

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

13 January 2016

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Adam Burnett

Olin Lathrop

Meeting Activity:

- The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

- The first order of business was the review of minutes from the 9 December 2015 meeting.
 - Adam Burnett mentioned that when taking minutes, we don't need to mention the people who make motions – although there is no harm in doing so.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed it's not necessary, but it's always important to keep track of who votes which way when a motion is not passed unanimously.
 - The draft minutes were reviewed on the projection screen. No changes were suggested.
 - Olin Lathrop moved to approve the minutes; Adam Burnett seconded.
 - Motion to approve the minutes passed by unanimous vote.

- The second order of business was a membership update.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that an email chain went around, and one member left some opinions there.
 - Olin Lathrop had thought the discussion was supposed be about the move to the town email server; wanted to make sure town server would push to our local email thread. He felt this somehow morphed into the discussion that made Josh Degen uncomfortable.
 - Adam Burnett mentioned that the chain was then forwarded to the town clerk and he let us know we were espousing opinions outside of an open meeting.
 - Brian Bettencourt described how then, Lee Davy resigned, followed by Josh Degen's resignation.
 - Olin Lathrop reminded the committee that our discussion of administrative matters via email is perfectly fine; we just have to not voice opinions.
 - Olin Lathrop: Last, Susan Black resigned. Reasons are unclear; she had earlier made mention of being too busy with Conservation Commission (ConsComm) too.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that Mary Metzger recently left ConsComm, creating a vacancy. He asked - could Adam Burnett join that one as well?
 - Adam Burnett voiced support.

- Brian Bettencourt supports Adam's membership on ConsComm, and asked how to help make this a reality.
- Adam Burnett and Olin Lathrop described how ConsComm involves (also) a state position, not just town, with delegation of legal authority and certain state mandated responsibilities, e.g. wetland protection act.
- Adam Burnett took it as an Action Item to explore how to potentially become part of ConsComm.

- Brian Bettencourt asked how to boost membership in Invasive Species Committee.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned a potential candidate Mark Gerath who had previously reached out --- he's on the Groton Conservation Trust.
- Olin Lathrop took it as an Action Item to reach out to Mark Gerath and see if interested.
- The Committee agreed that connections with both ConsComm and the Trust would be excellent connections to have.
- Adam Burnett felt the only reason the Invasive Species Committee asked the Town to increase our number was many interested parties at the time.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that it's always good to have an odd number (to ensure quorum is met for voting). Current is 4, 5 would be good.

- The third order of business was a review of Open Meeting Law requirements.
 - The committee felt much of this discussion was already handled in the previous item.
 - Olin Lathrop reviewed: Administrative matters, scheduling, and similar factual items are all fine to discuss via email. He noted that when sending out the bittersweet brochure, he just said "please look it over", not "I put this in there because of X Y Z", or "I think this part is awesome". In short, facts can be presented, not opinions or value judgement.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that all should be careful when Replying to All in email chains, if the intent was only a private correspondence between individuals.
 - Olin Lathrop also mentioned vigilance is necessary to avoid Serial Communication (circles of email through one individual). Keep individual correspondence as such if containing any deliberation.

 - An off topic Action Item arose: Brian Bettencourt was to reserve Legion Hall for 2nd Wednesdays post January, via calling or emailing the Town Clerk.
 - Brian Bettencourt accepted and mentioned that backup will be a town hall meeting room.

- The fourth order of business was discussion of the draft brochure on Bittersweet.

- Olin Lathrop projected the source code for his brochure, and made changes to the document live based on comments and discussion with the rest of the committee.
- Brian Bettencourt wondered whether the brochure should steer clear (as in the current draft) from mentioning chemical herbicides. Roundup is effective on freshly cut bittersweet; but the committee doesn't want to encourage or discourage chemical use --- just stick to information.
- Brian Bettencourt felt that the brochure needed a picture of the berries; the committee agreed.
- As an action item, the whole committee was to look for sprays of bittersweet berries, and take pictures.
- Brian Bettencourt didn't like the mention of "fuzziness", feeling that that description was too much like poison ivy.
- The committee discussed multiple wording ideas, and settled on "leafy net engulfing" for one particularly vexing sentence.
- The committee debated mentioning the orange roots of the plant, and/or cautioning people not to buy or make wreaths from the fall foliage, but felt it was simple and best as is.

- Olin Lathrop suggested that the tone is for average reader; not too fancy wording, no scientific terms.
- Olin Lathrop also noted that it deliberately mentions specific places in Groton.
- The committee then debated whether or not it was a good idea to mention specific locations. Consensus was that pointing out specific areas with bittersweet infestation was helpful since readers could then go observe the plant with their own eyes; however, official materials should only mention Town or other public lands (avoid pointing out private properties).

- Brian Bettencourt mentioned a need to include a paragraph (with picture) describing the fruit (berries) of the bittersweet plant, since the berries are an easy way to identify the plant in fall and winter.

- Brian Bettencourt also felt that the brochure should stay simple, and avoid mentioning the potential hybridization of Oriental and American bittersweet. Adam Burnett agreed, and mentioned that the existence of American bittersweet in the area around Groton is uncertain anyway.
- As an action item, Adam Burnett agreed to find out if American Bittersweet is found around Groton.
- Olin Lathrop reminded the committee that this local focus for the brochure is by design.

- The committee reviewed the brochure further, and made several small edits to text.

- Olin Lathrop described his desire to have the committee send this brochure around to other groups in Groton and beyond; this explains the mention of Copyright - Town of Groton MA Invasive Species Comm. at bottom.
- Adam Burnett noted that our official name was the Invasives Control Committee --- this led to further discussion under Any Other Business, below.

- Olin Lathrop mentioned that all pictures in the document- have higher resolution versions; he will send full size for the actual document layout. Olin Lathrop accepted as an action item to send full size pics (via a link), along with the brochure text to Brian Bettencourt for final layout and editing in Publisher or similar software.
- Olin Lathrop moved that the reviewed draft brochure was ready for layout and formatting, with further review and editing of final formatted draft at upcoming meeting. Adam Burnett seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- As an action item, Olin Lathrop will post the final draft to a website for review.

- The fifth order of business was an update on progress regarding a Groton Electric Light (GEL) mailer insert.
 - Olin Lathrop reported that he had spoken with Kevin Kelly. Mr. Kelly described the standard program for mailer inserts, including price list, and mentioned that the Committee should talk to Tammi (the GEL Administrative Assistant). Olin Lathrop felt that Mr. Kelly was describing the situation where an organization inserts “their” mailer, where there is no relationship with GEL.
 - Olin Lathrop then discussed how he’d gotten ahold of Tammi, and advised her that the Committee was really were asking that GEL could make a bittersweet brochure as THEIR mailer, with the committee’s assistance. Tammi responded that this seemed unlikely, but she would ask Kevin Kelly for his thoughts.

- The sixth order of business was to discuss the location of Phragmites (reed) around town.
 - Brian Bettencourt reminded the Committee that an action item from the previous meeting was to discover Phragmites locations and report them back to the group. He reported that he’d found Phragmites in several wetland locations around Eastern Groton.
 - The rest of the Committee had no current updates.
 - As an action item, Adam Burnett agreed to note locations of Phragmites in his travels around Groton.

- The seventh order of business was to discuss the Conservation Summit and Any Other Business (AOB).
 - The committee discussed the Conservation Summit: February 3rd 2016, at Lawrence Academy. Brian Bettencourt, Adam Burnett, and Olin Lathrop all stated their desire to attend.
 - Olin Lathrop reiterated his plan to present at the Summit for the Committee.

- AOB:
- Adam Burnett mentioned changing the name of the committee, away from the original “Invasives Control Committee”.
 - Adam Burnett moved that the name should be ONLY “Invasive Species Committee”. Olin Lathrop seconded.
- The motion passed unanimously.
- Brian Bettencourt accepted as an action item to email the Town Manager that the committee voted to recommend that our name be “Invasives Species Committee”, and that the Selectmen take up in their agenda an official change to the name.
- Adam Burnett asked whether the committee should be concerned about vacancies (the current limit is 7 members; actual membership is 4).
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that quorum rules are only governed by the actual number of members, and expressed confidence in the committee’s ability to attract more members.
- Olin Lathrop brought up the Keystone Program. This program is looking for new people to apply for this year. He suggested Brian Bettencourt could attend – it’s a 2.5 day intensive training out at Harvard Forest. As an action item, Olin Lathrop agreed to forward the details to Brian Bettencourt.
- Adam Burnett asked that if any committee member does attend the course, they please ask questions pertaining to how/when invasives are changing forestry practices.
- Adam Burnett next asked what followup/next steps were regarding Herbicide Licensing for the committee.
- Olin Lathrop described his research on this topic. There are 4 types of applicator licenses. One must start with the Core (Basic) license. The process is first, get the study materials; then, take the exam, and get the license. The total cost with material, test, license = \$242. Renewal is \$100 annually. There is an additional requirement for course hours every 3 years to avoid taking the test again.
- Olin Lathrop described how he had presented all this to the Town Manager, and asked whether the town could pay for this licensing plus some basic applicator gear (sprayer, backpack) for 2 committee members. The Manager expressed interest in the idea and agreed to put it on the Selectmen’s Agenda in late Jan/early Feb. The town manager agreed to let the committee know when this agenda item is scheduled.
- The committee agreed to send at least one member to that selectmens meeting once the agenda is set and disseminated.
- The final order of business was to wrap up and adjourn.
 - Olin Lathrop moved to adjourn; Adam Burnett seconded.

- The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.
- The meeting wound up at 8:30 PM.