**Groton Stewardship Committee Minutes**

**Present**: Eileen McHugh (Conservation Commission, Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee); Olin Lathrop (Conservation Commission, Invasive Species Committee, Trails Committee); Alex Woodle (Great Pond Advisory Committee); Lisa Murray (Groton Garden Club); Bob Hanninen (Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee); Anna Eliot (Community Preservation Committee, Park Commission).

**Others Present:** Jodi Valenta; Nik Gualco (Conservation Administrator).

**Meeting date:** Wednesday, April 21, 2021, 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

E. McHugh called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting began with Jodi Valenta sharing her experience with stewardship in Groton, which includes monitoring the properties and working to conserve freshwater turtles.

**Discuss site walk to Priest Family Conservation Area**

The Committee shared their impressions of the Priest Family Conservation Area after the recent site walk. Some of these impressions included: the need for treating the invasive vegetation infestation; the unique geologic setting of the hill; the possibility of opening up a vista increase the recreational value; the scale of the work required to restore the field; the restoration project is an opportunity for the Committee to showcase a unique property; the potential for education and outreach (i.e., interpretative signage).

A. Eliot shared a short script she received from Susan Dunleavey (of the Priest Family). O. Lathrop described the MassWildlife grant process.

Contacting the homeowner (former Trimer House) was brought up with O. Lathrop being the current point of contact. E. McHugh expressed an interest in engaging with the homeowner to coordinate B. Easom taking his tractor up the hill for an upcoming work day.

Action Items – see below.

**Stewardship Committee charge, appointments updates**

The Committee discussed the status of the appointment of members including who has been sworn in with the Town Clerk. The Committee decided it would wait until enough of the Committee has been sworn in before selecting officers.

**Short video outlines updates**

B. Hanninen gave a presentation on Flat Pond as well as the surrounding conservation area (off Townsend Road and Lakin Street). Hanninen presented problems to the management of the pond/area, which includes beaver activity and associated flooding; encroachment by surrounding houses; infestations of invasive species.

The Committee provided feedback on the issues as well as how the material would fit into a script. Some feedback included creating an action plan for how to breakdown the management needs. The Committee also discussed motor boats and if there should be restrictions added prohibiting their use.

A. Eliot shared that the Committee may want to engage directly with the abutters in designing management recommendations. This would allow for better commination. Flat Pond could be targeted as a first area to try out this type of engagement strategy. N. Gualco stated that he would reach out to the Groton Conservation Trust who has experience with this type of outreach and seek guidance.

L. Murray shared that the Garden Club approved the concept of creating videos at a recent meeting.

The Committee then discussed how the videos could be shared after they are created.

**Announcements & discussion: upcoming events**

A. Woodle made an announcement about the April 27 treatment of Lost Lake. This will be the year’s first SONAR treatment (for invasive vegetation).

O. Lathrop announced that a RDA was filed by the Invasive Species Committee to treat Phragmites at Carmichael Swamp.

L. Murray shared that the annual plant sale is May 15 + 16.

E. McHugh discussed the prospect of reinvigorating the (former) stewardship committee network. Gualco agreed to share the files with E. McHugh who will reach out and gauge interest in participating in the newest iteration of stewardship committee. The Committee discussed what is known about the previous stewardship group. Methods were discussed on how to engage with volunteers and keep them involved. J. Valenta shared that in her experience communication with the previous stewardship group was two-way (between the steward and the Conservation Administrator). She continued by stating that the experience would have been enhanced if there were connections between the individual stewards.

**Approve past meeting minutes**

Upon a motion by A. Woodle, seconded by A. Eliot, it was:

VOTED to accept the meeting minutes for January 20, 2021 as drafted.

**The motion passed by a roll call vote (Aye: AW, AE, BH, LM, EM; Abstain: OL)**

Upon a motion by A. Eliot, seconded by B. Hanninen, it was:

VOTED to accept the meeting minutes for February 17, 2021 as drafted.

**The motion passed by a roll call vote (Aye: AW, AE, BH, LM, EM; Abstain: OL)**

Upon a motion by A. Eliot, seconded by A. Woodle, it was:

VOTED to accept the meeting minutes for March 17, 2021 as drafted.

**The motion passed by a roll call vote (Aye: AW, AE, BH, LM, EM; Abstain: OL)**

**Conclusion and set next meeting date**

The Committee agreed to meet May 19, 2021 at 6:30PM.

Action Items:

1. EM will work with NG on engaging with former Stewardship Committee network;
2. Members will get sworn in at Town Clerk;
3. Members will continue to work on their short-videos
4. EM will coordinate with B. Easom and the Committee regarding the work day at Priest Family Consecration Area.
5. OL will check on MassWildlife Habitat Grant
6. OL will contact the home owner (former Trimper house) about access and on creating a more formal permanent agreement on use of the access road.
7. NG will contact the Conservation Trust about communicating with abutters.
8. AE will continue to make progress on the Priest Family short-video.
9. The Committee will discuss whether to engage with a forester to assess the Priest Family Conservation Area at its next meeting.

Upon a motion by A. Eliot, seconded by A. Woodle, it was:

VOTED to adjourn the meeting.

**The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.**

**Minutes Approved: September 22, 2021**