

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

A meeting of the Fish and Game Council was held on the above date.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chairman Frank Virgilio.

Chairman Virgilio read aloud the following notice: In accordance with P.L. 1975, c. 231 notice of this meeting was filed with and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State on August 22,2023 and delivered to the designated newspapers for Fish and Wildlife, the Newark Star Ledger on August 26,2023 and the Atlantic City Press on August 25,2023.

Roll call was taken in attendance:

- Chairman Frank Virgilio
- Councilman James DeStephano
- Councilman Mitchell Jones
- Councilman Ed Kertz
- Councilman Rick Lathrop -Late 1:30
- Councilman Rob Pollock
- Councilman Bob Puskas
- Councilman Loren Robinson
- Councilman Ken Whildin

Fish & Wildlife employees included: D. Golden, G. Kopkash, C. Stanko, K. Byrne, and D. Bajek. There were several members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio welcomed everyone to this meeting. This Council believes that adopting the 2022 Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and Game Code changes needs to hear the voices of all stakeholders and individuals. As such, we have made public comment an essential process of this meeting and will provide an opportunity for comment after our discussions concerning the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and Game Code changes adoption document before the Council votes.

Assistant Commissioner Golden appreciates everyone's patience while we are working on this new virtual meeting platform. During the meeting he would like all Council members to self-mute to cut down on background noises. For the public attendees, you will remain muted throughout the meeting. When we take public comment if you want to speak, please use the raise hand function so we can unmute you and take comments one by one. Any comments left in the chat will not be read.

He would like to recognize our staff, specifically Assistant Director Barno and Chief Stanko, who worked so hard to get us to this point. This was a lot of work with over 9,000 comments and they worked with our Office of Legal Affairs and the DAG's office to get this in place for the Council.

**2022 Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and Game Code Change Adoption:**

Assistant Director Barno wanted to apologize to the Council as well as to the public for cancelling the last scheduled meeting as we were caught in the attorney review process and as you all know rule making goes through an extensive legal review and we had to wait for their approval. She would like to thank the staff as well for all their efforts in the months of processing all the comments, the double checking, rechecking, it was a small army working behind the scenes to process all the comments in the fastest amount of time possible. Also, she would like to give a special thanks to Assistant Director Kopkash, Chief Springer, and Karen Byrne for working behind the scenes running the virtual meeting platform. And a huge shout-out to Chief Stanko for all the long hours, long nights, and long weekends over the past few months.

As you know, there is no presentation today. At the July Fish and Game Council meeting, the Council voted for Fish & Wildlife to move forward with the preparation of the adoption of the 2022 Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and three related amendments to the Game Code. The amendments include prohibiting the taking of bears under 75lbs., prohibiting the taking of an adult bear accompanied by bears under 75lbs, and prohibiting the taking of bear within 300 feet of a bait pile. At that meeting, in response to the comments received, the Council also directed that 2021 and 2022 data be added to several figures within the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy. These are non-substantive changes that do not require additional public notice and comment. The purpose of this meeting today is for the Council to vote on whether or not to approve the adoption document that has been provided to the Council members for your review.

**Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion concerning the adoption document sent to review by Council.**

**Councilman Puskas made a motion to open the floor for discussion, seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken; all approve.**

Council discussion took place.

**Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor from discussion.**

**Councilman Whildin made a motion to close the floor from discussion, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken, all approved.**

**Public Comment on 2022 Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and Game Code Changes:**

Dawn Zalinski spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Jeff Tittle spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Raymond Lesniak spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Taylor McFarlin spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Janet Pizar spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Elisa Frank spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Sandy P. spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Doris Lin spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Barbara Sachau spoke in opposition of lethal bear management.

Anthony spoke in support of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Plan and the regulated hunt.

John P. spoke in support of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Plan and the regulated hunt.

**Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the adoption documents as provided for submission to the Commissioner's Office for review and signature for filing by the Office of Legal Affairs by September 8,2023.**

**Councilman Whildin made a motion to accept the adoption documents as provided for submission to the commissioner's Office for review and signature for filing by the Office of Legal Affairs by September 8,2023, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken; all approve. motion carries.**

**Chairman Virgilio asked for a second motion to provide Fish and Wildlife approval to make any technical administrative changes that may be necessary prior to filing.**

**Councilman Whildin made a motion to provide Fish and Wildlife approval to make any technical administrative changes that may be necessary prior to filing, seconded by Councilman Kertz. Vote taken; all approve, motion carries.**

**Councilman Whildin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:46 p.m., seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken; all approve.**

**Next meeting is September 12,2023 at 10:00 at the Robbinsville office.**