



## Groton Stewardship Committee Minutes

**Present:** Lisa Murray, Chair; Eileen McHugh, Vice-Chair; Olin Lathrop; Ronald Hersch; Anna Eliot.

**Absent:** Kimberly Kuliesis; Bob Hanninen; Deborah Collum.

**Others Present:** Charlotte Steeves (Conservation Administrator); Paul Funch (Groton Trails Committee).

**Location:** Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

**When:** January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**6:30 PM L. Murray called to order**

### Committee updates

#### Brown Loaf Discussion Summary

L. Murray said that P. Funch was present to give a summary on the Brown Loaf land from a discussion during the previous meeting.

P. Funch said that he was not aware he would be giving a summary.

C. Steeves said she put the summary together to present to the Committee for the members who were not present during the last meeting.

E. McHugh said she reviewed the summary and made some changes. The Town already owns the Brown Loaf land and was going to receive money for a Conservation Restriction. She said the Conservation Commission will ultimately need to make a decision based on a recommendation from the Stewardship Committee. She suggested creating an action plan for the Brown Loaf land which would then be presented to the Conservation Commission.

R. Hersch said it is important to recognize that there is already a designated area set aside for motorized vehicle use.

E. McHugh said the area is a transmission line and motorized vehicles are using the area illegally.

P. Funch said residents would like mountain biking and horseback riding to be allowed in the area. He said any prohibiting of motorized vehicles would have to be enforced by the power company.

O. Lathrop said the area is owned by the Town and the power company has an easement. He said it is up to the Town to prohibit certain uses of the land.

Groton Stewardship Committee  
Meeting Minutes- January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

P. Funch said the discussion should be focused on transferring all or some of the land to the Conservation Commission so that uses can be regulated and keeping sensitive areas protected.

E. McHugh said that if the land is given to the Conservation Commission, it would be their responsibility to set the rules and regulations on the allowed and prohibited uses, similar to a Conservation Restriction. She said there needs to be a set of rules established.

P. Funch said a site walk to survey the wetland borders and existing trails needs to be done before any restrictions of uses can be drafted.

A. Elliott asked who should be invited to the site walk.

O. Lathrop suggested that the Conservation Commission should be invited.

E. McHugh said the site walk should be exclusive to the Stewardship Committee, and once the regulations are drafted, the discussion would be opened up to a larger audience. She said once Conservation is involved, Stewardship will be done with their job of drafting the regulations for the land.

O. Lathrop suggested the site walk occur in early April once the snow has melted.

E. McHugh suggested April 13th at 9:30 AM for a site walk at the Brown Loaf land.

O. Lathrop suggested everyone meet at the end of Brown Loaf Road, off of Gay Road, to start the site walk, and showed a map of an area where cars can park.

Discussion: Long-term management for Knopps Pond and Lost Lake

R. Hersch said that the Groton Lakes Association commissioned a study to monitor the impact of watershed activities on the water quality at the two Great Ponds. He said he wanted to give an overview of the next steps after reviewing the report on the water quality and recommendations for long-term management. He said the intention is to apply for a grant to work on several of the recommended projects outlined in the report. He said he spoke with the DPW about grants to identify and mitigate sources of runoff within the watershed. He asked the Stewardship Committee for a letter of support to be used when applying for grants.

A. Eliot suggested that R. Hersch draft the letter for the Stewardship Committee to sign.

R. Hersch said he is focusing on the priorities outlined in the report that the State is interested in funding.

Committee Updates:

E. McHugh said that the Native Peoples Recognition Group will be meeting to discuss the renaming of the parcel near Baddacook Pond to Nipmuck Meadows.

Groton Stewardship Committee  
Meeting Minutes- January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

O. Lathrop said he can work on getting a sign designed for the new name.

A. Eliot said the Park Commission has been thinking about identifying areas to honor native people. She said the Town owns an area off Hollis Street, and this area could possibly be dedicated to the native people of the area who fought in the King Philip's War.

O. Lathrop said the Trails Committee is considering modifications to the trails within the Casella Preservation and within the former Palmer Land. He said the discussion has been postponed until February. He also said he is in the process of ordering plastic for new signs.

A. Eliot said the Parks Commission is not in the position to organize or fund an invasive species mitigation at the moment. She said they are focusing mainly on Cow Pond. She said the invasive species mitigation would be a collaborative effort across committees.

L. Murray said the Garden Club's annual lecture will be taking place on March 3rd at the Groton Center.. She said there will be a virtual tour of New England Gardens.

Updates on Ongoing Projects:

C. Steeves brought up the idea of using Chapter 97 to swap land in exchange for a small area right off Chicopee Row at the Williams Barn site. She said the Town needs to find a place to build a service shed for the PFAs waterline project along Chicopee Row, and she thought this might be one option to transfer land from the Town to the Conservation Commission.

O. Lathrop said he does not like the concept because the Chapter 97 land swap can take at least 3 years. He said it is a long difficult process involving lots of legislation and bureaucracy.

R. Hersch said the Water Department would have to be the ones to push for the Chapter 97 legislation to pass through all the hurdles in a timely manner in this case.

C. Steeves suggested that the Commission may have good negotiating power if they were to exchange a small piece of Williams Barn in exchange for the Town owned Brown Loaf land.

O. Lathrop said across the street from Williams Barn is the Williams Conservation Area. He said if they needed a piece of Town Land for a swap, this may be an option. He also suggested the cemetery.

A. Eliot said the cemetery is privately owned.

Approve Meeting Minutes

Several changes were made to the meeting minutes from November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, prior to the meeting.

E. McHugh made the motion to approve the minutes from November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, as amended and it was seconded by A. Eliot:

**The motion passed by a roll call vote (Yes: EM, RH, LM); (Abstained: AE, OL).**

Groton Stewardship Committee  
Meeting Minutes- January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Approve Next Meeting Date

L. Murray stated the next meeting date would be February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 at 6:30 PM.

Adjourn

E. McHugh made the motion to adjourn and it was seconded by R. Hersch.  
(Yes: EM, OL, AE, RH, LM)

Minutes Approved: 4-17-2024