**Groton Stewardship Committee Minutes**

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

**Absent:** Deb Collum

**Others Present:** Nik Gualco (Conservation Administrator); Sherry Anders (Shirley Greenway Committee)

**Location:** Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

**When:** June 29, 2022

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

**Committee updates**

O. Lathrop reported on the recent training workshop hosted by the Squannacook-Nissitissit Wild & Scenic Council at Sorhaug Woods, which provided attendees with information on identifying and controlling invasive vegetation. N. Gualco gave an update on Priest Hill. All work associated with the MassWildlife grant is now complete. He continued and shared that the Sargisson Beach Committee is getting closer to filing a NOI for improvements to the beach and access road. Finally, Gualco reported that the Conservation Commission will be mowing the Shattuck Homestead in the coming weeks and will need volunteers to help with the required turtle sweep.

**Continue review of land use policy for conservation land and discuss the communication of said policy to the public.**

E. McHugh provided an update on the revising of the land use regulations based on the feedback she received by members of the Stewardship Committee and the Conservation Commission. She will share the revised draft via email to gather comments/suggested edits.

**Review of Special Projects: MassWildlife Oak Woodland Habitat Restoration Project**

Sherry Anders (Shirley Greenway Committee member) gave a brief summary of the MassWildlife project proposal to convert approximately 2,000 acres of forested land along the Squannacook River (in Townsend and Shirley) to open scrubland-oak woodland habitat (what is referred to as a fire influenced habitat). This type of land cover is beneficial to a number of rare and declining species, which is why the State has a goal to keep approximately 20-25% of their land holdings in this type of land cover. S. Anders then recapped the steps MassWildlife has taken to progress the project. S. Anders reported that a central point of concern among stakeholders (e.g., NRWA, Squannacook-Nissitissit Wild & Scenic Council, Shirley Greenway Committee) is an apparent lack of transparency by the State on the project’s environmental impacts. Finally, S. Anders reported that after a site walk and dialogue with stakeholders, MassWildlife has agreed to postpone the project to allow for more time to review the proposal and evaluate how it will affect the environmental. MassWildlife is currently undertaking a MEPA review of the project, which will allow for public comment.

A discussion ensued about the project, including the MEPA review process and possible ways the Stewardship Committee could take a leadership role in facilitating educational opportunities and general outreach regarding this project. The group discussed possibly hosting a forum where a representative from MassWildlife could provide a presentation of the proposed project and answer questions from stakeholders and the general public. It was agreed that NRWA may be the best entity to host such an event so N. Gualco agreed to contact Al Futterman and discuss this idea further.

**Outreach Update, Videos**

E. McHugh gave an update on the Commission’s initiative to re-name one of its properties in honor of the Nipmuc tribe. The Commission has selected the Shattuck Homestead property as the leading candidate for re-naming. E. McHugh continued by sharing a drafted “Stewardship Card” she created highlighting on-going activities of the property as well as the existing constraints (conservation restriction and deed restrictions). Bruce Easom of the Conservation Commission and Becky Pine of the Select Board will approach the Nipmuc Tribe about this idea to solicit interest.

**Approve meeting minutes**

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

VOTED to accept the meeting minutes of May 18, 2022 as amended.

**The motion carried by a roll call vote: (Yes: KK, BH, AE, LM, LT, EM; Abstain: OL)**

**Set next meeting date**

The Committee agreed to meet next on July 20, 2022, which will be the first meeting back in-person.

**Adjourn**

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

 VOTED to adjourn the meeting.

 **The motion carried by a roll call vote: (Yes: OL, KK, BH, AE, LM, LT, EM)**

**Minutes Approved: July 20, 2022**