

WILDLIFE from page 1A

Resident Bonnie Allen, who moved to the city seven years ago, talked about how she was surprised by the swiftness of the deer when she first started planting gardens.

"I was very excited about gardening, and envisioned all sorts of things. I planted, only to find in the morning they were gone. I would go from the front of my house to the back of my house, and in that time they had ripped up everything I planted in that afternoon," she said.

However, Allen said that she knew deer were in the area when she moved to Dunes City.

"This is very natural area and I enjoy that," she said. "I had an option which is, I put up a fence. And in that time, the deer have not bothered my yard, and it is very nice to my view. I have an option, and the deer don't. The culling is a euphemism for killing. I suggest that we find a way to accommodate our needs in consideration of theirs. One option might be to increase the fence height limit of six feet to eight feet. But I'm glad to see not only a humane solution, but a solution that is considerate of wild animals in this community."

But building a fence to save a yard would only fix part of the problem, as Councilor Duke Wells pointed out.

"I hit a deer a couple of months ago, with \$1,000 to \$2,000 worth of damage to my truck," he said. "It's a real problem."

Wells believed there were two reasons for the deer.

"They're coming here to be around homes to be safe," he said. "I think they're getting out of the woods because they're getting preyed on so much by the cats out there that they feel safer. And then they had so many generations of babies here, it's just home to them now."

But Wells, who described himself as an avid outdoorsman who enjoys a deer and elk hunt, believed culling isn't the answer.

"To me the problem isn't the deer or the citizens of Dunes City, the problem is ODFW," he said. "They made a point that they wouldn't move them. That's baloney ... We transported a bunch of blacktails up

to Alaska and they're doing quite well. They will move, I just don't think ODFW wants to deal with the trouble and expense of taking them, catching them and moving them up in the woods. I'm for getting rid of the deer because they're a nuisance, but I'm not for killing them outright. I think [ODFW] need to put on their big boy pants, capture them and move them out of the city."

Wells also pointed out that the deer are not the only wildlife problem facing the area, saying, "I think it goes back to having too many deer in Dunes City, too many bears, and I also saw a cougar about six months ago. Now we're getting into some real serious problems when you start having cougars in the daytime when there's children around."

There have been a string of reported bear sightings in the past month, including an incident of one bear breaking into a home. As for the cougars, Mills stated that one was spotted in the Clear Lake and Boy Scout Road area recently.

While Mills reported ODFW believes the bear incidents are occurring because of problems with this year's berry bushes, the cougar issue has not yet been addressed. Some in the audience posited that cougars are coming to the area because of an overabundance in the deer population.

As of right now, the scope of the issue is being studied, and ODFW is expected to address the issue "because the citizens need to be able to voice their concerns with them," Mayor Robert Forsythe said. That discussion will be held in December.

In other news from the meeting, residents raised concerns regarding the recent award of a \$301,750 grant to purchase Rebecca's Trail.

"The question I have is, how has that been trail been decided, or has it been decided," resident Alan Snow asked.

Mills responded that the city is currently in negotiations for the property, and nothing has been decided on the trail itself. The grant is merely for the acquisition of the trail, with an assurance that if it is purchased, action would be taken within two years.

"There has to be a planning phase where we decide what we want to accomplish with it, and how we're going to go about it," Mills said, pointing out that it will be a public process.

Snow stated that neighbors he has been talking to don't want the area to become a haven for a homeless population.

"And I'll be frank, most of the citizens just aren't interested in a trail," he said.

Mills replied, "We did do a feasibility study, and it came across clearly that the citizens were interested and would use it."

However, Forsythe pointed out that the entire discussion could be moot if the acquisition fails to come to fruition in the first place.

Finally, the mayor reopened a long-dormant issue from almost a year ago, when Dunes City was deciding whether or not the city should be receiving liquor and cigarette taxes from the state, which brings in thousands of dollars and prevents the cash-strapped city from going into insolvency.

In 2018, it was discovered by the city that ORS 221.770 states that cities who do not collect taxes from residents should not be receiving funds from cigarette and liquor taxes. To rectify the issue, the city proposed a small tax from residents to fulfill the ORS requirement.

However, voters that year rejected the tax by a large margin.

At that point, the council was unsure whether or not they could remain a city. They spoke with their attorney, who suggested that the city not bring the issue up to the state.

"What he said was, it's the state's decision, and it's not ours," Mills said. "We shouldn't come forward and do the state's job. ... And we do notify the state every year that we do not. It's on our website. The state is choosing to do it, knowing full well that we don't collect taxes."

But Forsythe felt that they had never really addressed the question fully, instead opting for a "don't ask, don't tell" approach.

"I don't function that way," he said. "I want to know whether it's real or not real, or if we're doing the right thing."

At that point, Forsythe contacted state representatives Arnie Roblan and Cadly McKeown for help clarifying the issue. That was months ago, and the city had not heard word back yet. So Forsythe reached out again this month, and he was put in contact with a representative from the League of Oregon Cities who had previously worked for the Oregon Department of Revenue. Their advice was that the issue did not appear to

be settled, and it was possible that the city was in violation. The city would have to do the one thing it has avoided doing all this time — speak directly with the state about the issue.

"So if it's okay with you guys, I'd really like for Jamie to make a phone call directly to the Department of Revenue and find out exactly why they've been sending us the money," Forsythe said. "If we're getting money, and we're not following those requirements, I would like to know on their end, is why are they not following their own ordinances. And find out, what the issue is, what they expect from us."

Councilor Alan Montgomery was conflicted about addressing the taxing issue with the state.

"I agree I don't like things unknown, but you also don't want to rattle the cage," he said.

"It just seems to me that we need to find an answer," Councilor Sheldon Meyer said. "History, for the last how many years, has de-

cided that we deserved it. I think that would be a really good argument in terms of them continuing to grant us and the other cities. It makes the whole state better."

The action could lead to a number of possible outcomes. The state could simply say it is aware of the issue and it's not a problem.

"It could be a simple solution to take out section D [in the ORS]," Forsythe said.

The state could also deem the issue a problem and require the city to pay back the taxes it has received, though the city's lawyer stated it was more likely Dunes City would be grandfathered in if the state was concerned.

A third option could mean that the issue of a small taxation could make its way back to the ballot.

The councilors had a wide-ranging discussion on the issue of elections and how the council as individuals did not do enough to reach out to the public in 2018.

See DUNES CITY page 9A

Thanks to all who made the Florence 13th annual Veteran's Day Parade a success!

The Florence Veteran's Day Parade Committee would like to thank all participants in the parade. Many people viewed the a parade to support our Grand Marshalls, World War II veterans. Florence has a large group of veterans, and the parade is a salute to all who have served our great nation.

Many volunteer and many hours went into the success of the parade & we were blessed with good weather!

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