

## Residents pressure supervisors into postponing bow hunting in White's Woods

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- September 30, 2022 6 hrs ago



More than 20 Friends of White's Woods members and township residents attended the White Township Supervisors meeting Wednesday to oppose the township's proposed bow hunting program that was initially set to begin Oct. 1 in White's Woods.

NATHAN ZISK/Gazette

More than 20 residents attended White Township's supervisors meeting Wednesday to oppose bow hunting in White's Woods, which was set to begin Saturday.

Residents brandished signs that read "Listen to the Public," "Keep White's Woods Safe" and "Public Input Counts" during the meeting, and nearly 10 residents spoke out to express various concerns over the township's deer management program that was adopted in December 2021.

After significant public pressure, supervisors decided to postpone the township's deer management program at least until the winter hunting season to resolve some of the safety and property issues raised by Friends of White's Woods members and residents unaffiliated with the organization.

Residents raised a number of concerns regarding the bow hunting plan, from its lack of public input to unclear objectives and goals to unresolved property and safety considerations.

Some of the residents said they did not oppose hunting in White's Woods but rather the way in which the township was pursuing deer management, which they believed would negatively impact park-goers and property owners living around the woods.

Some of the safety concerns raised included a lack of transparency about when and where hunting would take place in the woods. Many of the residents, and even some of the supervisors, were unaware that bow hunting in the woods would have begun Saturday.

"I understand that this hunting would be late season after Christmas, not Oct. 1," said supervisor Eugene Gemmell.

Supervisor Sandi Gillette also stated she was unaware hunting would begin Saturday.

"That's what we thought, too," said FOWW vice president David Dahlheimer. "We interviewed about 60 people last Saturday as they were going into the woods, and very few knew that there was a plan for bow hunting even though there were signs out. And no one knew that there wasn't hunting on Sunday, and no one knew the times that the hunters would be out there, and (very few) knew that they really should wear blaze orange. ... So, you can see there are some safety concerns."

Residents said they were worried there was no way of telling when or where hunters would be in the woods. Additionally, some residents were concerned about deer running into and dying on private property.

"Most people think that bow-hunting deer is a clean shoot, kill, field dress, extract process, but death is not instant," one resident said. "After (deer) are hit, they tend to run downhill, which in White's Woods means they will tend to be running toward private property since most of White's Woods occupies Coleman Hill with the lower elevations being private residences in White Township and Indiana Borough."

Bow hunters often follow blood trails for tens, even hundreds of yards to track a deer they've struck after it runs off. Because of White's Woods' size, shape and location, blood trails could easily stretch across private properties, and hunters would have to decide whether to continue tracking the deer through those properties.

"White's Woods is less than a half-square mile in a Y-shape — that means no spot in White's Woods is more than two city blocks from private property," the resident said. "Blood trails of deer shot in White's Woods will likely extend downhill onto private land. ... So, when a deer is shot in White's Woods and dies in a citizen's back yard on a Saturday afternoon, who do they call to have it removed? The state police, the sheriff, White Township commissioners, recreation department, borough police, Game Commission?"

White Township recreation director Ryan Shaffer, who coordinated the deer management program, said the program will remain postponed until supervisors say otherwise.

Also Wednesday, supervisors unanimously approved a number of agenda items during the supervisors meeting, including:

- Ordinance 1092 to place two new stop signs at the intersection between Harvest and Strawberry lanes, which would create a three-way stop, in response to a June 29 petition signed by all but one resident along Harvest Lane
- A non-building declaration by property owners who recently purchased seven acres of land along East Pike. By declaring they will not build on the property, the owners can forgo township sewer plan requirements.
- The township's 2023 minimum municipal obligation of \$26,529.32

"Through the state, the township's required to put in 7 percent of the salaries (of fulltime township employees) into a pension program," said township manager Chris Anderson, "and as part of the state's program, they do reimburse the township for a portion of that. And after being reimbursed from the state, the township contribution is \$26,529.32."

Supervisors also made a number of announcements Wednesday, including:

- The township received its foreign fire insurance at an amount of \$95,130.93, with 90 percent going to the Indiana Fire Association and 10 percent going to the Creekside Volunteer Fire Company.
- Fall leaf collection for 2022 will take place Oct. 24, Oct. 31, Nov. 7, Nov. 14 and Nov. 21. Collection begins at 7 a.m.
- PennDOT's stop sign study on North Ninth Street is underway.
- The township has issued 93 total building permits this year, with 16 being processed.

- Entries for White Township’s Halloween contests are being accepted on the township’s website. Participants can enter in the house decorating and/or pet costume contests.

- White Township was awarded a \$100,000 DCED grand to help fund phase 1 of the township’s amphitheater project.

“We had requested \$250,000, and what they want from us right now is to rewrite the scope of the project,” said township public relations and communications specialist Chauncey Ross.

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