

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

14 October 2015

Legion Hall

Committee members present:

Brian Bettencourt

Susan Black

Olin Lathrop

Josh Degen

Other attendees:

Lee Davy

Adam Burnett

Meeting Activity:

- The meeting was called to order at 19:00.
- The first order of business was the membership of the committee.
 - The committee discussed whether all those who signed a volunteer form could be recommended and appointed as members.
 - That docket would thus include Lee Davy, Holly Estes, Adam Burnett, and Jody Valenta
 - Josh Degen informed the committee that he would abstain on membership votes, and that his understanding of the charter was that only 7 members were allowed.
 - The committee's understanding was that we could recommend to the Selectmen expansion beyond 7 members, but also that not all who volunteered would want to be a full member. Consensus was to vote on specific people for now.
 - Olin Lathrop moved to recommend Lee Davy, Holly Estes, and Adam Burnett for membership.
 - Seconded, PASSED by unanimous vote (J. Degen abstaining)
 - Josh Degen moved to recommend to the selectmen that the committee membership be expanded to 9.
 - Seconded, PASSED by unanimous vote
 - Committee chair (Brian Bettencourt) to pass along recommendation to Town Clerk's office.
- The second order of business was the review of minutes from the 14Sep2015 meeting.

- Discussion centered on how to handle review of minutes, including file formats and electronic editing. The committee agreed that all differences of opinion in minutes should be discussed in open meeting and not over email. Pointing out typos and editing problems is acceptable, but substantive changes to content should be reserved for open meeting.
- Minutes were reviewed on projection screen. No changes other than typographical errors.
- Brian Bettencourt moved to approve the minutes.
 - Seconded, PASSED by unanimous vote.
- Discussion then turned to the role of a Secretary for the committee. The committee agreed for now to maintain a “rotating” secretary system, where individual members would be responsible on a meeting-to-meeting basis for keeping notes and organizing minutes. Josh Degen volunteered to handle notes for next meeting, using Dragon speech recognition software.
- The third order of business was discussion of short-term projects for the committee. Each attendee was asked to nominate and lead discussion of one idea.
 - Josh Degen: Choosing a ~1-mile stretch of road in Groton, and treating one side but not the other for eradication of invasive plants. Candidate site: Chicopee Row, from the cemetery to Williams Barn. Invasives include bittersweet, multiflora rose, Asian honeysuckle. The ConsComm has some land in this area, and the Dept of Environmental affairs has grant money available for this type of work. This work to be done under control of the town and ConsComm. The idea is to have a “poster child” type experience, using volunteers primarily, in the Spring.
 - This would likely require an herbicide applicator’s license. Josh Degen will keep his up to date.
 - The committee felt that the Highway Dept. should be heavily involved, so timing can be coordinated with their work schedule. Brian Bettencourt to extend invitation to attend next meeting to Tom Delaney.
 - Susan Black: Put together a brochure on invasives, together with the ConsComm, with text and pictures. Brochure to be given out at group events in town, i.e. greens sale, plant sales, river fest, Groton fest. Critical would be to have brochure in ConsComm’s hand for their site walks.
 - The committee agreed that the brochure should be kept to 6-8 plants maximum, with just enough information and pictures to make useful. A “most wanted” list.
 - Olin Lathrop: Make a very simple brochure on Asian Bittersweet alone.

- Josh Degen mentioned that the Electric Light Dept is very motivated to get rid of bittersweet, and that they may be amenable to including a 1-page brochure in their bill mailing. This typically requires 4-5 months lead time.
- Susan Black mentioned that she already has material on many common invasives, and agreed to share ahead of next meeting.
- Olin Lathrop described the “second half” of his idea; namely, a booth at riverFest with this brochure and plant samples.
- Brian Bettencourt volunteered to do Microsoft Publisher/Powerpoint work on brochures, if provided material.
- Lee Davy recommended source websites, and discussion followed on legal and fair use of photographs. Suggestion was made to use www.invasive.org and other open source material, and stick to non-commercial software for dissemination of materials whenever possible.
- Adam Burnett: Work with the ConsComm on a system like “Land Steward”, where a person(s) could work to maintain one manageable piece of land where invasives aren’t completely out of control (yet). Alternatively, that the committee broadcast information on different land management techniques and their relationship to invasive species problems.
 - Discussion focused on how to operationalize this idea. The committee agreed to focus on knowledge, and helping other town committees and bodies (education and advocacy).
 - Lee Davy agreed to be point person for communication. He has downloaded plenty of research material and has been in touch with the cable studio re/ public outreach.
- Brian Bettencourt: Eradicate common reed (*Phragmites*) from a prominent location in Groton, such as Broadmeadow. Volunteer project similar to Josh Degen’s above.
 - Susan black discussed information she has concerning costs for professional removal of reed. Not inexpensive. Requires foliar spray and manual digging. Will bring cost estimates from ACT for treatment of 4 acres to next meeting.
 - The committee considered manual removal (volunteers) then professional followup.
 - After discussion of the Broadmeadow area and complex parcel ownership, the committee decided to ask ConsComm for guidance on a good parcel of town owned land with reed.

- Josh Degen mentioned the corner of Lost Lake Dr. and Route 40 --- town parcel 233-98.1 --- the committee decided to investigate further.
- The fourth order of business was a fast brainstorming session on additional project ideas and action items.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed to take pictures of bittersweet (with geotags) around Groton and share with the committee.
 - Susan Black agreed to share existing pictures she has.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed to house electronic materials (pictures, text) on his PC.
 - Josh Degen mentioned that factual committee material only could be housed on personal computers, per Open Meeting Laws.
 - Lee Davy agreed to investigate getting space on the town web server.
 - All agreed that Tom Delaney should be invited to next meeting.
- The fifth order of business was to vote on the first project(s) to advance.
 - Brian Bettencourt moved to postpone the vote. The committee agreed unanimously. Further consideration of ideas to be held after materials gathered (at next meeting).
 - Olin Lathrop agreed to contact GELD about flyer inserts, and to send pictures to Brian Bettencourt.
 - Susan Black agreed to send bittersweet materials to Brian Bettencourt.
- The sixth order of business was Any Other Business.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed to email town manager, reporting that the committee voted to recommend Adam Burnett, Lee Davy, and Holly Estes, AND that the committee recommended that the selectmen vote to expand the committee to 9 members.
- Olin Lathrop moved to adjourn
 - Seconded, PASSED by unanimous vote.
 - Committee meeting adjourned at 20:15