

# Times Community Newspapers

## Woodside homeowners divided on bow hunting issue

By Jerry Schanke  
02/24/2004

While few Fairfax County residents would deny that the whitetail deer population has spawned property damage and traffic safety issues, a decision by at least one property owner to embrace bow hunting as a control measure is causing a stir in one McLean community.

That stir became public Monday night as some 50 residents of Woodside Estates in McLean attended what was billed as an informational meeting on bow hunting as a deer control measure.

Woodside Estates is just north of where Lewinsville Road joins Route 7, only a mile or so from Tysons Corner. There are some 215 homes in the development, many on more than an acre of land.

The meeting was called by Jan and Irv Auerbach, who wrote to their neighbors Feb. 12 advising them that they were tired of deer eating their plants and presenting road and health hazards. They said they planned to have experienced archers hunt deer on their property to reduce the deer herd.

The Auerbach's letter invited their neighbors to hear from bow hunters representing Suburban Whitetail Management of Northern Virginia (SWM) and the Fairfax County's deer management expert. Their questions would be answered Monday night.

Three days later on Feb. 15, the Auerbach's letter drew a response in the form of a letter from three other residents to all Woodside homeowners. Their letter included a petition opposing bow hunting in Woodside Estates, "reasons to oppose bow hunting" in the community, "common sense hunting safeguards in other communities" and a fact sheet titled "Suburban Deer 101."

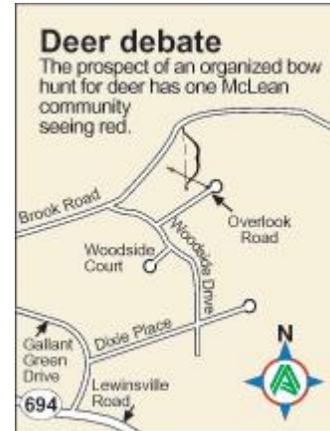
Monday night's meeting was to begin with presentations by the bow hunters, the county expert and a state game warden.

Before the first presentation, however, Woodside Estate resident Marty Fletcher cited early returns from the petition opposing bow hunting in the community.

"We've surveyed 122 of 215 homes and talked to 204 adult residents," Fletcher said. "Ninety-three percent are opposed, 4 percent chose not to sign and 3 percent are studying the issue. When was the last time 93 percent of Woodside residents agreed on anything?" he added.

Eric Huppert, president of SWM, described the group as 55 experienced archers who hunt deer for no pay on private property. He said the group, which subscribes to a rigid course of training and a code of ethics, has harvested approximately 400 deer in Fairfax County since 1997. Venison is donated to Hunters for the Hungry.

Huppert also explained that bow hunters use tree stands, thus limiting the possibility of an errant



arrow posing a safety threat.

Earl Hodnett, wildlife biologist for Fairfax County's Animal Services Division, said he did not know how many deer were in the vicinity of Woodside Estates, but that "anything over 15 deer per square mile and you see damage."

Hodnett said the facts suggest that safety concerns can be overstated. "Injuries to nonparticipants (in bow hunting) in Fairfax County are zero," Hodnett said. "Injuries to nonparticipants in Virginia is zero," he said.

Hodnett said Virginia law permits homeowners to hunt on their property. Use of firearms carries prohibitions; archery does not.

After the meeting, Irv Auerbach said the presentations "reinforced my conviction that this (bow hunting) is safe. I plan to go ahead."

Julie Fletcher, one of the residents circulating the petition, said she believes most county residents are unaware of the "lack of safeguards" in relation to bow hunting. Asked if she heard anything in the presentations that changed her mind, Fletcher said, "Not at all; in fact, it scared me."

Fletcher said residents plan to meet with Fairfax County Supervisor Joan DuBois on March 11 to discuss the issue. She said the issue also will be raised with the Lewinsville Coalition, which represents some 12 homeowners' associations in the Lewinsville corridor.

The Woodside Estates Citizens Association has not taken a position on the issue. Irv Auerbach is president of the association.

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