

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

20Jan2020

Legion Hall

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Richard Hewitt

Other attendees:

Rick Muehlke

Jonathan Basch

Lisa Murray

Carole Greenfield

Alison Hamilton

Agenda:

- 1) Membership update - welcome new people - process for swearing-in
- 2) Review of Minutes from last meeting
- 3) Review of the next draft brochure - Autumn Olive
- 4) Autumn Olive at Eliades
- 5) Next invited speaker
- 6) Groton Conservation Summit
- 7) Report on climate-change resiliency workshop
- 8) 2020 Plans for Japanese Knotweed study
- 9) Invasive Species forum/conference
- 10) Any Other Business

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

“Any Other Business” was shifted to the first item of business, to welcome Lisa Murray and discuss the Garden Club’s Native Gardening Initiative.

- Lisa Murray introduced herself and the Garden Club, and mentioned that she’d been trying to get together with the Invasive Species Committee for a while to collaborate.
 - The Club is working on a Native Plant Challenge, initiated by the MA Federation of Garden Clubs.
 - The idea is to support more diverse habitat for wildlife, using native plants on civic properties.
 - The Garden Club maintains 10 properties in Groton.

- Brian Bettencourt and Richard Hewitt both said: The Club does a great job!
- Lisa Murray described the goals of the program: They want to encourage gardeners to work with not against nature; there is an important role for native plants in our ecosystem.
- Lisa Murray described how the Club puts on an annual Trust Fund lecture, cosponsored with the Nashua River Watershed Association.
 - The Lecture is February 9th. Sunday. 2-4 PM @ The Groton Center.
 - The Speaker: Toby Wolf. The Title: Design lessons from nature.
 - The Club is inviting area landscapers, gardeners, and members of the gardening community to the lecture.
 - Possibly collaborate with them, help discuss how the plants they plant impact biodiversity, overall ecosystem.
- Brian Bettencourt said: The Lecture sounds awesome, and is right in line with the mission of the Committee, and our brochures. The brochures cover what to replace invasives with (Native plants).
 - Lisa Murray said: The Club had a posterboard up at GrotonFest with that exact topic.
- Olin Lathrop asked: Would you have any use for our flyers?
 - Lisa Murray replied: Yes, we can put them up at the Lecture; we'll have a display table.
 - Carole Greenfield asked: Should we post on the Club's website?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: No, we have our brochures on the town website already.
- Olin Lathrop asked: What if the Committee gave the Club a bunch of brochures?
 - Lisa Murray replied: Sure, we can give them out at general meetings too.
- Lisa Murray described last year's lecture: Attended by about 100 people. The Club has been increasing advertising, and hope for even more attendees this year.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to produce large batches of all 6 brochures, and get to Lisa Murray ahead of the Lecture and the general meeting Feb. 4th.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to post the PDF advertisement for the Lecture that Lisa Murray had sent him to the Invasive Species Committee Announcements list.
- Carole Greenfield said that the Club could consider working with the Library – for example to get books on the topic, hook into their Public Relations.
 - Lisa Murray replied: Definitely – the Club is working with them a lot already on some other topics.
- Olin Lathrop said: Now the other “big topic” --- the Committee is hoping that the Garden Club could be “eyes” on some town properties – i.e., to look for invasives. In particular, the Club could look for Ash trees --- the Committee would like to inoculate for Emerald Ash Borer.
 - Lisa Murray said: Will do.
 - Lisa Murray mentioned that one big area for invasive plants in general is Sawyer Common (Martins Pond and Hollis St.).
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Excellent, thank you. Also keep your eyes open for Ash trees.
- Rick Muehlke added that he knew there were some Ash trees back behind the library.
- Brian Bettencourt said: We the Committee think this is a great area for collaboration. Representatives will be at the lecture. Additionally, both groups will be at the Conservation Summit. We have a great opportunity to work together on some invasive plants!

The second order of business was a Membership Update.

- Brian Bettencourt asked: Who's an official Committee member, and who's not?
 - Olin Lathrop said: The Town website still stays Brian Bettencourt, Olin Lathrop, Richard Hewitt, and Adam Burnett.
- Jonathan Basch indicated that he'd filled out the volunteer form.
- Olin Lathrop Moved that the Committee recommend Jonathan Basch to the selectmen for membership to the Committee.
 - Richard Hewitt Seconded.
 - The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.
- Alison Hamilton indicated that she had not done the volunteer form yet.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Is the form strictly necessary?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to send the Volunteer Form to Alison Hamilton.
 - Alison Hamilton said: Or I can just go to Town Hall.
- Olin Lathrop Moved to recommend Alison Hamilton to the selectmen for membership to the Committee.
 - Richard Hewitt Seconded.
 - The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.
- Olin Lathrop asked Jonathan Basch: Have the selectmen met and accepted you yet?
 - Jonathan Basch replied: Not to my knowledge.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Do you get notified?
 - (Discussion – yes, the Town Hall notifies people who are voted on)
 - Jonathan Basch noted that Brian Bettencourt was emailed when he (Jonathan) filled out the form.
 - Jonathan Basch took an Action Item to ask the Town Clerk if his nomination has been voted upon yet. If so, he will go get sworn in.
- Carole Greenfield and Rick Muehlke discussed remaining as observers for now.

The third item was review of minutes from the last meeting.

- Olin Lathrop said he'd reviewed and had no edits.
- Richard Hewitt said he too had reviewed and had no edits.
- Olin Lathrop Moved to approve the minutes as written.
 - Richard Hewitt Seconded.
 - The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

The fourth item was review of the next brochure, Autumn Olive.

- Brian Bettencourt said that Carole Greenfield was so kind as to send some text about Autumn Olive. He put the paragraphs into the usual template, did some editing, and added photographs.

- Olin Lathrop added that he had some more photos (of his own) too.
- The Committee reviewed the draft brochure live on screen.
- The Committee and observers provided comments/edits and Brian Bettencourt edited live.
- Rick Muehlke asked: Do you put dates or versions on the brochures itself?
 - Brian Bettencourt and Olin Lathrop replied: No – just the Copyright.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to send Brian Bettencourt some more Autumn Olive pictures, taken locally (from Eliades land). Brian Bettencourt can replace any in there if he likes.
 - Olin Lathrop displayed some Autumn Olive pictures live on screen.
- Richard Hewitt said: The Committee can vote on the Final version at the next meeting.

(The next item, Autumn olive at Eliades Land, was discussed briefly).

The fifth item of business was the Next Invited Speaker.

- Olin Lathrop said: The Committee hasn't had a good lecture in awhile.
- Jonathan Basch asked: What sort of topics have been covered?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Emerald Ash Borer, biocontrol, Michelle Ruby on local research, Phragmites.
- Carole Greenfield said: A good topic would be climate change and invasives.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed, and added that David Black would be great for that.
- Rick Muehlke asked: What about "Garden in the Woods"?
 - Lisa Murray replied: They're called the Native Plants Trust now.
 - The Garden Club once had someone come in and do a "kill your lawn" talk.
- Rick Muehlke asked: What about the contractor from Athol who specializes in invasives control.
 - Taylor was his last name.
 - He worked for a company called "Vegetation Control Services". He just retired. He's been written up extensively.
 - Rick Muehlke took an Action Item to send Olin Lathrop the name/contact of invasives specialist Taylor.
- Olin Lathrop asked: What about Spotted Lanternfly?
- Lisa Murray added: Another good one would be Jumping worms. She had circulated info on this animal via the Garden Club list; she can send to Olin Lathrop.
- Alison Hamilton added: A friend of hers just started a nonprofit, called Eat the Invasives or something similar.
 - This contact might've moved away; Alison will check.
 - Alison Hamilton took an Action Item to check on the Eat The Invasives contact.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to think of a speaker that could combine late-breaking new invasives to be on the lookout for (incl. spotted lanternfly).

The sixth item of business was the Groton Conservation Summit.

- Brian Bettencourt said: I received the email.
- Olin Lathrop said: The Summit is the Last Thursday in February (27th).

- The Groton [Senior] Center. 6:30 for social hour. At 7 the event really starts.
 - Each group introduces themselves VERY BRIEFLY. Total 45 minutes for all intros.
- Lisa Murray asked: Will that document you sent out be on the screen at the Summit?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No. No slides, no presentations.
- Carole Greenfield asked: Is the Summit open to the public?
 - (Discussion: The answer is Yes)
- The segment of the Summit following the intros will be: John Ellenberger speaking about a group he wants to start.
- Alison Hamilton asked: What is the purpose of the meeting?
- (Committee Discussion):
 - Anyone can come and find out about the various conservation groups in town, network, come up with new ideas for groups.
- Richard Hewitt added: A lot of committees might work on similar things – identify overlaps, pool resources, etc.

The seventh item was report on climate change resiliency workshop.

- Brian Bettencourt said: Adam Burnett was going. He's not here to discuss. Table this topic till next time.
- Alison Hamilton filled in some information: The workshop was centered around a training type program, to see if the town qualifies for a grant.

The eighth item was 2020 plans for the Knotweed Study.

- Olin Lathrop said: Not much has changed since last time but:
 - This year: The Committee will cut everything back (dead stuff) to see exactly what's growing.
 - The Committee will ask Jack Petropolous for his assistance, including the use of his giant weedwhacker.
- Alison Hamilton asked: What is the timing?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: April for initial cut back.
 - Brian Bettencourt added: For treatment, come later, i.e. June.
- Rick Muehlke asked: Does Petropolous' equipment require tractor?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No.
- Alison Hamilton asked: Could a college student help record data, turn it into a project?
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Olin Lathrop could give data from last year.
 - Olin Lathrop said: Yes, as long as the logistics aren't horrendous.
 - Alison Hamilton said: This could be for an Honors thesis student – it'd be fun.
- Brian Bettencourt described going to the Hayden Rd. site today (as an aside) --- he wants to nominate it again for treatment of Knotweed this coming summer.
 - Olin Lathrop said: The Committee would have to get an RDA from the Conservation Commission.

- Rick Muehlke added: Ray Lyons would help.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to file a RDA at the Conservation Commission for Hayden Rd. Knotweed; these are good for 3 years.

The ninth item was Invasive Species Forum / Conference.

- Olin Lathrop said he'd been going to a lot of seminars, lectures, etc. lately. See a lot of the same people, talking about the same stuff.
 - There's no state-wide conference for this topic.
 - It would be awesome to get a conference together, right here in Groton.
- Carole Greenfield asked: Could the Committee enlist a college?
 - Alison Hamilton asked: UMass?
 - Brian Bettencourt and Olin Lathrop both said: No they're busy.
- Carole Greenfield asked: What's the goal?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Get everyone together.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: Whitepapers.
 - Olin Lathrop added: Outreach. Here's what we found and here's what we can do about it.
 - Could the Committee even do something like this? It would likely have to be 3Q or 4Q 2020.
- Brian Bettencourt said: It's a big undertaking if you want broad advertising, broad attendance. It requires a lot of event planning.
 - Alison Hamilton asked: How many people can be held in the Groton Center?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: 125.
- Brian Bettencourt said his concern isn't physical stuff. It's more mission creep and scope. The Committee would have to keep it on task and on topic.
 - Olin Lathrop said: First there would be a call for participation – scope the general idea – 30-45min. synopses at a layman's level.
- Richard Hewitt asked: Could it be made more regional? Perhaps stuff on Cape Cod doesn't apply here, e.g. and vice versa.
 - Brian Bettencourt added: Or, just make sure topics are appropriate.
 - Alison Hamilton gave an example of Asian crabs.
- Lisa Murray asked: Would this be a public event?
 - Olin Lathrop and Brian Bettencourt replied: Yes. The Committee would advertise where interested people are.
 - Brian Bettencourt added: If you advertise really broadly like that (e.g. all State Conservation Commissions), you'd have to control attendance; each group would send delegates, that type of thing.
- Alison Hamilton and Brian Bettencourt added: This would be a huge amount of work.
- Carole Greenfield asked: Would one little town's agency be the right body to hold this?
 - Olin Lathrop added: He had made some feelers to state organizations.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Watch out for larger organizations taking it over...
 - Olin Lathrop replied: That'd be fine!

- The Committee discussed the concept --- there was general support for the idea.
 - Rick Muehlke said he'd found an example in Washington state online ... an Invasive Species Council.
 - Olin Lathrop said he would work on contacts and initial discussions.
- Rick Muehlke said: The Committee should definitely get bigger organizations in to help.
 - The Committee had a discussion re/ likely groups, e.g. Audobon, Tower Hill, the Trustees.

The tenth item was Any Other Business.

- Rick Muehlke said he'd attended a Watershed meeting
 - A State guru on the Forest Legacy Program gave a 2 hour lecture.
 - Bottom line for Groton – the whole town is in the Forest Legacy footprint.
 - Money is there for buying development rights.
 - The old demarcating line was the western part of town only. Now it's the whole town.
 - Futterman used to be the go-to guy.
 - One person (DCR, Forestry division) is now in charge of all regions – Reorganizing taking place.
 - Futterman was so good at getting together 1000 acres at a time.
 - Will be tough to have that level of local accountability.
 - Rick Muehlke took an Action Item to give the new Forest Legacy person contact info to Olin Lathrop.
 - The Committee discussed the new development potential between Maple and Hill Rd. Hayes land – 120 acres.
- Rick Muehlke said he'd heard that some of the Select Board and town Manager might want to reduce the CPA. He felt:
 - The CPA Funds lots of our work. He wants to fight any proposed reduction to the CPA.
 - He wants to organize a letter-writing campaign; there are lots of good uses for the CPA above/beyond pure land conservation (basket ball courts, recreation, library roof, Sargisson beach).
 - Need to educate the new Select Board members and new town citizens.
 - Alison Hamilton said she'd heard that some Select Board members are against conservation.
 - Richard Hewitt said: Look at the Community Preservation Plan for records of successes.
 - Town Meeting would have to vote the CPA out. It's not up to the Select Board themselves.

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Richard Hewitt seconded.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.