

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

15Jul2019

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Adam Burnett

Richard Hewitt

Agenda:

1. Review of minutes from last meeting
2. Review of draft letter to Commissioners of Trust Funds
3. Update on Shattuck Homestead
4. Status of Flyers at the library
5. Eliades land plans
6. Ash trees on Parks land
7. Overall list of sites and action schedules
8. News from Conservation Commission on Trimper land
9. Nod Road knotweed update
10. Any Other Business

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM

The first order of business was review of minutes from the May meeting.

- The draft minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Changes and edits were made per discussion.
- Olin Lathrop moved to approve the minutes as amended.
 - Adam Burnett seconded.
 - The motion passed by unanimous voice vote, Richard Hewitt abstaining.

The second order of business was reviewing a draft letter to the Commissioners of Trust Funds.

- The Committee reviewed the letter live on screen.
- Adam Burnett noted that the language should reflect that the Committee – not the brochures themselves – seek to educate the public ...
 - The edits were made accordingly.
- Olin Lathrop noted that only the Committee chair needs to sign.
- Olin Lathrop moved to approve the letter and authorize Brian Bettencourt to send to the Commissioners as edited.
 - Richard Hewitt seconded.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to send the letter to the Commissioners of Trust Funds.

The third order of business was an update on the Shattuck Homestead turtle sweep.

- The Committee reviewed pictures of the turtle sweep live on screen.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: How many volunteers showed up?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: About 15-20.
- Olin Lathrop reported that they found Zero turtles.
 - Two nests with signs of predation were observed.
- Olin Lathrop said that just as the turtle sweep finished, John Smielgeski showed up and started mowing, as per plan. The effort went really well.
- Olin Lathrop indicated that the next step was to wait for the swallowwort to grow back; then, spray around the edges with the backpack sprayer.
 - The Conservation Commission is also hiring a professional to come with a boom sprayer and spray the whole field with broadleaf herbicide.

The fourth item was brochures at the library.

- Brian Bettencourt mentioned that the last report was that brochures were left with a worker at library, who said she'd get them to the responsible party.
- Olin Lathrop replied: They never got back to me. After a couple weeks, they were unsure what was going on.
 - They eventually asked for and he brought over 15 of each brochure. The library will display.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: The first batch was lost?
 - Olin Lathrop said yes, but that was only 1 of each.
 - Olin Lathrop added that the library will contact us when they need more.
- Adam Burnett added: The Committee could always replenish if/when we see the public display.
 - Olin Lathrop replied yes, but it seems like the library has a lot of competing items on display; they'll figure it out.

The fifth order of business was plans for Eliades land.

- Olin Lathrop said that we were in the middle of Vesper Sparrow restriction right now.
- Olin Lathrop reported that the Autumn Olive is getting thicker and thicker.
 - Can't really mow right now.
 - He's getting commitment from Conservation Commission right now to really do it right – with chainsaws, brush mower.
- Adam Burnett said: The Committee will need to treat the plants in the wetlands separately.
 - Adam Burnett took an Action Item to research days this summer for treatment.
 - He would like to treat the Phragmites too.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed but cautioned that it might be tough to do in one day.
 - The Committee could use the "wetlands-approved" glyphosate. This would work on both autumn olive and phragmites.
- Olin Lathrop mentioned that this year, the Committee should just do foliar spray of the Phragmites.
 - A calm day, with not a lot of wind, would be required.

- Adam Burnett added: No pretreatment will be necessary... What about bundling the reeds?
- Olin Lathrop replied: That might be helpful –less herbicide would be used overall.
- Brian Bettencourt added: Too many plants per bundle would be counterproductive, as the plants in middle of a bundle might not get enough exposure to the herbicide.
- Adam Burnett took an Action Item to pick a weekend day(s) in September for Eliades work, and circulate options to the Committee email list.

The sixth order of business was Ash trees on Parks land.

- All the Committee members reported that they did not attend the recent Parks meeting.
- Olin Lathrop said: The Committee should get in front of Parks Commission, let them know who we are, and then ask them to inventory their ash trees ... so that the Committee can help them out.
- Adam Burnett added as an aside – he'd done a quick bit of research on Elms.
 - Injection of insecticide to halt bark beetle is effective in halting Dutch Elm *if* trees are isolated, not sharing root systems.
 - There is a fungicide, bark-injected, that is effective for all elms.
 - The trick is to inject before they're infected.
 - Also: The apparatus works well on elms without the necessity of the plastic syringe guides, which makes application easier.
- Olin Lathrop replied: When the Committee talks to Parks, we'll mention elms as well.
 - Then figure out how to pay for the work.
 - Adam Burnett mentioned that the same injection apparatus can be used for the fungicide.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Will the Parks Commission be upset that the Committee wasn't at the meeting?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: They knew that the Committee might not be there due to multiple conflicts.
 - Richard Hewitt agreed, stating that they probably just skipped the item on their Agenda.
 - Richard Hewitt took an Action Item to apologize on behalf of Committee to Parks Dept. Administrator Maureen Adema, and ask to be put back on the agenda for their next meeting; additionally, to followup with the Committee email list to make sure someone can attend.

The seventh order of business was an overall list of sites and an action plan.

- Olin Lathrop said that Nik at the Conservation Commission is scheduling multiple activities; he requested of the Committee a bullet list of the various things we'd like to get done, with rough dates.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Are you roughing it out now?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No, I'll do that over next couple weeks.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to draft a list of activities with approximate dates for each, and to circulate to the Committee email list for review.

The eighth order of business was an update on Conservation Commission plans for the Trimper parcel.

- The Committee reviewed the plot plan for a parcel off Martins Pond Rd (“Trimper land”).
 - Olin Lathrop reported that the Conservation Commission has been working with the estate of the former owner to preserve two plots. One is wholly owned. The second one to the North is not quite 50 acres.
 - The land consists of an old orchard, some woods, plus one house lot.
 - A land grant has been applied for to purchase the back woods, orchard, and chunk below the house lot.
 - The apple trees were cut out in the 1970s/1980s. Blue spruce were planted.
- Olin Lathrop reported that the spruce trees were completely covered with Asian bittersweet.
 - The Committee reviewed pictures live on screen.
 - Spruces are covered with bittersweet.
 - Someone’s been mowing between the spruce trees; the area is nice and open.
- The Conservation Commission would like to take out the trees, then mow every couple years to keep it open habitat.
 - Richard Hewitt mentioned that the Dunstable Conservation Commission did something similar and sold the removed trees as Christmas trees.
 - Olin Lathrop added: The Conservation Commission will pay a logger to get them out. The trees are not worth much to a logging company.
- Brian Bettencourt and Richard Hewitt asked: How much would the grant cover?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: 60% reimbursement.
- Adam Burnett asked: Is there any stream corridor, or wetland?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Not much. There is some wetland. No real stream.
- Brian Bettencourt asked if the Committee’s main interest is to keep the bittersweet down?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes, once the trees are gone.
 - Adam Burnett mentioned that he felt it’d be nice to walk the property and make plans.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed, but said not until the Conservation Commission owns it.
 - Adam Burnett said that the Committee should get on the Conservation Commission agenda regarding this matter.

The ninth order of business was an update on the Nod Rd. knotweed project.

- The Committee reviewed pictures taken before and after cutting and/or treating (recent pictures).
 - The Cut-only plots have grown back lushly (albeit not as tall as untreated).
 - The cut-and-treat plots show some regrowth, but lots of dead canes. There is much less growth than cut-only.
- Olin Lathrop said that he will also mark off the plot where Virginia creeper seems to be holding back the growth of the knotweed – just to see if it halts or slows the progression.
- Brian Bettencourt added: The Committee should not forget the Hayden Rd. stand. It is large and worthy of treatment, as is the smaller one on Townsend Rd. by St. James Ave.
 - Olin Lathrop asked: Would you do a cut and drip on Hayden Rd stand?
 - Brian Bettencourt: Said he would, but he hadn’t looked at it since last year.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to check out the Hayden Rd. knotweed stand, and report on suitability for treating This Summer.

- Olin Lathrop said: The Hayden Rd. stand is on Conservation Commission land. The Committee would have to ask permission and file a RDA.
- Olin Lathrop added that it might be possible to use Jack Petropolous' brush mower contraption.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied he would check it out – the key question is steepness of the terrain.

The tenth order of business was Any Other Business.

- Brian Bettencourt described an email received from Barbara Rich regarding Japanese Knotweed on her property.
 - The Committee discussed the email and its contents.
 - Her preferred treatment of vinegar is ineffective.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: What should the Committee write back to her?
 - Richard Hewitt said: Send her the recent article in Slate about knotweed.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to forward the Slate article to Barbara Rich, and to email her generally supportive language reflecting that the Committee can't intervene on private land. Also, the email should mention that digging and herbicide is only effective treatment, particularly mentioning cut-and-drip treatment.
 - Olin Lathrop said: You could also call her on the phone.
- Brian Bettencourt mentioned that he had to re-up his swearing-in at Town Hall again.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to get sworn in ASAP.
- Adam Burnett described black swallowwort infesting an open meadow at Groton Place, in an area where the "butterfly lady" is planting milkweed.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: That's NEFF land (correct).
 - Adam Burnett reported that the black swallowwort is growing quite a bit, in both the wild part and the milkweed-planted part of the meadow.
- Richard Hewitt asked: What happened with the class Olin Lathrop was going to do?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: We have three sessions booked in September-October at the library.

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Adam Burnett seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.