



Groton Stewardship Committee Minutes

Present: Lisa Murray, Chair; Eileen McHugh, Vice-Chair; Kimberly Kuliesis; Anna Eliot.

Absent: Olin Lathrop; Bob Hanninen.

Others Present: Charlotte Steeves (Conservation Administrator).

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

When: March 20th, 2024

6:30 PM L. Murray called to order

Committee updates

Vacancies on Committee: E. McHugh, K. Kuliesis, L. Murray, and A. Eliot convened with the intention of discussing the committee's size and membership. It was noted that the number of committee members was either seven or nine, depending on the source, and all agreed to reduce the number to maintain a quorum. E. McHugh decided to consult with the Conservation Commission regarding this issue. They also reviewed the history of the Committee, including the timing of members' joining and the need for approval from the Conservation Commission for size increases. Discussion ensued regarding the current membership, noting recent resignations and the possibility of designating alternate members. E. McHugh said there are 6 current members, and she suggested the Committee vote to reduce the number of positions on the Committee from 9 to 7. She said since the Committee does not have a quorum to vote, she would ask the Conservation Commission to vote to reduce the number of positions on the Stewardship Committee to 7 so that quorum can be met with 4 members. L. Murray said that she would reach out to B. Hanninen to see if he was still interested in being a member. All agreed to continue efforts to recruit new members.

CR Management Strategies: E. McHugh suggested using ArcGIS to mark property boundaries to prevent encroachment, while C. Steeves compiled a list of CRs owned by the Commission and other entities. The Committee discussed the need for more detailed information on past site walks and baseline reports, and strategies for managing properties. They also highlighted the need for maintenance of numerous protected areas, and discussed the newly acquired 'Palmer land'. C. Steeves Charlotte raised concerns about potential development on a parcel of land owned by National Grid, which was found to contain endangered species. L. Murray and A. Eliot discussed the possibility of applying for a Conservation Restriction (CR) on the land, but C. Steeves noted that the first step would be to get permission from National Grid. A. Eliot added that the area might also qualify for a State-required MBTA designation, which could lead to eligibility for MassWorks grants. However, this would need approval from the Planning Board and town meeting. The Committee agreed to explore these options further, but acknowledged that the decision ultimately rests with the landowner.

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Municipal Reforestation Program: L. Murray introduced the concept of municipal reforestation, an initiative in the legislature aiming to increase tree canopy in urban areas to combat excessive heat and poor air quality. E. McHugh clarified that if passed, Groton, as a municipality with a population over 10,000 and a tree canopy of at least 60%, would be required to create a reforestation plan, potentially leading to the town having to plant trees. The Committee discussed the possibility of collaborating with existing organizations such as the Friends of the Tree Warden and the potential impact on Main Street. The final decision on whether Groton should support the bill was left open.

Lost Lake and Knops Pond Letter of Support: There was a discussion about ongoing projects and the Lost Lake/Knops Pond water quality grant, with clarification on a miscommunication regarding a letter of support for the grant. Since there was no quorum, the Committee recommended that the letter of support be signed by the Conservation Commission.

Open Space Plan Discussion: The Committee also planned to revisit a previous discussion on the open space plan and role of conservation restrictions. A contentious issue regarding a piece of land, specifically the 'brown loaf' property, was discussed, with the Committee agreeing to seek more information on the implications of a rejected Conservation Restriction (CR) for the property. Lastly, the Committee discussed the issue of Groton School and Lawrence Academy acquiring and managing town parcels, expressing concerns over changes in land use and the proliferation of invasive species. The Committee discussed the preservation and maintenance of certain land parcels, particularly the views, and the potential involvement of educational institutions that own large tracts of land. They considered creating a management plan for the land, communicating a larger vision to the town, and the role of the Master plan and open space plan in addressing these issues.

Approve Next Meeting Date

L. Murray stated the next meeting date would be April 17th, 2024 at 6:30 PM.

L. Murray also reminded the Committee of the upcoming site walk at Brown Loaf on Saturday, April 13th at 9:30 AM.

Adjourn

E. McHugh made the motion to adjourn and it was seconded by K. Kuliesis .
(Yes: EM, KK, AE, LM)

Minutes Approved: 4/17/2024