

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

15Oct2018

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Greta Marks-Strouble

Richard Hewitt

Adam Burnett

Also attending: Andy George

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Housekeeping items: Swear-ins, membership, communication
- 3) Petapawag ash trees: Status of trees and grant proposal
- 4) Eliades Phragmites and Autumn olive treatment: timing and progress
- 5) Shattuck Homestead black swallowwort control: grant proposal
- 6) Red mulberry seedlings update
- 7) Action Items update
- 8) Any Other Business

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

The first order of business was Review of Minutes from the last meeting.

- The draft minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept the minutes as presented.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble seconded.
 - The Motion passed anonymously.

The second order of business was housekeeping items: swear-ins, communication.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that he still hadn't done his swear-in at Town Hall.
- The Committee discussed this matter – Brian Bettencourt said he'd get to it, post haste!
- The Committee discussed Membership and communication that Brian Bettencourt had received/conducted online.
 - Toby Wolf – the Committee discussed his qualifications and interest in joining.
 - Patrick Parker-Roach – had contacted Brian Bettencourt a couple of times. Will be back in touch.
- The Committee welcomed a new attendee: Andy George – from CT – he was president of a land trust, Conservation Commission for several years, open space planning, similar positions.
 - He worked on both Conservation Commission/Wetlands.

- Has done a lot of work on invasive species control on land trust properties.
- He recently moved to new house on land next to Meadow Brook conservation commission – noticing a lot of invasive species.
- He walked the property with Nik Gualco – would like to be a steward.
- He's familiar with monitoring.
- He found the Committee materials online – thought it sounded like a good agenda.
- He'd also reached out to Groton Conservation Trust ... has been working with them.

The third order of business was Petapawag place ash trees.

- Olin Lathrop led the Committee in a review of the area on map (on screen); the Committee commenced with a brief review of the presence of Emerald Ash Borer in neighboring towns.
 - The goal would be to treat the ~12 ash trees at the boat launch.
- Olin Lathrop said he'd explored the urban forestry grant further.
 - He filed the pre-application with DCR.
 - Brian Bettencourt mentioned: The Committee should have seen that---
 - He already heard back – DCR probably won't pay for any labor, and definitely won't pay for any chemicals; equipment costs are below their threshold.
- Olin Lathrop said as a result, the Committee should still go to the Selectmen; \$3000 cost is way less than taking down 12 trees in a public space.
 - Andy George asked: Couldn't you put out RFP to tree companies?
 - Olin Lathrop replied – we'd like to do this with volunteer labor. We calculated costs of doing the chemical application ourselves.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Would the timing of chemical application be leaf-out?
 - Adam Burnett said yes, roughly early May.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What's next?
 - Olin Lathrop said he was waiting on correspondence from DCR; the grant deadline is Nov. 1st; that doesn't look good.
 - Brian Bettencourt said after that, the Committee can talk to Mark Haddad.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: An alternate source would be the Conservation Fund, but he would prefer direct from Selectmen.
 - Andy George asked – is this from CPA money?
 - Olin Lathrop replied - No, the Conservation Fund is a separate small fund.
- Adam Burnett asked - which property?
 - Richard Hewitt asked – NWRA land?
 - Adam Burnett and Olin Lathrop replied: No, it belongs to the Conservation Commission.
- Olin Lathrop added that he'd filed the RDA with Conservation Commission for permission to treat the trees with insecticide.

The fourth order of business was Eliades Phragmites and Autumn olive treatment: timing and progress.

- Olin Lathrop said he had no progress to report.
- Brian Bettencourt replied: Greta Marks-Strouble, you said you'd swing by...
 - Greta Marks-Strouble responded: Nope not me either!
- Brian Bettencourt said: The question is – last time Olin Lathrop mentioned that Conservation Commission mowing schedule is set.

- Olin Lathrop responded: Smegelski (sp?) said he'd volunteered to cut field for autumn olive control – he was supposed to get in touch.
 - Once he's done with harvest, he'll be in touch.
 - Richard Hewitt added - He does Surrenden Farm.
 - Brian Bettencourt said that Olin Lathrop should just reach out to him at next Conservation Commission meeting.
- Brian Bettencourt and Olin Lathrop said they both really want to check on Phragmites more than anything.
 - Brian Bettencourt issued a General call to the Committee - whoever's in area- go look at the Phragmites! Hard freeze freeze was coming this week.
- The Committee reviewed the map of the area on screen, and how the reeds were bundled and cut.
- Adam Burnett took an Action Item to swing by Eliades on way home from work, report on Phragmites stand.
 - Adam Burnett added – it's too late to treat this year.
- Andy George mentioned that back in Connecticut, they controlled Autumn olive as well. They paid someone to cut, and treated roots.
- Adam Burnett said that the major labor for the Committee was dragging slash around.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that the Committee's autumn olive control was very successful – it's dead (where it was treated).
- The Committee briefly reviewed neighbor concerns, including visual impact of slash.

The fifth item of business was Shattuck Homestead black swallowwort control grant proposal.

- Olin Lathrop said he had not much to report yet, but the Conservation Commission agreed that over the winter they will put together a firm timeline of what and when for controlling black swallowwort; broad agreement that it's a worthy project.
- The Committee reviewed the Shattuck Homestead parcel on screen, and discussed:
 - Review of history of conditions – must be preserved in open condition.
 - Review of control effort: Successful along the road.
 - There is still lots in the field itself that needs treating.
 - Turtle restrictions are in place. Can't mow without turtle sweep. Next year the sweep will happen.
 - Swallow wort doesn't make pods if it gets mowed! It's thus possible to use less herbicide – only where it can grow tall.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Is it spreading into nearby areas?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes, but the spread is FROM nearby parcels.
 - Adam Burnett added: it loves open fields.
- Brian Bettencourt said: Next spring, the Committee can volunteer to help turtle sweep.
- Adam Burnett added that the state NHESP program loves Groton – there are lots of turtles and other species; intersection of different biomes, lots of drumlins.
 - Olin Lathrop added: We have more drumlins here than anywhere else around!
 - Adam Burnett and Greta Marks-Strouble added: And lots of kettle holes...

The sixth item of business was a Red mulberry seedlings update.

- Greta Marks-Strouble reported that her seedling got attacked by chipmunks again; it had recovered nicely, with new leaves. She would put in the basement once dormant.
- Adam Burnett said that the species is a very fast grower.
- The Committee briefly discussed overwintering strategies.

The seventh item of business was Action Items update.

- Review:
 - Adam Burnett, Greta Marks-Strouble to write to the Mass. Fish&Wildlife point of contact person and ask whether/how the chestnut idea would fit the proposal criteria.
 - No progress.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked - I thought you really meant it as fact finding and exploration.
 - Adam Burnett replied: Correct.
 - Brian Bettencourt stated: It's a big project – could really stand some funding.
 - Adam Burnett replied: Correct. It will need funding.
 - The Committee reviewed the project, ideas, and plans.
 - This included a review of chestnut history, and the finding of some trees in Farmers+Mechanics property that seem somewhat resistant.
 - RELATED: Olin Lathrop reported finding some chestnuts east of Ames Pond (Town Forest). A whole lot of little saplings that are getting zapped by blight. But one that's a few inches around and healthy. So: they are out there!
 - Greta Marks-Strouble said she'd read about a method to "release" the stem sprouted ones; cut all the little sprouts but one. Leave it to grow.
 - Olin Lathrop asked - Wouldn't the blight get that one?
 - Greta Marks-Strouble responded: Perhaps – also though many were cut early as "firebreak".
 - Olin Lathrop said there are lots of shrubby multi-sprouters in the Town Forest.
 - Olin Lathrop, Adam Burnett, Greta Marks-Strouble were to propose a Sat or Sun morning to get out to Eliades and hit the Phragmites. Circulate to Committee.
 - Discussed.
- Adam Burnett and Greta Marks-Strouble took an Action Item to research funding opportunities for Chestnut proposal.

The eighth order of business was Any Other Business.

- Adam Burnett said he'd attended a talk at NWRA; including folks from DCR. Got some great materials on aquatic plants; keys and guides.
 - The Committee reviewed: Lots of great material on invasive aquatic plants.
 - State law now to "stop hitch-hikers" – boats must be cleared of all material.
 - Great key to MA aquatic plants.
 - The reference doesn't specifically use the word "non-native", but there's a little Boat symbol next to them (stop aquatic hitchhikers)
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Are the lakes association and great ponds groups involved?
 - Olin Lathrop said: If not, the Committee should let them know about these materials.
- Brian Bettencourt asked for a report from GrotonFest.

- Olin Lathrop said there was no real presence. Greta Marks-Strouble was sick.
- The Committee discussed their brochures – they needed more to be printed. Traditionally this was Adam Burnett's job.
 - Greta Marks-Strouble said she'd successfully printed from a USB stick brought town hall.
 - Brian Bettencourt emailed the multiflora rose brochure to Greta Marks-Strouble.
- Greta Marks-Strouble took an Action Item to print multiflora rose flyers at town hall.
- Brian Bettencourt added Andy George to the Invasive google group.

Adam Burnett moved to adjourn.

Olin Lathrop seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 PM.