

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
June 19, 2007

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council was held on the above date. In attendance were:

Acting Chairwoman Jeanette Vreeland
Councilman Dave Burke
Councilman Ed Kertz
Councilwoman Jane Morton-Galetto
Councilman John Messeroll
Councilman Robert Puskas
Councilman Dan Van Mater
Councilman Len Wolgast

Absent: Councilman Richard Culp
Councilman Fred Hough

Division employees included: Director Dave Chanda, Mark Dobelbower, Jim Sciascia, Lisa Barno, Tony Petrongolo, Paulette Nelson, Pat Carr, Ted Nichols and Andy Burnett.

Members of the public included: George Howard, Jean Howard, Ed Markowski, Rob Winkel and others.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

In accordance with P.L. 1975, c231, notice of this meeting was filed with and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State and sent to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the The Press (Atlantic City) on May 22, 2007.

Roll call was taken.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that a request for Executive Session was made by the Bureau of Law Enforcement. **A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Burke to go into Executive Session. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.** Executive Session began at 11:23 am.

The Executive Session ended at 12:05 pm, at which time the meeting broke for lunch.

The meeting resumed at 12:47 pm.

A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Puskas to approve the minutes of the May, 2007 meeting. There was a confirmation of information regarding a vote taken at the last meeting. **A second motion was made by Councilman Kertz, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to accept the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that she had received information on a Bear Hunter Rights Coalition Program being presented by the U.S. Sportmens Alliance, and she will be attending this program later this week in Ohio. She is hoping to bring back information that may be helpful to the bear hunting program in New Jersey.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland reminded all Council members that they should have their expense vouchers in by the July meeting.

Director Chanda noted that an exemption has been received to the hiring freeze for Conservation Officer positions, and they are looking to backfill six vacancies. The budget is being reviewed to be sure funding for these positions is available. He noted that the hiring process is lengthy, and it could take approximately one year until these officers were out in the field.

Director Chanda reported that on May 16, 2007 several representatives from the Fish and Game and Marine Fisheries Councils participated in shorebird trapping and banding activities on the Delaware Bay.

Director Chanda noted that the Ponderlodge property is being revisited. The town had previously expressed some interest in the ball fields, and local conservation groups were interested in the buildings, but it seemed as though things were not going to work out. The Division was moving toward demolishing the buildings, and at the request of Assemblymen Van Drew and Albano, a meeting was held with representatives from the town council and some of the local conservation groups regarding their interest in this property. The Commissioner has given them a month to prepare a detailed plan on what they may be able to do with this property. Director Chanda and Assistant Commissioner Cradic will most likely be involved in a meeting on this matter in the near future, and he will report back on this matter at a later date.

Director Chanda noted the recent incidents of coyote attacks in Middletown. He spoke of the efforts of Division staff regarding this matter.

Director Chanda reported that as of the middle of June, \$12.1 million dollars had been deposited into Division accounts, and it is likely that we will take in another \$200,000 or more by the end of the fiscal year. The final revenue is expected to be between \$12.3 and \$12.5 million dollars. Additional monies will be included from the National Guard licenses. Total amounts of State appropriation monies for Fiscal Year 2008 will not be known until the budget is signed.

Members of the Council were asked by Director Chanda to note September 23, 2007 on their calendars for a program that is going to be hosted by Public Service Electric and Gas. Formal

invitations are to follow to. The program will be a tour of the Estuary Enhancement Program, and the Marine and Non-Game and Endangered Species Councils will also be invited.

Councilman Puskas asked Director Chanda if the \$850,000 from the Department for the Bear Education Program was ever received? Director Chanda noted that while the money has not actually been deposited in accounts, the Division is spending money for this program and the Department is paying some of the bills. The Department spent \$180,000 on a Black Bear Educational Media Campaign. As a result, the remaining education budget will have to be adjusted. The Conservation Officer, Biologist and Technician positions have been filled, so the Division is just now starting to charge against those accounts. Two vehicles were also purchased with monies from the Vernon Valley account, with the assurance that these monies will be credited back to the Division.

Councilwoman Galetto noted that she had seen Assemblyman Van Drew recently and they spoke about Ponderlodge, and he would like to see it become a nature center. Director Chanda advised that it would take \$1 million dollars to bring the building up to code, and he's not sure what groups may be interested in investing that amount of money into making the renovations. The town has only expressed interest in the playing fields and the swimming pool, and if Ponderlodge is developed as an education center, it would be totally separate from what the town wants. A decision should be received from the Commissioner's Office within the next thirty days on the future of the Ponderlodge property.

Councilman Kertz reported from the Agriculture Committee. Farmers have started picking blueberries this morning, and they are hoping for rain tonight. Councilman Puskas noted that most of the crops are in. He has started to see deer again, as well as some turkey.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Legislative Committee. He noted that they had a very productive meeting this morning with Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson on pending bills. He then reviewed each bill for Council's comments:

A 2615 – Prohibits the trapping of cats and dogs; limits the trapping to animal control Officers, members of the SPCA and volunteers of the Trap-Neuter-Return program.

Councilman Messeroll noted that the Committee is opposed since it is a trapping issue. **A motion was made by Councilman Kertz, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to oppose bill A2615. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

A2754 – Authorizes free hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses and free admission to State parks and forests for individuals with certain types of military service.

Councilman Messeroll noted that the Committee supports this bill. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to support bill A2754. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.** Councilwoman Galetto asked if the vote should be to support this bill as long as funding is maintained? Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson gave an explanation of the language of the bill. **Councilman Puskas made a motion to amend the vote**

to support this bill as long as funding is in place, and this was seconded by Councilman Kertz. The motion was approved by all as amended.

A2830 – Changes the perimeter for bow and arrow hunting around an occupied building.

Councilman Messeroll noted that the perimeter change would be from 450 feet to 150 feet, with the exception of schools, where it would remain at 450 feet. The Committee supports this bill. **A motion was made by Councilman Kertz, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to support bill A2830. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

A3250 – Directs the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Senior Services to establish Statewide avian influenza preparedness program; appropriates \$500,000.

The Committee recommends supporting this bill if amendments are made so that monies could be received by Fish and Wildlife for the examination of wild birds and importation of such birds into the State. Councilwoman Galetto asked if this bill shows Fish and Wildlife to be involved with this process? Legislative Liaison Nelson explained, that yes it does. Councilman Messeroll added that it only shows funding for the Department of Agriculture. Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson added that this is geared for wild birds, and the Division is only mentioned in that portion of the bill. They also need to address euthanasia issues. Councilwoman Galetto asked if the bill mentions people who are veterinarians and avian handlers? Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson was not sure. She explained it covers mostly poultry, and only had one paragraph on wildlife. Councilman Kertz asked if we were looking to for portion of the \$500,000. appropriation, or something on top of that? Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson noted we were looking for something on top of that amount since that \$500,000. is what the other departments would have needed. **A motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Kertz to support bill A3250 with amendments. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

A3275 – Changes the composition and revises the authority of the Fish and Game Council.

The Committee is opposed to this bill. Councilman Wolgast gave an explanation of the bills flaws, noting how it would impact hunting and fishing in the State. He expressed that Council must make sure that this bill does not pass. Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson gave an explanation of the bill. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman to opposed A-3275. A vote was taken with all in favor of opposing this bill.**

A3616 – Prohibits the possession of firearms and weapons in public parks.

The Committee noted that even though hunting is an exemption, this bill needs further review for other activities that occur at State parks, such as war reenactments. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to further review bill A3616. A vote was taken will all in favor.**

A3624 – Requires the Department of Transportation to provide for removal of deer carcasses from county and municipal roads; appropriates \$730,000.

It was recommended not to take a position on this bill since it is a Department of Transportation issue. Councilwoman Galetto asked if we should support this bill? Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson gave an explanation of the language of the bill, and there was some further discussion among the members. **A motion was made by Councilman Burke, seconded by Councilman Kertz not to take a position on this bill.** Councilwoman Galetto felt that Council should support this bill, showing the Department of Transportation that we support the funding proposed to be given to them? There was some further discussion on this, since the matter of who should be removing deer carcasses has been an issue between the Department of Transportation and the Division in the past. Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that the recommendation not to take a position on this bill was because the Division was not named in the language. Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson noted that they could vote today, and come back in the future and change their position on this matter. Councilwoman Galetto asked to defer to Director Chanda for his opinion, and he noted that while her thoughts are good, felt that it was a Department of Transportation issue and didn't require action on our part. There was some additional discussion, and then **a vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed, to take no position on A3624.**

A3931 – Requires voter registration forms be available when applying for hunting, fishing or trapping licenses.

It was noted that this could incur additional costs to the license agents with no monetary return, and the Division could end up losing license agents. The Committee recommends opposing this bill. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to oppose this bill.** Councilman Burke questioned if Council should take no position on this matter? Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson gave an explanation as to why it was recommended opposing the bill, and **a vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed to oppose supporting A3931.**

A3998 – Revises the definition of destructive device to include weapons of .50 caliber or greater.

The Committee would like a further review of this bill because of shotguns. Muzzleloaders are exempt in this bill. Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson gave an explanation of the language. **A motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Puskas to further review bill A3998. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed**

A4022 – Establishes the New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium.

The Committee recommends taking no position on this matter since it does not affect the Fish and Game Council and relates more to the Marine Fisheries Council. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Kertz to take no position on bill A4022.** Councilwoman Galetto asked if this bill should just be by-passed on by Council rather than send a message that we have no say one way or the other on this matter? Councilman Kertz had a question on the current status of the Consortium? Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson gave an explanation of the bill and its intent to formalize the Consortium's existence. **A vote was taken**

with all in favor, and one opposition from Councilwoman Galetto to take no position on bill A4022.

A4153 – Increases penalties for intentional feeding of black bears.

Councilman Messeroll reviewed the fee schedule for fines related to feeding black bears. He noted the Committee supports the fines, with a note that Council would like to see to improvements the law. **A motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Kertz to support this bill.** Councilman Wolgast had a concern for deer hunters who bait in an area where there may be bear, and where they exempt? Councilman Kertz noted this bill deals only with the fines, not with what is intentional or unintentional. Legislative Liaison Nelson noted she believed that there is a baiting exemption and deferred to Chief Dobelbower, who believed that there was an exemption for deer hunters. Councilman Kertz questioned Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson about the other bill that had addressed baiting? Legislative Liaison Paulette Nelson gave an explanation, noting that it has not been introduced as a bill yet. **A vote was taken with all in favor of supporting the fine increase portion of this bill A4153, none opposed.**

Councilwoman Galetto reported for the Endangered and Non-Game Species Committee. The Committee met in May. Topics discussed included the Kestrel nesting box program, and an issue on the Garden State Parkway where an interchange was upgraded to a four leaf clover. Snake tunnels were put in place at this interchange, and as discussed in past meetings, there were some problems with these tunnels; however improvements have been made to these tunnels.

The Wildlife Action Plan meetings are being held regionally.

The rules for the Threatened and Endangered Species are still in the works, but are moving forward.

A second letter was sent to the Commissioner noting that she had not responded to their recommendations on off-road vehicle usage in New Jersey. She did reply with a plan similar to the plan from former Commissioner Campbell, noting the need to make sights for off road vehicles, and stating that Sierra Sands property was being considered since it was purchased with Green Acres funding. The Endangered and Non-Game Species Council feels it is not an appropriate area because of the threatened and endangered species in that area. A letter will be sent back to Commissioner Jackson stating their concerns.

The shorebird scientists were here, and the shorebirds have moved on to their Artic nesting grounds, along with many of the scientists. The scientists that were here were from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Chile and Argentina. There are some indications that Canada may be adding the Red knot to their list of endangered or threatened species. Councilwoman Galetto noted that our scientists are projecting a possible extinction of the Red knot by 2010 unless something significant takes place. Information on the data collected should be available in the next few months.

Councilwoman Galetto commented on the Avian flu legislation. There are a number of scientists from one of the University's who have been collecting swabs and bloods samples from the birds for a number of years now, and she's not certain if the Division has been receiving this data. She felt the Division should be sure to get this data since it addresses various diseases and parasites.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Federation, noting that things have been quiet.

Fishing derbies have been going on, with one just held in Rosevelt Park, and another scheduled this weekend in Monmouth County.

The State Federation banquet and convention is scheduled for June 29, 30 and July 1, 2007 at Panther Valley.

Legislative issues are being reviewed, and work on the membership drive continues.

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She passed out a copy of the proposed amendments to the 2008-2009 Fish Code, and noted that most are administrative changes, and wanted to review these proposals with the Council before they are sent to Legal Affairs.

The first change is item 1, page 2, which addresses fishing 24 hours a day and that you can catch fish in excess of the legal limit. It was being proposed to move these into the General Provisions section of the code.

Items 20 and 21, page 6, would set dates of when the bait fish harvest reports are due.

It was noted by Senior Biologist Shawn Crouse that several species of fish that are currently not covered under the warm water regulation. These are pinelands species, and include Mud sunfish, Blackbanded sunfish, Bluespotted sunfish, and Banded sunfish. Because of their small size and colors, these fish are being collected for aquariums, and the Bureau would like to propose that possession of these species be prohibited (page 29). Councilwoman Galetto questioned if they could still be collected under a scientific or educational permit? Chief Barno noted that yes, this was possible, but the regulation to prohibit possession is for people who are collecting them for personal use. Councilman Messeroll asked if these fish were a target of anglers, or due to their small size if that wasn't a problem? Chief Barno noted that no, that wasn't generally a problem, and if any, it would be the Mud sunfish since it is the larger of the four species. There was some additional discussion on these fish and their sizes.

Items on pages 32 through 34, which address water lowering and pages 35 through 37 which address fish stocking were discussed. These segments have not been incorporated into the Administrative Code prior to the 2008-2009 Fish Code. Chief Barno reviewed these changes with the Council, as highlighted in her hand out.

After a review and discussion of these proposals, **a motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Puskas to approve these changes to be introduced to the Fish Code for public comment. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Barno was asked if there would be an issue on the timeline with these substantial changes. Chief Barno noted that things were still on schedule for the adoption in January, and the only change might be the September public hearing, which may run two weeks later than usual.

Chief Barno reported that on May 11, 2007 the feed supplier for the Hackettstown Hatchery advised them that the starter feed fish meal they had received was potentially contaminated with melamine. The feed was recalled, and one lot that was tested has come back negative, and further results are pending from two additional lots. The melamine is not toxic to fish melamine, it does not bio-accumulate and there is no public concern. Due to the size of these fish, they will not be harvestable for three years. Craig Lemon from the Hackettstown Hatchery has been working with the Federal Drug Administration on this matter. Bill Stanley did a study on the discharge water from the Hatchery, and contaminant levels were about 650,000 times lower than any kind of action limit and there is no concern.

The Hackettstown Hatchery staff is now down to four full-time staff. Chief Barno noted that they are working with the Assistant Commissioner's Office to do a critical backfill of vacant positions. The reduction in staff is going to greatly affect the derby program for next year.

Overall, 55 of the 85 fishing derbies for this year have been completed. There was a good amount of positive feedback received from the derby sponsors.

Chief Barno distributed a summary of the Spring stocking program from the Pequest Trout Hatchery. This year they set a record for the pounds of fish that were produced, in spite of the shortage of personnel. They exceeded over 319,000 pounds of fish, with a total amount of fish at 603,000. This is the highest amount of pound weight since Pequest started trout stocking in 1984.

The schedule for the Fall and Winter trout stocking programs was distributed. Chief Barno reviewed the allocations of fish, giving an explanation of the major changes.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland asked if the Council could offer any assistance with trying to get the Pathologist position filled? Chief Barno noted that the Assistant Commissioner was aware of the situation, and added that retired Pathologist had come in to train the staff on testing for VHS (Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia), but referred the staffing question to Director Chanda. He explained that there was a list of personnel actions for various titles and bureaus that had been sent to the Commissioner's Office. These requests are then sent to the Governor's Office, and if the request does not go forward for these positions, it might warrant some action by the Council.

Due to concerns at Lake Hopatcong last year concerning Largemouth bass virus and VHS concerns with neighboring states, staff has put together a testing program for the State of New Jersey. They are asking for sampling at 14 large scale lakes, as well as some smaller water bodies. Copies of this information will follow. Chief Barno gave a summary of the program and its sampling criteria.

One aspect of the Fish Code changes was relative to the Round Valley Reservoir and increasing the harvest of Lake trout to help with the low numbers of Alewife populations. Chief Barno reported that Alewife are being taken from Lake Hopatcong to be put into the Round Valley Reservoir. They are looking to move 10,000 fish a day for 10 days, and with restrictions now in place in New York State relative to bait fish, more fish were available to us.

With regard to the bait fish restrictions in New York State, Greenwood Lake, which is a border lake with New York, will not let you cross onto the state line with baitfish. New York is only letting anglers use bait fish taken from the lake where the angler is fishing, and they have to be certified tested for VHS. This could present a potential problem for some of our New Jersey anglers.

Chief Barno has been working with Don Wilkinson interviewing potential candidates to fill the Assistant Biologist position for Environmental Review left vacant by the retirement of Andy Didun. They are hoping to have someone in place by the end of June, or early July.

A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilwoman Galetto, to approve the Fall and Winter stocking schedules. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.

Councilman Messeroll reminded members that the September 11, 2007 Council meeting was to be followed by a Waterfowl Committee meeting in the evening, so if the Fish Code hearing was planned for that day, they may want to postpone it to a different evening. Chief Barno noted that it would most likely be scheduled later in the month.

Councilman Burke reported that the Waterfowl Advisory Committee had a meeting on June 12, 2007. They recommended the purchase of a 35 acre wetlands site known as the Smith property, which will become part of the Pork Island Wildlife Management Area. They also recommended the purchase of a 129 acre island behind Ocean City.

Councilman Burke noted that the acquisition flier is nearly done; it just needs some additional acquisition information listed.

The Committee had a preview of the 2008 Waterfowl print. The print is of Canvasbacks, and will be done by Rob Leslie.

Councilman Burke also noted the September 23, 2007 tour by Public Service Electric and Gas that Director Chanda mentioned earlier.

A question was raised concerning an increase in the cost of the Waterfowl stamp. Councilmen Burke and Messeroll reviewed this matter, noting that it was recommended by the Committee, but would require Legislative action. Some highlights of how the monies from the Waterfowl stamps were distributed were reviewed.

Councilman Messeroll noted that a brochure he had reviewed, NJ Ramp Guides, does not mention the Waterfowl Stamp Committee. He would like to see this rectified.

Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr was present to report for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He turned the meeting over to Principal Biologist Ted Nichols who presented the recommended New Jersey 2007-2008 Migratory Bird Seasons.

Principal Biologist Ted Nichols handed out the information for the recommended dates, and gave of a review of same. It was noted that the Canada goose season for September currently has one set of rules for September 1 through September 15, 2007 and a second set of rules for rest of September regarding electronic calls, unplugged guns, and hunting hours ½ hour after sunset. The Atlantic Flyway Council has recommended to the United States Fish and Wildlife Services Service Regulation Committee that they extend those tools for the early part of September through September 30 to the Atlantic flyway states.

Councilman Kertz questioned Principal Biologist Ted Nichols as to whether or not he felt they would allow the unplugged guns? Principal Biologist noted that the request was a package deal, not one or the other, and he did not know. The USFWS has not given any indication on their feeling on this. He recommends that these tools only be used in New Jersey if the USFWS approves the extension through the end of September, otherwise you would have two very different sets of rules to deal with in one season and that may get very confusing.

A motion was made by Councilman Wolgast, seconded by Councilman Kertz, to accept the recommendations for the September Canada goose season if the tools exemption is given by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Service Regulation Committee. A vote was taken showing all in favor, none opposed.

There was a review of the additional season dates. The Sea duck season will start one week later and end one week later. The dates for rails and moorhen, snipe and crows are all the same as last year. The only other change for the early season regulations would be for woodcock. The Atlantic Flyway Council has recommended to the USFWS to allow for compensatory dates for New Jersey since hunting is not allowed on Sundays. There was additional explanation of the dates, and discussion among the members and Division personnel. **A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll to accept the woodcock dates with compensatory dates (if approved by the Services Regulation Committee), and seconded by Councilman Van Mater. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

The Youth Waterfowl dates would be impacted by the new rules for the early Canada goose season if they are approved by the Services Regulation Committee. Since the proposed Canada goose season rules will not allow for any other waterfowl hunting to be open during that season with those additional tools, the Youth Waterfowl dates would have to be pushed back to October. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Kertz, to accept the early season dates as proposed. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.

There was a brief review of the late season dates. Principal Biologist Ted Nichols gave an explanation of each season answered some questions for the Council. Councilman Puskas had a

question regarding zone boundary changes for the late season, and Principal Biologist Nichols explained that he felt the boundaries were in line with the criteria they had. There was some additional discussion of the criteria information and how the zones are determined. **A motion was made by Councilman Wolgast, seconded by Councilman Kertz, to accept the last season dates as proposed. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr continued with the Bureau report. He distributed a summary of the hot issues of the Bureau, as well as the bear activity report. He noted that so far this year seven bears have been euthanized as Category One bears, compared to six bears this time last year and felt that this increase was not significant.

He noted that urban bear activity was receiving a lot of cooperation from the local police departments, where they can confine the bear to a certain area, and then personnel from the Bureau can come in to remove the bear and take it to the closest wildlife management area nearest state-owned land with suitable bear habitat. There are currently three urban bears that are creating a problem. He reported on one particular bear and its movement. On February 11, the bear was removed from Maplewood and taken 17 miles away to the Wildcat Ridge WMA. On March 17, the same bear was removed from Florham Park and taken 16 miles away to the Black River WMA. This past Sunday, the bear was reported to be in near the Lehigh Valley Airport in Pennsylvania, which is 48 miles away. A second bear that was born tagged as a cub in Stillwater Township was reported to be in Upper Black Eddy, Pennsylvania on April 20. This was a distance of 54 miles away from where it was born. This was offered to give an idea of the range these bears can have provide information on the distances that bears can disperse.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that the number of complaints were extremely high, and Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr noted that these were only the calls received to his office, not those that went to the local police departments. He noted that staff was running so much now, that they were having trouble keeping up with the entering the complaints into the database to generate reports. Councilman Wolgast asked if the addition of new personnel was not alleviating the problem, and Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr reported that two Wildlife Control Technicians went to work on bears, but there was no backfill of their old positions, and they were doing bear work as well as wildlife control work. One other Technician was promoted to an Assistant Biologist position for bears, but that position was not backfilled either. They currently have no seasonal positions filled. Councilman Wolgast asked what the projections were for bear complaints for next year? Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr noted that it was hard to say, since there are many factors involved, but anticipates receiving more complaints. He noted that it may be six months before the new personnel will be able to work on their own due to the amount of training and testing involved.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland asked if the bear-resistant trash cans had been distributed in West Milford. Supervising Biologist Carr noted that he was not sure, but to his knowledge they have not. There was some problem with the bids on their end, and things were back and forth. The Division has provided them the township GIS administrator with information on neighborhoods where we would like the cans could be distributed.

Councilman Kertz has some concerns it would take so much time before the employees in the newly filled positions could work on their own, and the costs involved. Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr explained the factors involved. Councilman Kertz asked if these positions were supposed to have been six new positions? Director Chanda explained that the expertise came from within the Division, and when the Commissioner came up with the plan, she was clear that she wanted to add six new people. When it was explained that people from Wildlife Control wanted to transfer to do bear research, she committed to doing whatever it takes to backfill behind them in the Wildlife Control Unit. Councilman Wolgast noted that they also questioned the Commissioner at that meeting about the \$850,000 appropriation would continue, but she could not guarantee that money would be available next year. There was some additional discussion on this matter. Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr noted that there are dedicated people on this project, and they work hard to get both the bear and wildlife portions of their jobs done. Some additional discussion on bears continued, and it was noted that females were still producing three cubs, numbers would continue to increase, and ongoing additional funding was going to be needed unless the population was controlled.

Councilman Messeroll asked there was any information received from Great Adventure on contraception and sterilization control they were doing. No report has been received.

Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr noted the recent coyote activity in Middletown. Two youths have been bitten. There have also been two reports of dogs being attacked by coyotes, but it has been determined that those were attacks were most likely made by other dogs. Tomorrow evening, Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr and Principal Biologist Anthony McBride will be in Middletown to do a presentation and address any questions. Last year's harvest reports for Monmouth County showed that no coyotes were taken. Hunters are going to be reminded that you can take a coyote while deer hunting, and the County parks system is going to be asked to allow coyote to be hunted on their property while sportsmen are deer hunting.

One additional report was received of a resident of Howell Township in who had been bitten, but the only tracks found in the yard were dog tracks.

Councilwoman Galetto asked if there was any information on the website regarding coyotes that was similar to the information passed out from Middletown? Supervising Biologist Carr noted that yes there was, and that is where Middletown had gotten their website information from.

Supervising Biologist Patrick Carr reported that the Spring turkey season preliminary harvest information was listed on the hot issues handout. He noted that the numbers were down by 12%. Some of this may have been due to the bad poult survival from hatches two or three years ago.

It was reported that Principal Biologist Carole Kandoth and Chief Herrighty have been working on the Game Code, and it will be sent to the Register soon if it has not been sent already.

Chief Jim Sciascia gave the report for the Bureau of Information and Education. He reported that the new Bear Education Biologist, Michelle Ruggerio will be starting on July 9. She currently works for the Department, and has quite a bit of experience with public contact.

The warm season programs at Pequest and Sedge Island are underway. There are many activities scheduled at both areas.

The Hunter Education graduate numbers are up about 20% from this time last year. They have held 35 classes to date, with 1650 to 1700 graduates so far. Some of this increase in numbers has to do with work being done with the Boy Scouts, allowing them to take the course during their gatherings which allows them to earn their hunter education badge. The spring and summer class sign up rate is higher, and it is hoped that this is due to the banners posted at some of the wildlife management area signs encouraging students to "beat the rush".

It was reported that Supervising Biologist Paul Ritter went to Frostburg, New York to set up hunter education classes for a Boy Scout camp, which hosts 5,000 scouts during the summer. Of these scouts, 80% are from New Jersey and a significant number of them could potentially take our hunter education course this summer.

Chief Sciascia was happy to report that New Jersey has a National champion in the National Archery in Schools Program. The National shoot was held last weekend, with 123 schools participating with almost 1,600 archers. There were categories for elementary, middle and high school, and our champion was an elementary school girl who shot a score of 280 out of a possible 300. The highest score was for the National high school champion who shot 288, so her score was quite impressive. New Jersey also had a third place finish in the Middle School category from a young girl who shot a score of 275. He hopes that this can only help to increase the interest in this program.

Chief Sciascia noted that they are still on track with the Archery Trade Association for the purchase of the 21 loaner equipment kits for the Archery In Schools Program.

Chief Sciascia noted that a proposal had been sent to the Assistant Commissioner's office for the Archery Park at Black River. Director Chanda added that no response had been received yet, and that Council may want to send a letter to her lending their support to this matter. Chief Sciascia will assist with the preparation of this letter.

Chief Sciascia distributed a flier that was prepared for the meeting on coyotes that was to be held in Middletown. Additional copies will be printed for distribution to other communities as needed.

Chief Sciascia has been reviewing the license sales for hunting and fishing licenses in 2006-2007. The non-resident bow and hunting licenses are at their highest levels since 2001 and may be due to the direct mail promotion done to PA deer hunters in last fall. A survey has been created to see if hunters recall receiving the promotional mailing, and if this impacted their decision to purchase a non-resident license. Results of this survey will be reported back at a later date.

This morning, Chief Sciascia printed a report that was produced for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies about angler license buying trends. Data was taken from 15 states that have electronic licensing systems. He gave a brief review of the findings of the report which found that only 10 % of anglers purchased a license all 5 years of the period studied. This points to the potential to increase license sales by finding ways to encourage anglers to become more regular license buyers.

Upcoming events that the Bureau will be attending include the Freedom Fest Fair which will be held July 10, 2007 through July 14, 2007 at the Horse Park of New Jersey, and the Sussex County Fair which will be held August 3, 2007 through August 12, 2007. The Sussex County Sportsmen's Federation is paying for a 60 x 30 tent, and the Division will be well represented at this event. He offered many thanks to the Sussex Federation for paying for this space.

Chief Tony Petrongolo gave the report for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted that the wildlife management area system has grown to over 311,000 acres.

Some recent projects that have been completed including the road access to the new Assunpink Lake boat ramp. This gravel road was significantly improved with the application of oil and chips. This was completed with funds received from the Corporate Business Tax.

Absecon Township is working on repaving the road to the Absecon Creek boat ramp, as well as the adjacent parking area. This is on township owned and leased property. It should be completed within the next two to three weeks, and may cause some minor inconveniences to anglers during renovations. There will be a one-day period that the ramp will be closed due to paving being done right in front of the ramp. Councilman Kertz asked if this closure would be posted on the website, because recently the ramp was closed and the only notice about this closure was a poster at the ramp. Chief Petrongolo noted that that closure was an annual event, and that they had spoken to Absecon and indicated that the Division would like advance notice in the future of this annual closure.

Councilman Burke asked if a copy of the final contract with Absecon had been received. Chief Petrongolo noted that it had, and added that he can get a copy of that to Councilman Burke.

Chief Petrongolo noted that road through the Ken Lockwood Gorge is still closed after the flooding in April. Mixed reviews have been received regarding this closure, and a major project is in the design phase for repairing the road. This should be done by next Spring, and for now the road will remain closed.

Chief Petrongolo noted that the recent fire at the Stafford Forge WMA burned about ¾ of the 15,000 acres of the area. Plans were on the drawing board to do some thinning and controlled burning activities on the area, but Pinelands permitting slowed the process and made it difficult for this type of project on a large scale basis. Work on restoration of habitat in the area has to go through the Pinelands Commission, which makes it extremely difficult and time-consuming to accomplish. There was some additional discussion on the benefits of maintaining habitat in this area through activities such as controlled burning.

Councilwoman Galetto asked if there were any known threatened or endangered species at the proposed archery range site on the Black River WMA? Chief Petrongolo reported that no, there was not, but any project of this type would need to have to go through the review process. Chief Sciascia noted that the total footprint for this plan would utilize approximately five acres, and most of that area is already cleared. The primary concern is going to be the stream corridor that you would cross coming in the driveway, but the range will still be 300 to 400 hundred feet away from that crossing. Councilwoman Galetto questioned why the Black River WMA was chosen, since it is not centrally located in the State? Chief Sciascia noted this site was chosen because it is in the center of the Northern portion of the State, and has easy access from many major highways, and is within 45 minutes of all many heavily populated areas. The Archery Trade Association looks at all this when they target a site for a range. This is the same type of analysis that will be done in order to build a site in South Jersey. Councilwoman Galetto asked if a range of this type could support high school competitions, and Chief Sciascia noted that this range will have everything from Olympic style ranges to 3-D silhouette targets, and it will be the premiere archery park on the East coast.

Chief Dobelbower gave the report for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He noted that personnel activities have been busy with activities that included, coyotes, alligators, bears, bear sweeps, education efforts, training police officers, fishing derbies and many Information and Education related events.

Chief Dobelbower reported that personnel made 7,502 inspections, resulting in 510 summonses and 59 warnings being issued. Most of the violations were fishing or wildlife management area related. Quite a bit of turkey hunting enforcement was done, and it seems that there is an increase in hunters shooting from their vehicles and not using turkey calls. There were some good cases made during the turkey season. He added that the case load has grown with the increase in the turkey population.

Chief Dobelbower wanted to make the Council aware of one case that was now listed on the Division's website. The Marine Unit Conservation Officers worked a case that involved two party boats taking undersized fish, and going over the legal possession limits. He gave an explanation of the case, whereby one boat would come in to dock and notify the other boat if officers were on location. When the second boat came in, the undersized and over the limit fish would be gone. They were able to make the case by leaving some officers back at the dock, and having others aboard a Coast Guard boat several miles off shore to check the other boat at the same time. The case resulted in 37 summonses being issued to 28 patrons, and the seizure of 400 Black Sea bass and 26 Tautog. The illegal catch was almost equal to the legal catch. Chief Dobelbower gives a lot of credit to those involved in putting this case together. The fish were donated to the Atlantic City Rescue Mission.

Chief Dobelbower noted the recent retirement of Captain Mike Boyle, who was our Training Officer and is internationally known, Lt. Don Cole from the Northern Region and Officer Gary Fittin from the Marine Unit. Together, they had 75 years of combined experience.

One additional matter Chief Dobelbower mentioned was the proposed assembly bill regarding the feeding of bears. He reviewed a portion of the language of the bill, and noted that all that was done was to increase the penalties.

Chief Dobelbower noted that two new Conservation Officers have been hired for the bear positions, and have been put into vacant position in Sussex and Warren Counties. One of these officers is due to go to the police academy in July, and the other in August. They will not be done with the academy until late December.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland asked the members of the public if anyone had any comments. There were no public comments.

Councilman Wolgast noted an editorial from the Fisherman magazine. The editorial talks about resolution A3275, which changes the structure of the Council, and this magazine goes to 100,000 readers, so many people will be aware of this matter. He also passed out a draft copy of the resolution he was asked to draw up at the last meeting regarding feral cats. Councilwoman Galetto shared some information on a meeting that was held with Eric Stiles and others regarding this matter. There was some additional discussion on the issue of feral cats. **A motion was made by Councilman Kertz, seconded by Councilman Messeroll to send this resolution to the Commissioner. A vote was taken showing all in favor, none opposed.**

Old and new business was discussed. George Howard expressed his thoughts regarding bill A3275, noting that the Federation sees this as a tremendous opportunity for the sportsmen, particularly because of the way the bill is written, because it will give a real opportunity to get involved with the political agenda in this coming election. He noted that this bill was a real attack on the hunting and fishing public in the State. There was additional discussion between members of the Council and George Howard and Ed Markowski regarding this bill.

A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Kertz, to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 4:27 pm.

