

# Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

5 Mar 2018

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Greta Marks-Strouble

Adam Burnett

Agenda:

- 1) Review of Minutes from the 15Jan2018 meeting
- 2) Quick report on presentation to Selectmen
- 3) Report on status of Chestnut plantation proposal to Conservation Commission
- 4) Discussion on Letter of support to Conservation Commission
- 5) Report from Groton Conservation Summit
- 6) Updates to brochures and status of newest brochure(s)
- 7) Action Items updates
- 8) Any Other Business

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Order of business was Review of minutes from 15Jan2018.

- The minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept them as written.
  - Greta Marks-Strouble seconded.
  - The motion passed unanimously.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> order of business was a report on the presentation to Selectmen.

- Greta Marks-Strouble thought it went very well; everyone seemed very engaged and interested.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that Josh Degen and Jack Petropolous weren't there.
- Olin Lathrop said that things went well; the Selectmen seemed to understand that Committee is volunteers who are doing something no one else would do.
- Olin Lathrop said that Becky Pine asked the most questions.
  - Greta Marks-Strouble said that all the Selectmen asked at least one question.
- Brian Bettencourt asked – were there any recommendations from the selectmen or others?
  - Olin Lathrop said there were no real recommendations but ... the selectmen asked about the Applicator's License: Can the Committee use it on other peoples' property?
    - Olin Lathrop said he turned the question back to them; can they research? The Selectmen said sure.

- The Selectmen will ask Mark Haddad about the Committee using the Applicator's license on other (private) property.
- Greta Marks-Strouble said that Pine asked about mulberry, Manugian asked about chestnuts.
- Olin Lathrop felt that in general, the Committee's slides and PDFs were well received.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> order of business was a report on the Chestnut proposal.

- Olin Lathrop relayed that at the last meeting, the proposal was edited. It has subsequently been submitted.
  - The Conservation Commission felt the draft was too restrictive – that was the discussion at a Conservation Commission meeting.
- Adam Burnett said - it's a good start though!
- Olin Lathrop said - at the next Conservation Commission meeting, he took the bullet points they had originally put for Farmers and Mechanics, then added the bullets the Committee wanted, along with text saying the Chestnut goals should be "interpreted in the context of the original larger goals below..."
  - This draft will be discussed at the next Conservation Commission meeting.
- Adam Burnett said he felt there are some mutually exclusive goals. For example, one can't manage for chestnuts and timber at the same time. The idea would be to pick and choose; some acres for this goal, some for another goal. Goals could include recreation, wildlife, etc.
  - Olin Lathrop agreed and felt that in the end, that's what is going to happen. The timber harvest was ~5 years ago. So, nothing is going to happen for another 10 years anyway (e.g., another harvest). By that time, the Committee will have been able to see how the Chestnuts are growing.
- Greta Marks-Strouble said she felt that managing for chestnuts seems like a common sense goal.
- Olin Lathrop indicated that part of what is wanted is to find other people that might be able to help cross-breed chestnuts. He contacted the organization in Virginia that Greta Marks-Strouble had found.
  - Greta Marks-Strouble clarified – the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation.
  - Olin Lathrop said he'd heard back from them – he got a stock reply saying basically "we don't send out seeds any more". So he tried again, saying "please answer my actual questions".
    - He got another email saying "I can't give out names of other folks".
  - Olin Lathrop said he followed up again, and sent another email saying "Can you forward my contact info to anyone you know up in the area that has American chestnuts"...
- Olin Lathrop said he'd also heard talk of a growth somewhere out in the Berkshires of native chestnut that's doing well.
  - The ACCF has someone listed out in that area (Richmond, MA) – may be one and the same.
- Greta Marks-Strouble said perhaps the ACCF's reticence in sharing information is because they're worried about someone taking pollen and hybridizing.
  - Brian Bettencourt said – there's nothing wrong with that per se, but harming the trees is obviously wrong.
- Adam Burnett described how the blight fungus also grows on oak, so it's not likely that a stand of chestnuts anywhere hasn't been exposed.

- Adam Burnett mentioned, as an aside, that he'd brought in a sample of hybrid American/Chinese chestnut sticks/leaves.
  - The Committee examined the specimen.
  - Brian Bettencourt said the leaves look more broad, not as long and lanceolate as American Chestnut.
    - Greta Marks-Strouble agreed.
- Adam Burnett passed around samples of the burs and nuts.
  - The Committee had a discussion on morphology of burs, nuts, and leaves.
- Adam Burnett mentioned that similar burs were visible at the base of the exemplar tree in Farmers/Mechanics site.

The 4<sup>th</sup> order of business was the letter of support to the Conservation Commission.

- Olin Lathrop described the situation: The Conservation Commission has put in for a \$25000 Community Preservation Commission grant. That's the Conservation Fund, that's used for land purchase. Currently that fund sits at ~\$750000.
  - There are 3 or 4 possible parcels that the Conservation Commission would like to move on; this may exhaust their current funding.
- Olin Lathrop said: The Conservation Commission is asking for letter of support from the Committee to the CPC. The letter would say that \$25K is a worthy application of CPC money, to get land as it comes available.
- Brian Bettencourt volunteered to write a letter, representing the Committee.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: When is the letter due?
  - Olin Lathrop replied that the CPC may have already met – but the letter would still be useful.
- Adam Burnett moved that the Committee recommend support for the Conservation Commission grant request, and that the chair be authorized to write a letter detailing that support.
  - Olin Lathrop seconded.
  - The motion passed unanimously.
- The Committee discussed points for the letter live:
  - A very short letter – 1 paragraph.
  - The Committee supports the request.
  - The Committee looks forward to working together with the Conservation Commission to help manage these public properties for the removal of invasives.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to draft the letter to the CPC and circulate it to committee, quickly.

The 5<sup>th</sup> order of business was a report from the Groton Conservation Summit.

- Brian Bettencourt said he enjoyed the Summit – he learned about iNaturalist, and had used the app several times already.
  - Olin Lathrop agreed.
- Adam Burnett asked: Could the Committee use the app to log invasives?
  - Brian Bettencourt said: Yes, the Committee could make an official "Project" specifically for invasives.

- Adam Burnett said it would be interesting to log areas where the Invasives are NOT found.
- The Committee next had a side discussion regarding invasive Kiwi fruit plants.
- Brian Bettencourt led a discussion regarding the format of the Summit - did people like it or not?
  - Olin Lathrop noted that the Conservation Commission will run the Summit next year.
- Brian Bettencourt said he felt that getting a good speaker and topic is the most important thing.
- Adam Burnett mentioned that it'd be great to get all the involved committees to have opportunity to contribute something.

The 6<sup>th</sup> order of business was a brochures update.

- Adam Burnett said he had nothing to offer right now.
- Olin Lathrop: Gave sets of all 4 to Rick Muelhke
- Greta Marks-Strouble provided the following updates/corrections to existing brochures:
  - Japanese Barberry – title – Barberry should be capitalized
  - Japanese Barberry – the part about “no known herbivores” needs qualification.
    - Brian Bettencourt edited the section as follows: “Wildlife will eat the berries but very rarely browse the plant itself”
  - The Committee had a discussion about the terms “Oriental” vs. “Asian” bittersweet.
  - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to change “Oriental” to “Asian” throughout the document, BUT in first full sentence say “Asian (or Oriental) bittersweet”, and take care of the other (above) edits to the other brochures.

The 7<sup>th</sup> order of business was Action Items from last time.

- Richard Hewitt said he did go to town hall and swear in.
- Olin Lathrop did give brochures to Rick Muelhke.
- Greta Marks-Strouble reported that she was almost done on the Multiflora Rose material; lots of text, photos. She also obtained some pictures on her own.
  - Greta Marks-Strouble took an Action Item to finish up the multiflora rose material.
  - Adam Burnett said he will keep working on phragmites.
- Brian Bettencourt said he did the selectmen presentation, all with help from Olin Lathrop et al.

The 8<sup>th</sup> order of business was Any Other Business.

- Brian Bettencourt asked: The Emerald Ash Borer talk – with thanks to Olin Lathrop for arranging – how did this come about?
  - Olin Lathrop said: The gentleman (speaker) from the Mass Dept of Agricultural Resources sent an email to the Conservation Commission.
    - He'd recently found EAB in Shirley and Pepperell, and wanted to talk to the town.
    - Olin Lathrop said - this is great for the Invasive Species Comm.
    - The speaker was at a recent conference, and chatted with Olin Lathrop.
- The talk is tentatively scheduled for Wed April 11<sup>th</sup>.
  - Greta Marks-Strouble said – the Committee should check there are no holidays.
  - Brian Bettencourt looked online and reported that the date looks good.
- Brian Bettencourt asked - when will the date be finalized?

- Olin Lathrop said – as soon as the Committee says go.
    - The room is already reserved.
  - Olin Lathrop said he would ask the speaker for a biosketch and abstract.
- Brian Bettencourt said he would post the talk announcement to Talk About Groton, to the Groton Inv Species announcement list, and the local newspapers.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to coordinate with the speaker, get biosketch and abstract, put announcement together, and ask the town to put it on the Committee website.
  - Brian Bettencourt said publicity should be done a month out, then again a week out.
  - Brian Bettencourt mentioned the previous speaker Roy Van Driesche was an EAB expert ... he should come if he can.
- Brian Bettencourt said: The other standing item was work with Highway Dept on knotweed.
  - Olin Lathrop said he felt it was still early on that but, he'd spoken with Chris Polatin – he has a company that worked on Invasive eradication. They spoke on Saturday at the Conservation Commission conference; he had great info to share.
    - They compared notes on knotweed; he does stem injection.
    - Brian Bettencourt mentioned that he'd had success with cut and paint.
    - Olin Lathrop mentioned doing some plot type work on the Nod Rd. extension-
      - This led to a Committee discussion on control methods.
  - Brian Bettencourt asked: When should the Committee approach the Highway Dept.?
    - Olin Lathrop said that the Dept. doesn't plan too far ahead in time.
    - Olin Lathrop also mentioned that if the Committee was doing stem application, the consensus is supposedly to get it in spring. Foliar application comes later when the plants are flowering.
    - Adam Burnett said – the Committee can do research, that's in the mission and goals.
  - Olin Lathrop said – the Committee just needs to do the research on the ownership of the land on Nod Rd.
    - Adam Burnett said – it is mostly the old dump site he believes.
    - Olin Lathrop said – some of the site is likely in J Harry Rich state forest; caution would be needed there.
    - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to research the Nod Rd Knotweed stand – the start/end of the Town owned portion.
- Greta Marks-Strouble said she wanted to mention – now is a great time to mow meadow properties like Eliades. It's a good time for wildlife, and also to cut back woody invasives from last year.
  - Adam Burnett agreed, saying if the goal is to create a meadow of forbs, perennials, mow now to kill back woody plants like multiflora rose, autumn olive etc.
  - Olin Lathrop said he thought the budget situation at the Conservation Commission might not allow the work to be done right now ... most cutting is done in the Fall.
    - Brian Bettencourt asked - couldn't the Committee / Commission convince someone to do it gratis for now?
  - Olin Lathrop said he would talk to Nik about the budget situation for mowing activities.

Adam Burnett moved to adjourn.

Greta Marks-Strouble seconded.

The motion passed unanimously –

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.