at the meeting to absent Council members.

Legislative Committee:

Assistant Director Nelson reported there are a couple of introductory bills.

A1387 – This bill has been seen in the past – requires voter registration forms be made available when applying for hunting, fishing or trapping license. This would require stores that sell licenses be a part of the voter registrations process. Councilman Gudmundsson asked how would that work if a person buys online. Assistant Director stated there would have to be a link to the voter registration form. Acting Chairman Burke asked if form just had to be available? Assistant Director Nelson stated the attendant would be required to help fill out the form if requested.

A3685 – new bill – Establishes reasonableness standard for persons lawfully transporting firearm who deviate from course of travel. This bill would make it legal for hunters to stop and get gas or food while going to and from the hunting location. Assistant Director Nelson stated it is a good bill and hopes it moves forward.

A112 & S472 has also been introduced in previous sessions. This bill clarifies that the Fish and Game Council has sole authority to regulate freshwater fishing, hunting and trapping. The Council has supported bill in past

S2204 (companion bill, A773,) has been introduced – It clarifies that use of propane-powered noise making devise is allowed as non-lethal method of wildlife control on farmland. There is no action on that bill yet.

S977 & S978 – are now signed by the Governor and are law.

AJR24 has been heard by the full Assembly and declares aquaculture an important State economic driver and urges State to include aquaculture industry in it economic development plans.

A2949 – is in Governor’s Office and it provides diamond back terrapins protection as nongame indigenous species.

A3342 designates striped bass (*Morone saxatillis*) as New Jersey saltwater fish went through Assembly committee.

No position will be taken by the Council at this time on the new bills.

Endangered and Non-game Species Advisory Committee (ENSAC):
No report.

Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee:
No meeting scheduled – no report.

Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee:
Councilman Brodhecker there is no meeting scheduled until July – no report.

DIVISION REPORTS

Barbara Stoff, Licensing and Permits, has spent the last four weeks making sure the contract that is currently active is renewed for the next year while Treasury is working on the Request for Proposal. Testing for mid-year licensing is being done. Some will go on sale starting tomorrow, June 13th. Some mid-year licenses will not be available for the public, they are commercial marine licenses, surf clams, bait clams and others. On the recreational side, riffle permits for the next cycle should go on sale tomorrow as well. The waterfowl stamps and HIP certificate will open on July 1st. There is an ongoing issue with Active’s helpdesk dealing with both customers who call in from using the website and the license agents. No matter what information the

Division gives to them, not all people answering the phones are following protocol. Regarding the buddy fishing license, if an agent has a problem at night or on the weekend, there is a fifty-fifty chance of the agent getting a wrong answer.

The sale of turkey permits is up by 6% from last year. The number of farmers who pick up their permits stayed exactly the same throughout the last two years. Fishing licenses has a 3.6% increase of non-residents and residents are down by 3.6% over last year.

Ms. Stoff explained the issue she has faced with Treasury and the Office of Information Technology in trying to get a new contract. Ms. Stoff further explained that Treasury will not allow any changes, including increase of fees, until a new contract is in place. Ms. Stoff explained the system that is currently in use is outdated and the Division will encounter problems with VeriFone at the end with this system.

Director Chanda noted that the Commissioner's Office is aware of the problem and is willing to intervene.

Chief Lisa Barno, Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries, agreed that the cleanup done by Mr. Still on the Lower Raritan River has no doubt helped increase angling in that section of the river. She noted she did not share Councilman's Gudmundsson's enthusiasm for the increase in reports of Striped Bass in the river as they do not help the struggling shad population. The sudden shift in temperature has brought a quick end to the trout season.

There were a few fish kills over the Memorial Day weekend in several waterbodies including Greenwood Lake, Lake Hopatcong, Paulinskill Lake and Upper Greenwood. Interestingly, these waters are located in the northwestern part of the state but no fish kills were reported in central and southern waters that had the same dramatic increase in water temperatures. Fortunately, most were small kills, under 500 fish. They were crappies, largemouth bass, sunfish and catfish. The catfish were surprise to see, as they are usually tolerant of shifts in environmental conditions. Most of the kills occurred over a 2-3 day period. Unfortunately, by the time the Division received the calls, the fish were too deteriorated to further investigate the specific cause.

There was also a fish kill on Budd Lake that started on Tuesday after Memorial Day and fisheries staff was able to get fresh fish samples to provide to the State Fish pathologist to examine. They were mostly white perch with a mix of sunfish and bass. After examination the cause was identified as columnaris, which is a common bacteria which affects the gills. Typically, fish can tolerate it and fight it off; but when you have a sudden shift in water temperatures, it puts stress on the fish. Most species are also spawning and that is another added stressor. The added stressors tied with the columnaris can collectively result in the die offs.

Chief Barno, also noted that electrofishing surveys have been conducted over the past few weeks and at Round Valley and unspawned Largemouth Bass were still being documented. The cold temperatures earlier in the spring no doubt are affecting spawning. Not only are wild populations in lakes throughout the state being affected but it will also affect the fish spawning at the Hackettstown Hatchery. At the end of the week, the Smallmouth Bass ponds will be drained and we will know to what extent they have been affected and the numbers of fish available.

Hughesville Dam removal project will start on the Musconetcong River on June 16th. It will be hydraulically dredged and the sediment will go into the two lagoons that are part of the paper mill property. Then a systematic removal of the Hughesville Dam will begin. It is one of three projects scheduled on the Musconetcong River. The removal of the Bloomsbury dam is being looked at by the Army Corp of Engineers and Warren Glen Dam is waiting for funds to be released for a feasibility study.

Chief Barno gave an update on the Sparta Glen Brook habitat improvement project. The North Jersey Trout Unlimited chapter was awarded a \$5,000 grant with the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture. This is the first project in New Jersey to be awarded funds through the joint venture. A lot of the project work has already been done. There will be monitoring of the riparian planning that was done and looking at additional bank work that may be needed.

On West Portal Creek, Pat Hamilton has started with the restoration project, in the creek above the Route 70 culvert by removing Brown Trout. No further work has been done in the area where the detergent spill took place, as we are giving time for the macroinvertebrate population to rebound. Brook Trout will be introduced in that stretch towards the end of the summer.

Round Valley Reservoir lake inventory this year for the Bureau, night electrofishing has resulted in 200 largemouth bass being caught with over 5 hours on the clock of actual electrofishing. Chief Barno passed around a picture of an 8.8 pound largemouth bass that was collected and noted that there is a gap in sizes and with most bass to be under 4 pounds. The reservoir has had a history of some die-offs of large bass in early spring. Electrofishing will resume in the fall.

Chief Barno stated with the lack of rainfall streams are really low. She distributed a drought indicator chart and explained the concern of low water.

Round Valley Reservoir dam maintenance project is in the request for proposal phase. Proposals have been submitted back to the New Jersey Water Supply Authority and they will be selecting the engineering firm at their August meeting. Plans are anticipated by this time next year. Water and fishing access has been incorporated into the design plans by the New Jersey Water Supply Authority.

Chief Barno updated the Council on sampling that was done in the Flat Brook. Staff member, Ross Shramko, is tracking movement of trout after stocking. In weeks 5, 6 & 7, he did a ¾ mile stretch of electrofishing each time. Trout are appear not to be holding in the area but are moving out. Additional fish movement monitoring is planned in the future.

Ed Conley, Acting Superintendent at Pequest reported for the Bureau of Fish Production, Mr. Conley congratulated Chief Matthews for almost 38 years of service. He also commended the Pequest production staff and all the other Bureaus involved on a job well done for the 2016 spring trout program. Trout stocking finished on May 27th. Pequest exceeded it baseline of 570,000 by stocking over 611,000 rainbow trout with over 6,400 of them being brood-stock. The production fish weighed over a ½ pound each. There were very few complaints on stocking this year and there will be a full stocking summary in the report next month.

Highlights of Pequest are: Raceways are being steamed cleaned and sterilized for the 2017 spring program. The 2016 fall and winter program trout have been inventoried and reset; The 2017 fall program was set-up; The maintenance crew at the hatchery assisted in the replacement of antennas and cables on well houses as part of the broad spectrum radio system that sends signals from the well houses to the computerized monitoring system as a preventative maintenance. The cables were getting old and dry. Water could get into them and degrade the system causing staff to come in for false alarms.

The Hackettstown Hatchery: Round Valley Trout Association purchased 500,000 golden shiners for stocking in Round Valley Reservoir at a later date; Provided 10 counties with 78,000 *Gambusia* and 53,000 fathead minnows for mosquito control to date; Ponds were set-up for largemouth bass and smallmouth bass brood-stock; Over 500,000 walleye fry were set up on a 4 acre pond to be harvested and reset at a later time; Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife gave us 2,000 8½ inch landlocked salmon in trade for 27,000 surplus 3-inch northern pike fingerlings. 1,200 salmon will be grown to a larger size and 800 were stocked in Waywayanda, Tilcon and Aeroflex Lakes.

Director Chanda commended Mr. Conley for stepping up and filling in to a very needed program within the Division.

In the absence of Chief Al Ivany, Linda DiPiano from Bureau of Information and Education reported in his place. Ms. DiPiano gave an update on the May 15th Governors' Surf Fishing Tournament. There were a little over 600 registered participants. There were more than 245 bluefish caught. Three stripers were caught. Dakota Hahn of Toms River caught the winning 45 ½ inch striper. The former treasurer of the Tournament Committee, Paul Smith, was awarded a plaque by the Tournament Committee for his years of service. Mr. Smith is retiring. The former superintendent of Island Beach State Park, Ray Bukowski, received an award from the Beach Buggy Association for his hard work in restoring the park after Superstorm Sandy. Assistant Director Herrighty was the MC for the day. Lt. Governor Guadagno, who usually fishes in the Tournament, had to leave early because she had to go to Rutgers graduation. Commissioner Martin attended the Tournament and as he was speaking, winners names were still being changed as bigger fish were caught. Radio Station NJ101.5 also participated in the event. There were winners in every category. There will be a wrap-up meeting at the end of the month.

Ms. DiPiano attended two locations of the HOFNOD Youth Fishing Challenge on June 11th, in the morning Merrill Creek, and Hoffman Crossing in Califon in the afternoon. There were 18 sites in 14 counties. There were 200 registered participants in Gloucester County, 45 in Stokes and 3 in Merrill Creek. The winner in Merrill Creek was a 3 year old named Annalise, winning in all categories fishing with her Barbie light-up pole. There were over 50 youth at Hoffman Crossing in Califon and they are starting a HOFNOD program. There were 67 at Pine Lakes. Numbers from other sites are still coming in. While at Merrill Creek a juvenile bald eagle swooped down and caught a fish then flew back to its nest. Lake Lenape in Atlantic County combined with Cumberland County HOFNOD group, numbers not reported yet.

Ms. DiPiano reported this event has generated a lot of interest in HOFNOD. She spoke to an attorney for the Jersey City School District who is going to the Superintendent to get HOFNOD back in their school system. Ms. DiPiano also spoke to two attorneys from Burlington County who were volunteering for the Hoffman Crossing event and now want to start a program in Burlington County. Merrill Creek may start a HOFNOD group as well. A survey is being put together for site leaders to see what could be different, but there is a plan to keep doing this for next year.

Ms. DiPiano gave an update on the Pequest display case for the carved decoy ducks. A display case has been purchased and received. The series of stamps from 2003 – 2007 will be used and she is looking for prints to put with them. Ms. DiPiano will reach out to Councilman DeMartino for the prints. The display is a tall case with 5 shelves so each duck will be on its own shelf. Pequest has been open on the weekends and will continue to be open weekends through October.

Chief Dave Golden, Bureau of Land Management, reported an email blast was sent to pheasant and quail stamp buyers informing them of the upcoming stakeholders meeting where the proposed pheasant formula will be presented. Meetings will be held in three parts of the state; in the north at Pequest, in central at the Monmouth Battlefield and in the south at Batsto State Park. Another email will go out to remind them to RSVP. To date there are 120 responses. The notice was sent to 9,500 emails, several listservs and it was posted on the Division's website. On Friday, June 17th Chief Golden will do an interview on Rack and Fin Radio to get the word out and will present at the State Federation Meeting later that night.

The Wildlife Management Area Survey has been going on for about a month now. A meeting was held with Stockton and the employees conducting the survey. They have reported they are getting very interesting results. At this point we are ahead of the goal number of surveys need to make it statistically rigorous.

Round Valley received a grant from New Jersey I-Boat in the amount of \$250,000 to redo the parking lot and gravel ramp. Chief Golden received an email with a suggestion to use a portable ramp that can be moved down as the water moves. That is something to look into while the dam repair is going on in order to maintain access down to the water level. The money received from I-Boat is able to be leveraged against federal funds in order to do another boat ramp restoration at the Point Pleasant location. The plan is to get the construction done on the Round Valley Ramp and engineering design for Point Pleasant this year.

Chief Matt Brown, Bureau of Law Enforcement, reported at end of the month of May the Bureau started performing Delaware River patrol concentrating on striped bass. There were a lot of reports of people catching sturgeon and officers were making sure they safely got back in the water. There were patrols on the Delaware for wildlife. Wildlife Management Area patrols were done near Split Rock Reservoir and Wildcat Ridge. There was swimming going on in the reservoir and some ATV activity. There was an incident involving CDS, home grown herbs in their baked good as well as smoking. Lacey Township reached out to assist on task-force in off-roading on public property. The Bureau agreed to get involved if they exited onto state property. Properties involved were Greenwood Forest, Caruso Village and the Clay Holes. Two enforcement efforts picked up a variety of violations but for mostly off-roading. It is hopeful

that will be a big step in curtailing activity as word is getting out on social media. A lot of the people that are picked up are coming out of Philadelphia. Lacey Township is considering connecting with Delaware River Toll Commission to post signs warning to stay off public properties.

Social media issues: Facebook post on the harassment of turtles. In Green Pond there was an individual playing with a snapping turtle. Through investigation, it was reported the turtle did safely get back in the water. The individual received a warning for taking a turtle out of season. In Hamilton, there was youth putting a firecracker in mouth of a turtle. It was questionable whether the turtle was dead or alive. There was another report involving a turtle by State Park Police in Bass River, but it is not resolved yet.

There is a report of a video about teens who met on social media using the Tinder dating app. Captain Brown reminded any parents in the room to advise their children to stay off of it. It was reported two teens met on Tinder and agreed to meet at Rockport WMA to go for a hike. One teen was from Hackettstown and the other from Long Valley. The male was making unwanted advances on the female. She told him no and he eventually stopped the advances. This incident was brought to the Bureau's attention.

There is still a lot of off-roading going on at Sparta Mountain. Two individuals took a ride on the rhino and got stuck. Both received summons for off-roading on the property.

There is an investigation in Verona, from social media, of an individual taking northern water snakes. This investigation is still open.

It was reported there was a kangaroo walking around in Howell, but it turned out to be a wallaby. An individual had it as a pet and he was handled accordingly.

Carole Stanko, Chief of Wildlife Management reported hatching is still going on at the pheasant farm. The farm set 89,700 eggs. So far over 58,000 chicks have hatched which gives an 80% hatch rate. 21,000 birds have been put in range farm and everything is going well. The preliminary spring turkey harvest is down slightly from last year by 3.6% or 110 birds; but on par with 3 year average. The total take was 2,933 compared to 2015 which was 3,043. The first week was good and it was good to see more birds taken in the northern part of the state.

Bear staff is very busy this time of the year dealing with urban bears and other animals. Staff is also busy with research trapping of bears. Research has been shifted to spring and early summer due to the early bear hunting season this year. There has to be a certain amount of time in order for the drugs to pass through bear's system. The Bureau has handled approximately 65 – 70 bears over the past couple of weeks. Adding the den work done, there have been over 100 bears handled so far this year. The goal is 150 before the season opens in October. The bears are used to determine whether or not to close or extend the season. Deputy Commissioner Glass is interested in going out with staff during a research bear trapping.

Bob-white quail count surveys this time of the year. It is not expected to be better than previous years, but the Bureau will continue to monitor that population.

Friday June 17th the Northeast Wildlife Disease Cooperative will have a training session at the conservation center. In the absence of a staff pathologist, this training is very timely that they call this session. The training will be on “Internal communication and how we decide what to respond to.” With the lack of a pathologist it is a triage method to figure out what to send staff out on. At this point we are looking at population threat level to respond to. There will be two veterinarians coming from Tufts University to train staff. The Northeast Wildlife Disease Cooperative was founded based on a need in the northeast part of the country. The Division did belong to the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study out of the University of Georgia down in Athens, but their rates were a little too expensive. They charged a small state like New Jersey the same rate they would charge large neighboring states. A lot of northeast states withdrew and the northeast cooperative was formed using Tufts University, Cornell University, University of Pennsylvania and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture Lab.

The next Game Committee meeting will be on June 21st to finalize a proposal. At the next Council meeting a presentation of the amendments will be made as an introduction to the Council. There will not be a vote at the time. Stakeholders meeting will be held and the proposal will be brought back to the Council for a vote.

Councilwoman Blumig stated that she received a call and there is interest in having youth turkey hunters be allowed to hunt all day during turkey hunting season. They thought it would enhance the opportunity for interest and retention. Chief Stanko responded that she will bring it up to discuss at next Game Committee.

Lunch – 11:52 – 12:38

Acting Chairman Burke noted the minutes had been held over to vote on after lunch in order to give everyone a chance to review and asked for correction, addition or a motion.

Motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson and seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to approve the minutes of the May 10, 2016 meeting as presented. Vote taken, Four (4) in favor two (2) abstentions; motion carried.

Acting Chairman Burke noted Chief David Jenkins will not be at the meeting due to a conference call and there will be no New Jersey State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) update.

Acting Chairman Burke announced the proposed deer regulations set change for deer management zones 22, 26, 34, 46, & 63. At Game Committee meeting the deer harvest from last year was reviewed in relation to what the goal is for particular zones.

Dan Roberts, Project Leader of the Deer Research Project gave a PowerPoint presentation further explaining the proposed changes.

After a brief discussion, Acting Chairman Burked asked for a motion.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Blumig and seconded by Councilman Van Mater to support the deer regulation proposed changes as presented. Vote taken, all in favor; none opposed; motion carried.

Bob Erickson, former 28½ year biologist with the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, now with the National Wild Turkey Federation as a Regional Guide and Chief Matt Brown presented awards for a 2015 Southern Region (Atlantic, Cumberland and Cape May Counties) turkey poaching ring from Alabama bust. A total of \$6,700 in fines has been collected and one case is still pending. Officers involved were Lt Conservation Officer Zane Batten, Conservation Officer Keith Fox, Conservation Officer Todd Vazquez, Conservation Officer Dan Faith, Lt Conservation Officer Craig James, Conservation Officer Scott Risher. Each officer received a Command Citation and a white bar to be worn on their uniform from the Division. The lead officer in this bust, Conservation Officer Fox, was presented the 2016 Conservation Officer of the Year plaque award from the New Jersey Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation by Mr. Erickson.

PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES)

Barbara Sachau, Whitehouse Station, NJ commented on not having deer change on the agenda to allow public comment. She stated the deer mortality figures do not include car crashes and poachers. Ms. Sachau commented on claims for crop damage and stated pictures should be submitted and kept in the record. If information is given to the Council should be available to the public as well. From the Law Enforcement report regarding the 85 year old hunter, age needs to be examined when issuing gun permits and at some point there is a need to take guns away from older hunters.

Councilman Brodhecker tried to respond to crop damage issue, but it was rejected by Ms. Sachau.

A motion was made by Councilman Blumig and seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to adjourn the meeting. Vote taken; all in favor, none opposed – motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:13 pm