

Town applies for bait and shoot permits

by **JESSICA L. FINCH**
Associate Editor

The Town of Amherst is seeking permits from the Department of Environmental Conservation to continue to bait and shoot for deer.

The town will also continue the Deer Vehicle Accident Management Plan due to the the number of collisions reported.

Capt. David Hoy of the Amherst Police Department said there have been 368 accidents in 2006 — 100 more than the goal — and the final tally isn't compiled.

"These are levels that we haven't seen since the mid-1990s," Hoy said about the increase in deer/vehicle accidents.

There were 546 accidents reported in 2003, 511 in 2004 and 467 in 2005. As of September 233 accidents were recorded in 2006, according to the Deer Vehicle Accident Management Plan.

From 1992 to 1996, accidents were recorded in the 317-444 range with a drop into the 200s between 1997 and 2001. Then in 2002, the number spiked to 436.

"It seems to be an issue we are getting a better handle on. It looks as though the rate has decreased in the past three years, about 22 percent. If we have a normal December, as we had last year, the total would be approximately 425 for the year," Jason Engel, project manager in the Planning Department, said.

There are several "hot spots" in the town including Ayer Road,

Casey Road, Campbell Boulevard, Dodge Road, Hopkins Road, Interstates 290 and 990, Klein Road, Maple Road, Millersport Highway, Sheridan Drive, Wehrle Drive and Youngs Road.

With an increase in deer/vehicle accidents, the Town of Amherst is looking to continue the bait and shoot program that was started three or four years ago, Hoy said. The program was also used in the early and mid-1990s.

The Deer Vehicle Accident Management Plan committee recently released the numbers from 2006 — 304 nuisance permit tags were received (submitted by private property owners) and 232 deer were harvested. The total deer harvested in 2006 decreased compared to 400 in 2004 and 240 in 2005.

Permits from the DEC are granted from Jan. 1 to March 31. In 2006, 115 deer were harvested in January; 45 in February and 67 in March. Four other deer were harvested under a separate permit.

"This is definitely a program we are going to have to continue to get that ideal number," Engel said about the goal of 250-275 of accidents per year. "As we go we are learning and trying to make the program more efficient and more effective. And also more productive in getting more meat to the Food Bank."

The cost for harvesting the deer has totaled \$20,625 since 2004 with costs increasing in 2005 and 2006 to \$25 per deer, up from \$20 per deer in 2004.



A full-grown male deer, shown on Dec. 16, stands in a clearing on the north side of Maple Road between the Buffalo Shooting Club property and the Amherst Parks Department.

Photo by David F. Sherman

Amherst donates the meat from the deer to the Food Bank of Western New York and contributed 25,960 pounds since 2004.

The bait and shoot program was suspended in 2005 from Feb. 3 through March 11 after a bullet ricocheted and entered a house on San Fernando Lane. In 2006, no complaints were filed.

Hoy said the warm weather has contributed to the increased number of accidents this year because the deer's food supply is readily available in fields and lawns.

"The weather is working against us," he said, because the deer are not going into wooded areas in search of food.

The Oct. 12 storm is also playing a role in blocking accessibility to wooded areas.

"This problem is not unique to Amherst," Hoy said about an increase in accidents.

In addition to the bait and shoot program, Amherst has started an education procedure, including leaflets with information on preventing collisions. Reflective

signs have also been added to the roadways warning motorists of hot spots. The average cost of an accident is \$2,500.

The bait and shoot program cannot begin without permits from the DEC.

For more information, visit www.amherst.ny.us and click on the Planning Department. Anyone involved in a deer/vehicle accident should call the Amherst police at 689-1311 immediately.

e-mail: jfinch@beenews.com

New York State to require board training

by **JILL SCHMELZER**
Reporter

Beginning Jan. 1, New York State will implement training requirements for members of planning boards and zoning boards of appeal.

(See editorial on page four)

According to the publication "Planning News," the law was passed because cities, towns and villages have primary responsibility to regulate property use through citizen planning and zoning boards. Their actions have profound impact on state and local land use patterns and individual landowners.

The new law promotes a minimum training standard of four hours for the members through the state at no or minimal fiscal impact.

While individual municipalities could have required training prior to this new action, there was no uniform standard for the planning and zoning officials.

Both boards are appointed by elected officials and make recommendations for vote actions, according to Amherst Planning Board Chair Catharine Weiss.

The Amherst Town Board appoints the seven Planning Board members to seven-year terms, naming a new member each year. Weiss said. Most of the members were on other committees prior to being appointed to the Planning Board.

On the other hand, the Williamsville Village Board appoints members to the Planning Board based on expertise. For instance, one member is a lawyer, another is a horticulturist, two are business owners, two are architects and one is a surveyor, according to Trustee Brian Geary.

Once the new law comes into effect, the Village Board is looking into online courses and video presentations for the members to begin training.

"I would like to see us require a little more than the (state) minimum," Geary said. "Planning Board does have a lot of

authority, especially after the community plan comes up with the master plan."

Most planning boards, including those in Amherst and Williamsville, are given the authority to review applications for subdividing parcels of land within the municipality, according to the pamphlet "Planning Board Basics." State statute sets forth a comprehensive procedure that planning boards must follow during the review process.

The new training will help the members better understand the process.

Geary, who is Planning Board liaison, said when he was on the Williamsville Planning Board he was timid about speaking up on standards or making decisions prior to taking some online courses and lectures regarding procedures.

"They cover rules and laws as far as what we can and cannot do," Geary said, noting he had landscape expertise.

Business owners who request building in the town and village present site plans

before the planning boards, which have the authority to be as specific as they want.

For example, Geary said, when Walgreens requested building a location at the corner of Main Street and South Union Road, the Williamsville Planning Board had specific requirements for the landscape, building materials, colors and other aspects of the project. It is currently under construction.

Geary said that he supports the state's decision to implement the new requirements because the laws and building codes have changed, becoming more in-depth and complex.

"I think it's great," Weiss agreed. "Our board was always good about attending the courses, but now that they've made it mandatory, all the boards will be doing it."

e-mail: JSchmelzer@beenews.com



Free Estimates
24 Hour Emergency Service

Since 1996

More professional from the ground up.

- Tree Removal Experts
- Stump Grinding & Seeding
- Professional Pruning
- Tree Restoration Specialist
- Disease & Insect Control
- Certified Arborists

633-8008 • Williamsville






www.dbtree.com

**Assistive Living Apartments
& A Secured Memory Care Unit**



"Senior Living with a Difference!"



**Tours Available
Call Today!**

575 Cayuga Creek Road
 Cheektowaga, NY 14227
(716) 893-3000
www.PeregrinesLanding.com

PSAT SAT

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM KAPLAN!

**Prep smarter,
score higher—and
save up to \$150!**



Before the year ends, make the commitment to raise your score.
 Enroll in a Kaplan Classroom course by December 31st and **save \$100** or enroll in Private Tutoring and **save an additional \$50!**

Call today to speak with an educational advisor!

Higher test scores guaranteed or your money back.
1-800-KAP-TEST | kaptest.com/college

KAPLAN
TEST PREP AND ADMISSIONS

*This website and associated materials of these registered courses, effective as of December 31st, 2006. This offer applies only to PSAT/ACT and ACT Classroom Courses. Kaplan Private Tutoring Programs and Kaplan Classroom Private Tutoring Programs. Limited-time offer. ©Kaplan, Inc. 2006. All rights reserved. For complete program details, visit www.kaplan.com. The Higher Education Opportunity Act applies to Kaplan courses when and as amended under the United States, Canada, Mexico, The United Kingdom, and France.