

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

12 Dec 2016

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Adam Burnett

Greta Marks-Strouble

Agenda:

- 1) Review of Minutes
- 2) Action Item Review
- 3) Mulberry Tree Removal
- 4) The Next Brochure
- 5) AOB

The first order of business was Review of Minutes.

- The minutes of the 10 October 2016 meeting were reviewed live on screen.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble seconded.
- The motion passed unanimously.

The second order of business was Action Item Review.

- Brian Bettencourt described contacting David Black:
 - He is interested in giving a public seminar at a committee meeting; best months would be April or May.
 - Suggested topic would be loosestrife, the beetle (biocontrol) project.
- Olin Lathrop agreed this sounded good, and felt that Bob Pine could also be involved.
- Brian Bettencourt indicated he would coordinate having David Black come up with a talk title/idea, and would circulate to the committee for suggestions/approval.
- Adam Burnett mentioned that the beetles that eat the loosestrife are effective.
- Olin Lathrop agreed, and described Beaver Brook in Littleton --- loosestrife is now virtually gone. Unfortunately, Phragmites has taken over.
- Brian Bettencourt described asking Roy Van Driesche for ideas for other speakers.
 - Roy indicated he would get back to Brian with some names.
 - Olin Lathrop said he was recently at a conference about town forests, mentioned that someone from UMass spoke at our committee, and they knew Roy's name.
- Brian Bettencourt led an informal discussion on gypsy moths and UMass entomologist Joe Elkinton, including the natural population cycles in Massachusetts.

- Greta Marks-Strouble asked whether there was anything to do about local gypsy moth control.
 - Brian Bettencourt described the “Crisco and tinfoil” method.
- Brian Bettencourt described writing to the Talk About Groton group to boost membership.
- Brian Bettencourt indicated he still had not made a Google Group – this is a standing Action Item.
- Brian Bettencourt said he’d taken care of Greta Marks-Strouble’s recommendation to the Town Manager.
- Olin Lathrop said he’d left a message for Michelle Ruby.
- Olin Lathrop described receiving the details on how to sign up for pesticide applicator licenses; he’d emailed the link to Adam Burnett and himself.
 - Adam Burnett said he would review the materials.
- Greta Marks-Strouble said she’d taken pictures of the white mulberry tree at Prescott and disseminated to them to the committee.
 - Olin Lathrop said he too had tried to take pictures and couldn’t tell which was which (Red vs. Black vs. White Mulberry).
 - Adam Burnett indicated that it’s very hard to tell the difference in winter without leaves.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble agreed, and said she’d taken pictures earlier in the year.
 - She took a leaf home, and compared with a black mulberry. The Prescott tree leaf was leathery, whereas the black mulberry leaf was much more sandpapery. Also, the White mulberry leaf was more lobed.

The third order of business was the removal of the white mulberry tree at Prescott.

- Olin Lathrop asked: is this tree invasive - is it spreading?
- Greta Marks-Strouble said white mulberry is a fast growing tree; this particular one has not necessarily been there long yet. It’s about 20-30 feet tall.
- Adam Burnett said that white mulberry creates an enormous amount of fruit that is carried off by wildlife.
 - It would be great to swap this tree out with a native red mulberry.
- Brian Bettencourt asked whether red mulberry seeds/trees are carried by nurseries?
 - Adam Burnett believed so.
- Brian Bettencourt felt that the Committee should plant a tree, not a seed.
 - There was general agreement amongst the attendees.
- Olin Lathrop said that first we need to determine if the tree is on public land.
 - He described walking the area.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble said there is an old bench on the edge of the field: The tree is right behind the old bench.
- Olin Lathrop projected the parcel map live on screen:
 - The committee agreed the area is safely on public land.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble asked whether it mattered which side of the fence it’s on?

- Olin Lathrop said no, not according to map.
- Brian Bettencourt said the fence is likely from the old Prescott School days --- to keep kids out of the woods!
- Greta Marks-Strouble indicated that the tree is on the inside of the fence anyway.
- Greta Marks-Strouble said she had asked around re/ availability of native Red mulberry trees – she has not found many yet.
- Olin Lathrop asked whether native red mulberry grow this far north?
 - Greta Marks-Strouble indicated yes, Groton is on the northern edge of the range.
- Brian Bettencourt: proposed that Greta Marks-Strouble find a source online for a red mulberry from nursery stock, in the \$20-50 range.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble took an Action Item to find a source online.
 - Brian Bettencourt indicated that typically, nurseries ship in spring.
- Brian Bettencourt proposed that we recommend to the town that this invasive tree on public land be removed.
 - Olin Lathrop felt there was uncertainty as to who owns/operates the Prescott parcel.
- Olin Lathrop moved that the Chair contact the Town Manager, saying the Committee recommends the tree's removal, and asking for permission to remove, with brush to be dispersed.
 - Adam Burnett seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to contact the Town Manager as moved.
- Olin Lathrop felt that the Committee needed to find out what's happening to Prescott:
 - The area might be turned into a parking lot.
 - The committee should talk to Friends of the Trees- see what they recommend.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to get in touch with the Friends of the Trees and the Garden Club to identify a suitable location for the new tree.
 - Adam Burnett indicated a red mulberry is shade intolerant, that's about it.

The fourth order of business was the Next Brochure.

- Brian Bettencourt proposed that the committee name the species for the next brochure.
 - Olin Lathrop proposed Japanese knotweed.
 - Adam Burnett liked Phragmites, but felt that not much can be done to control it.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed.
- Brian Bettencourt indicated that the committee would need pictures:
 - He found a large stand of knotweed at the end of Hayden Rd., but didn't have pictures.
 - Adam Burnett mentioned that there are diagnostic features in winter - but identification is much easier in summer.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to send Japanese knotweed pictures to Brian Bettencourt.
- Greta Marks-Strouble indicated her support for Japanese barberry:

- The species attracts ticks and may help spread Lyme disease.
 - There is some planted at Moison Ace Hardware.
 - Adam Burnett described the diagnostic thorns and red berries.
- The committee reviewed pictures of Japanese knotweed on screen.
- Brian Bettencourt asked whether it was acceptable to find other pictures online, provided they were sourced correctly?
 - Olin Lathrop said ideally the pictures would say that reproduction is allowed; giving clear title to the pictures.
 - Adam Burnett said to go to any federal or state government website; those pictures are public domain.
- Olin Lathrop Moved that the next brochure cover Japanese knotweed.
 - Adam Burnett seconded.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to draft the brochure.
 - Adam Burnett suggested including a picture of Japanese knotweed in winter, as it is diagnostic.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item – to cut and take pictures of the hollow stem – a very helpful picture too.
 - Adam Burnett stressed - make sure to research when best to cut and treat.
- Greta Marks-Strouble took an Action Item to email the committee with simple bullet points re/ Japanese barberry, as a good candidate for the “next, next” brochure.
- Adam Burnett described the “horrific” behavior of Japanese knotweed – it resprouts easily from cuttings in mulch and similar substrates.
 - Adam Burnett mentioned a large stand of knotweed near the pumping station (Nod Rd.).
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned the stand at the end of Hayden Road.

The fifth order of business was Any Other Business.

- Olin Lathrop described the 3rd Annual Groton Conservation Summit: February 16th, rain date Feb. 23rd.
 - The Committee should have representation.
 - Rotating organizers: First was Groton Conservation Trust, then Conservation Commission, then Trails Committee (this year).
 - Olin Lathrop and Paul Funch organizing.
 - Consensus was that last year’s event was suboptimal
- Brian Bettencourt agreed; he felt it went way too long, too un-organized.
- Olin Lathrop will send out the official description.
 - Plans this year are: People will not stand up and introduce their organization. Instead, each group will be asked ahead of time to send in some information.
 - There will be an hour of networking time, followed by a David Black 30min presentation

- The Theme is how to work together; things that the groups can do only when working together.
 - So the formal request to each group is: Yes/No attend, a 1 paragraph writeup, contact info, “mug shot” photos, and (optional) discussion topics.
 - Olin Lathrop emailed this info to the committee.
- Brian Bettencourt felt we should advertise the event early and often.
- Adam Burnett suggested the committee work on a draft of their paragraph this month (online), and review at the January meeting.
 - Adam Burnett took an Action Item to begin drafting a paragraph describing the Committee and circulate it informally.
- Olin Lathrop described recent items on the topic of Woolly Adelgid.
 - Olin Lathrop attended a recent Fall Conservation Commission Conference.
 - A State DCR Forest Health Manager presented - He’s looking for a place as a test case for the beetle that USDA has developed for controlling adelgid.
 - Olin Lathrop talked with him, and swapped contact info.
 - DCR needs a decent stand of hemlocks on public land with access.
 - Olin Lathrop suggested Sorhaug Woods - what was a nasty adelgid infestation early this year has largely gone away by now! Was it because of drought? He emailed the gentleman from DCR, who is not sure.
 - Winter is usually what kills off adelgid, not summer.
 - A picture of hemlocks at Sorhaug was displayed live.
 - At the tips of branches, fresh healthy new growth was observable.
 - On the side of Chestnut Hill, exact spot where adelgid was seen last year-- - Olin Lathrop can’t find any adelgid, and sees new growth. An interesting development.
 - Now maybe Groton does not have a “good stand”. SOME was observed in Sorhaug woods, but overall it was hard to find.
 - Adam Burnett felt there was a good chance that adelgid will be back in the spring; Sorhaug might still be a good site for the DCR project.
 - Olin Lathrop they need a healthy population of adelgid to test the beetle biocontrol.
 - Brian Bettencourt felt that given the slow speed of bureaucracy, by the time the state actually got beetles here, the adelgid would probably be back.
 - Olin Lathrop indicated he’s waiting to hear back from DCR.
 - Olin Lathrop said he would love to get the Committee involved in more local research like that.
 - Brian Bettencourt emailed Roy Van Driesche re/ questions on adelgid life cycle, and environmental conditions.
- Adam Burnett brought up the topic of the Farmers and Mechanics site.
 - The Conservation Commission made a decision to cut timber, after at least 160 years since last disturbance.

- Invasives are being monitored; no bittersweet was found prior to cut. Now, in partially cleared openings, first growth of bittersweet (birds brought in seeds).
 - Now we have 19 acres of conservation land where bittersweet is going to be an issue.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that there is also some talk to do a harvest in Sorhaug Woods.
- Adam Burnett described how in training for his degree in forestry, he never learned about invasive species in terms of forest planning.
 - Foresters don't know about opening things up for invasives.
 - Now that stand is gonna be decades of work.
 - Really frustrating that they don't listen.
- Olin Lathrop indicated that the town could use Adam's help --- Conservation Commission wants to harvest in Sorhaug.
- Brian Bettencourt asked - Why?
- Olin Lathrop said he wasn't entirely sure; he would contact the others on the Conservation Commission and find out.

Olin Lathrop moved to adjourn.

Adam Burnett seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.