

Amending Leon Valley Code of Ordinances

Article 1.09 Parks and Recreation Prohibiting Deer Feeding in Public Parks

City Council Meeting

Public Works Director Melinda Moritz

April 4, 2023



Purpose

- To consider amending the Leon Valley Code of Ordinances, Chapter 1 General Provisions, Article 1.09 Parks and Recreation, Division 1 Generally, Sec. 1.09.036 Pets and Other Animals, (e), to prohibit the feeding of deer in parks
- Options
 - Approve
 - Approve with other amendments
 - Deny
- Declaration
 - Recommend approval of this amendment

Background

- Several residents whose property abuts Raymond Rimkus Park routinely feed the deer that congregate at the park & in the Huebner-Onion Natural Area Park
- This activity makes the deer less afraid of humans and may have contributed harm to deer, persons, vehicles, and other property
- Decades of research have shown that supplemental feeding leads to increased risk of disease, long-term habitat destruction, habituation to humans, alteration of other deer behavioral patterns

Background

- With chronic wasting disease now present in the state, the increased risk of disease transmission from feeding in a concentrated area is one of the most significant reasons not to feed
- Deer are extremely well-adapted animals and in general, don't need supplemental food
- The most used supplement is commercially processed corn, along with breads, tortillas, cakes, cookies, etc., which have no nutritional value to the deer

Background

- Commercially available corn was created to be used as bait by hunters and not as a supplemental food source contributing to the health of a herd
- Corn may also contain a fungus known as Aflatoxin, which is harmful to other wildlife
- This code does not prohibit the feeding of deer on privately owned property

Code Amendment

- Section (e) currently states:
 - It shall be unlawful to harm, disturb, trap, confine, catch, possess, or remove any wildlife from city parkland, natural area, trails or city-owned Huebner Creek or related drainage areas except as specifically authorized by the city.
- Amendment adds the word “feed” to the Section:
 - It shall be unlawful to **feed**, harm, disturb, trap, confine, catch, possess, or remove any wildlife from city parkland, natural areas, trails or city-owned Huebner Creek or related drainage areas except as specifically authorized by the city.

Fiscal Impact

- Signs have already been placed in the park discouraging persons from feeding the deer
- These signs cost the City \$780.00

Recommendation

- It is recommended the City Council approve the amendment to the code to prohibit the feeding of deer at city-owned parks

S.E.E. Statement

- *Social Equity* – Prohibiting the feeding of deer on publicly-owned land protects the health, safety, and welfare of deer, persons, and property in these areas
- *Economic Development* – The feeding of deer in concentrated areas may contribute to habitat destruction, as evidenced by the damage to city-planted trees and other vegetation in our parks and recreational areas
- *Environmental Stewardship* – Prohibiting the feeding of deer in our parks and recreational areas encourages natural feeding and other normal behaviors, which contribute to the regrowth of forbes and other native plantings