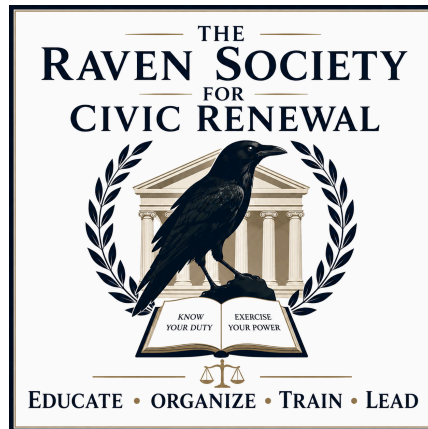




RAVEN SOCIETY FOR CIVIC RENEWAL

Proceedings No. 2

Community Deliberation Report

THE ELDRIDGE PARK GOOSE MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION

From Outrage to Stewardship

A Community Deliberation and Representative Civic Dialogue

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Raven Society for Civic Renewal

Independent Candidate for Mayor of Elmira

July 22, 2026, Elmira, New York

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Resolution No. RS-2026-02

Resolution Concerning Humane Wildlife Stewardship and Community Participation

Whereas

The Raven Society for Civic Renewal exists to encourage civil civic dialogue, thoughtful public deliberation, and the practice of representative self-government;

Whereas

The discussion concerning the management of the Canada goose population at Eldridge Park generated significant public participation from citizens representing a broad diversity of viewpoints;

Whereas

The discussion revealed both disagreement and substantial areas of common ground regarding stewardship, transparency, public health, conservation, humane wildlife management, and governmental responsibility;

Whereas

The Society recognizes that representative government functions best when citizens deliberate before government acts rather than after decisions have already become irreversible;

Therefore Be It Resolved

That the Raven Society for Civic Renewal adopts the following principles:

Section 1. Stewardship

Wildlife populations should be managed continuously rather than reactively.

Section 2. Transparency

Public participation should occur before irreversible management decisions whenever reasonably practicable.

Section 3. Humane Management

Government should employ the least intrusive effective wildlife management practices before considering lethal population reduction.

Section 4. Public Education

Citizen education regarding feeding wildlife, habitat management, and conservation shall form part of any comprehensive management strategy.

Section 5. Ongoing Monitoring

Municipal wildlife populations should be routinely monitored to prevent future crises.

Section 6. Civic Participation

This discussion shall serve as the Raven Society's first public demonstration of representative civic deliberation and community policy development.

Section 7. Future Deliberations

The Society shall continue conducting public deliberations on matters affecting the City of Elmira, using respectful dialogue, evidence-based discussion, and majority recommendations as a model for civic renewal.

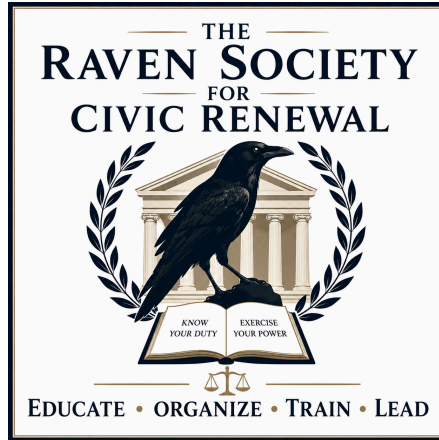
Adopted this 22nd day of July, 2026.

Julian Raven

Founder

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RAVEN SOCIETY FOR CIVIC RENEWAL

Proceedings No. 2 July 22, 2026

Community Deliberation Summary

The Eldridge Park Goose Management Discussion

From Outrage to Stewardship

Introduction

One of the principal purposes of the Raven Society for Civic Renewal is to restore the practice of civil civic dialogue. Modern political discussion too often begins with conclusions instead of questions, personalities instead of principles, and anger instead of understanding. The result is polarization rather than problem solving.

The Eldridge Park goose controversy provided an ideal opportunity to demonstrate a different approach.

Following the City's decision to remove more than two hundred Canada geese from Eldridge Park, members of the community expressed strong opinions across social media. Rather than dismissing these reactions as merely emotional, I reviewed them as

evidence of public concerns, practical suggestions, competing values, and possible policy solutions. Some were in response to my article (APPENDIX A), some were from other posts, and there were many more.

This document summarizes those viewpoints—not to determine who was "right," but to identify where agreement exists, where disagreement remains, and how a representative republic can use public discussion to arrive at wiser public policy.

Statement of Appreciation

The Raven Society expresses its sincere gratitude to every citizen who participated in the discussion.

Whether participants agreed or disagreed, each substantive contribution helped identify concerns, values, facts, and possible solutions that deserve consideration.

Healthy government requires citizens willing to speak, listen, reason, and persuade one another.

Public Sentiment

The discussion revealed substantial passion surrounding the City's decision.

Some participants expressed grief and outrage over the killing of the geese.

Others emphasized public health, park maintenance, and wildlife management.

Although emotions were often strong, the majority of substantive comments sought practical solutions rather than ideological conflict.

Reaction patterns to the original post reflected this balance. Positive reactions substantially exceeded angry reactions, while many participants engaged through thoughtful comments rather than emotional responses. The discussion demonstrated that citizens are capable of reasoned deliberation when provided an opportunity to participate.

Position One

Wildlife Deserves Better Stewardship

Many participants argued that the tragedy was not simply the loss of the geese but the City's failure to prevent the situation from reaching such an extreme point.

Several recurring observations included:

- Earlier intervention could have prevented the crisis.
- Population management should occur continuously.
- Government should act before drastic measures become necessary.
- Citizens should have been informed long before a cull became the chosen option.

This position did not necessarily reject wildlife management.

Rather, it criticized delayed leadership.

Position Two

Humane Wildlife Management

Many citizens proposed alternatives.

Suggestions included:

- annual population monitoring
- egg oiling
- egg depredation
- trained border collies
- habitat modification
- public education
- feeding restrictions
- gradual population control

Several commenters observed that numerous municipalities successfully manage resident goose populations through ongoing intervention without allowing numbers to reach crisis levels.

Position Three

Public Health and Park Access

Others emphasized legitimate concerns regarding:

- excessive goose droppings
- bacteria
- park maintenance
- children's safety
- environmental degradation
- declining recreational use

These participants generally accepted that government has an obligation to maintain parks for public use while acknowledging that wildlife management presents difficult choices.

Many of these same commenters nevertheless concluded that earlier management would likely have reduced the need for large-scale removal.

Position Four

Human Conduct

A surprising area of agreement emerged.

Many participants noted that human behavior significantly contributed to the problem.

Repeated observations included:

- feeding geese
- lack of enforcement
- insufficient public education
- inconsistent maintenance
- delayed government response

Rather than blaming the geese alone, these citizens emphasized that public policy must address the behavior that encourages unnaturally large resident populations.

Position Five

Transparency

Numerous participants criticized the process rather than simply the outcome.

Common themes included:

- earlier public notification
- public meetings
- expert presentations
- discussion of alternatives
- community participation before irreversible decisions

This suggests that citizens value being included in decisions affecting their community, even when consensus may ultimately prove impossible.

Consensus Observations

Although disagreement remained regarding the City's final decision, several areas of broad agreement emerged.

Most participants appeared to agree that:

- The goose population had become a management issue.
- Government responded too late.
- Earlier intervention would likely have produced better options.
- Public participation should have occurred before final decisions.
- Ongoing wildlife management is preferable to crisis management.
- Feeding wildlife contributes to long-term population problems.
- Parks should balance recreation with conservation.

The Stewardship Principle

The discussion ultimately shifted from geese to government.

The central lesson is not whether citizens favored or opposed the cull.

The central lesson is that good government prevents crises before drastic choices become unavoidable.

This principle extends well beyond wildlife management.

It applies equally to:

- municipal finances
- homelessness
- infrastructure
- code enforcement
- economic development
- neighborhood decline
- environmental stewardship

Good government manages continuously.

Poor government reacts after options have disappeared.

Demonstration of Representative Civic Dialogue

The Raven Society proposes using discussions such as this as practical exercises in civic participation.

Rather than shouting past one another, participants identify:

1. Facts
2. Values
3. Areas of agreement
4. Areas of disagreement
5. Possible solutions
6. Recommended policy

Members may then debate proposed resolutions before voting.

The resulting recommendation may then be presented publicly to elected officials as an informed expression of community judgment.

In this way, citizens practice the very habits upon which representative government depends.

Proposed Resolution

Following review of the community discussion, the Raven Society adopts the following guiding principle:

Wildlife populations should be managed continuously through transparent, humane, science-informed stewardship that emphasizes prevention, public participation, education, and the least intrusive effective methods, reserving lethal population reduction only after reasonable alternatives have been considered and openly discussed.

Closing Reflection

The Eldridge Park discussion demonstrated something encouraging.

Even in the midst of controversy, dozens of citizens contributed thoughtful observations, practical ideas, and genuine concerns for both people and wildlife.

That is precisely the purpose of the Raven Society for Civic Renewal.

Our objective is not to eliminate disagreement.

Our objective is to transform disagreement into deliberation, deliberation into understanding, and understanding into better public policy.

The strength of a representative republic is measured not by the absence of disagreement, but by the wisdom with which free citizens resolve it together.

Community Participants

I gratefully acknowledge the citizens whose public comments contributed to this community deliberation. This list is by no means exhaustive and so if your name does not appear, please accept my apologies if you made sincere comments and you do not appear.

Also thank you to the 'Elmira is Crazy' page and admins for facilitating the conversation.

Julian Raven, Independent Candidate for Mayor of Elmira

@Bonnie Wall
@Brenda Morgan
@Cathy Wood
@Cheryl Savino
@Christopher Smith
@David Uhler
@Devin Bachert
@Dominic Fiala
@Dylan Jones
@Ed Adams
@Edward Nichols
@Gail Van Cise Williams
@Helen Bonsignore
@Jaucque La Morg
@Jen McKamey West
@Joshua Connelly
@Karen Buchalla
@Maggie Stevens
@Michael Austin
@Mike Wolfe
@Olga Homerda Mace
@Penny DeRenzo
@Rhonda Benninger
@Sharon Ackley
@Stephanie Black
@Wyatt Halm
@admin

Appendix A

Original Article by Julian Raven



Raven for Mayor Position Paper

Stewardship, Not Sentiment: Why the Canada Goose Cull at Eldridge Park Was Necessary

One of the responsibilities of government is to make difficult decisions that are often unpopular in the short term but necessary for the long-term health of the community. Leadership is not measured by avoiding difficult choices; it is measured by making them wisely, compassionately, and responsibly.

The recent cull of approximately 200 Canada geese at Eldridge Park has understandably generated strong emotions throughout our community. Many residents are saddened. Many are angry. Others are simply shocked that birds which had become such a familiar part of the park are suddenly gone. Those emotions are real, and they deserve to be acknowledged—not dismissed.

As an artist, photographer, conservationist, and lover of nature, I understand those feelings personally. I have spent countless hours photographing wildlife throughout our region, including the magnificent Canada geese that made Eldridge Park their home. They are extraordinary creatures. They are beautiful in flight. They are majestic as they descend onto the water. They are fascinating to observe up close, displaying remarkable intelligence, curiosity, and confidence around people. One of my favorite photographs is of those very geese.

They will be missed.

Yet good government cannot be governed solely by emotion.

The unfortunate reality is that for years the Canada goose population at Eldridge Park was allowed to grow well beyond what the park could reasonably sustain. What began as a welcome feature of the park gradually became a management problem. The issue was never the geese themselves. The issue was the failure to responsibly manage their population.

Eldridge Park is not a wildlife refuge. It is not a protected nature preserve. It is, first and foremost, a public park designed for people—for families pushing strollers, children playing, seniors walking, runners, cyclists, anglers, photographers, and visitors who simply want to enjoy one of Elmira's most treasured public spaces.

Nature certainly belongs there. Wildlife belongs there. The lake, the trees, the fish, and a healthy population of birds all contribute to the beauty of the park. But the park exists for human recreation, and government has a responsibility to maintain that balance.

Unfortunately, the growing goose population eventually overwhelmed that balance.

Anyone who regularly visited Eldridge Park witnessed the problem. Walkways, lawns, picnic areas, and gathering places became heavily covered with large quantities of goose droppings. The accumulation created unpleasant odors, slippery walking conditions, sanitation concerns, and a visual blight that diminished the beauty of one of Elmira's signature parks. The geese themselves had become victims of years of governmental neglect.

The geese at times were a menace, their numbers and often indifference to ones approach could be intimidating. It felt like wading through a gang at times who would often hiss aggressively.

This was not a wildlife problem.

It was a management problem.

Had I been mayor while this situation developed over many years, I would have addressed it before it reached this point.

My administration would have implemented an ongoing wildlife management strategy that maintained a healthy, sustainable goose population rather than allowing it to grow until drastic intervention became unavoidable. Small, consistent reductions over time would likely have gone largely unnoticed by the public while preserving the visible presence of the geese that residents had grown to love. Implementation of deterrents would have caused many to choose the river over the park as they sought a landing zone.

That is what good stewardship looks like.

Instead, years of inaction produced a crisis requiring a single large-scale cull. The emotional shock our community now feels is largely the consequence of that mismanagement. People did not gradually notice fewer geese over several seasons. Instead, they woke up one day to find that nearly all of them had disappeared.

That shock was avoidable.

Whether gradual management would have been financially practical is another question. Continuous wildlife management carries ongoing costs that the City of Elmira may not have been able to justify. In contrast, a single coordinated operation may well have been the most cost-effective solution available once the population had reached unsustainable levels.

If that is the case, then I believe the cull itself was regrettable—but necessary.

Where I believe city leadership failed was in preparing the public.

Before undertaking such a visible and emotionally significant action, the City should have communicated openly with residents, and if it did I missed it. Officials should have explained why the population had become unsustainable, why action was necessary, what alternatives had been considered, and what residents could expect afterward. Honest communication would not have eliminated the disappointment, but it would have helped people understand the necessity behind the decision.

Leadership requires both good management and good communication.

This episode illustrates a broader pattern that my campaign has consistently identified.

Elmira has too often tolerated decline until problems become crises. Whether we are discussing infrastructure, finances, public facilities, abandoned properties, or wildlife

management, postponing responsible maintenance almost always leads to more expensive, more controversial, and more painful solutions later.

Government should not manage by emergency.

Government should manage through consistent stewardship.

To every resident saddened by the absence of these beautiful birds, I want you to know that I understand your disappointment. When a community has limited natural treasures, we become attached to them. The geese were part of countless family memories. Children delighted in watching them. Visitors photographed them. Artists and photographers like myself treasured them.

Those memories remain.

But nature is resilient.

Canada geese will return. They always do. Future generations will once again enjoy watching them take flight over the lake, glide across the water, and greet visitors throughout the park.

Our responsibility as a city is not to eliminate wildlife, but to manage it wisely.

As Mayor, my commitment will always be to proactive stewardship rather than reactive crisis management. Our public parks should remain clean, beautiful, safe, and welcoming while continuing to celebrate the natural beauty that makes places like Eldridge Park so special.

We can love nature while still managing it responsibly.

In fact, true conservation demands exactly that.

— **Julian Raven**

Independent Candidate for Mayor of Elmira