

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

16Nov2020

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Alison Hamilton

Jonathan Basch

Richard Hewitt

Ron Strohsahl

Also attending:

Lisa Murray

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes
- 2) News concerning, and plans for, Spotted Lanternfly in MA
- 3) Followup on Garden Club items, including invasive plant disposal
- 4) Phragmites Phollowups
- 5) Plans for our big batches of brochures, including invasive@townofgroton.org address change impact
- 6) Discussion of invasive control methods at Trimper land

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

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

- The minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Minor changes were made to the draft minutes.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept the minutes.
 - Richard Hewitt seconded.
 - The motion passed via unanimous roll call, Adam Burnett and Alison Hamilton abstaining.

The second order of business was news/plans on Spotted Lanternfly in MA.

- Brian Bettencourt mentioned that he'd seen the recent news regarding sightings of lanternfly in Massachusetts, and that he had been contacted by both Ron Strohsahl and Lisa Murray (about the news) as well.
- Lisa Murray said she'd read a recent article on the fly in Smithsonian magazine.
 - Brian Bettencourt added he had as well.
 - The local news article was focused on Pennsylvania as a source.
 - Landscape supply companies who provide shipments of trees/shrubs up to our area are a source of the fly.
 - 2 dead lanternflies had been found in MA: one in Milford, one in Norwood.

- Ron Strohsahl said that he'd just moved from Hopkinton (right next door to Milford). There are a few landscape supply places right on the Hopkinton/Milford line.
 - The MA State website said that they haven't found anything as of this month, after extensive surveys.
 - It is critically important to get the word out.
- Adam Burnett asked: What do they eat?
 - Ron Strohsahl replied: Tree of Heaven was their host, but now they've moved on to ~70 different species.
 - Perhaps because fruit trees are many folks' livelihood, lots of people are focusing there.
 - But the flies also eat oaks, maples, sycamore – almost everything.
 - They start on herbaceous material as nymphs, and move their way up until morphing into moths.
 - They get into the stem/under the bark, and suck on phloem as adults.
 - Olin Lathrop added: This behavior is found in all life stages.
- Olin Lathrop said that there'd been some discussion as to whether Tree of Heaven is more than just their "preferred host".
 - He attended seminar a year ago about this.
 - Scientists have found ~20 chemicals that attract the insect – they are found in Tree of Heaven, but also in other plants.
 - They're not 100% sure if Tree of Heaven is necessary at some stage of their life cycle.
 - The insect has a straw-like mouthpart to suck phloem.
 - They excrete sugary liquid, which hosts mold.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Wouldn't it be a simple experiment(s) to determine necessity of Tree of Heaven?
 - Olin Lathrop said it would seem so.
- Olin Lathrop said there is lots of activity on this insect - lots of scientists working on it.
- Olin Lathrop said that the Committee could/should find out where Tree of Heaven exists in Groton.
 - The Committee's injection pesticide could be used on Tree of Heaven – inject the pesticide, and make a population sink for Lanternfly.
 - Adam Burnett said that Tree of Heaven is quite prolific in city environments --- look at Fitchburg or Worcester.
 - Richard Hewitt added: The Committee could ask the Garden Club.
 - Lisa Murray responded: Ask the Tree Warden! It's a good idea.
- Adam Burnett said that there are some trees he needs to identify at the Boutwell House.
 - There are some exotic looking trees there that might be Tree of Heaven. They have large compound leaves and might have the diagnostic seed pods.
 - Adam Burnett took an Action Item to check if Trees of Heaven exist at Boutwell House in the center of town, and also to check other sites in town or in Ayer.
 - Alison Hamilton said to look for the distinctive bark.
 - Adam Burnett agreed and said he did seem to notice that previously.
- Brian Bettencourt added he thought it would be ironic to try to "save" Tree of Heaven to kill Lanternfly since the tree itself is a non-native invasive plant.

- Olin Lathrop replied that they do not really need the help – they’re a native host for the insect – they can handle them pretty well.
- Ron Strohsahl asked: Are there any traps based on those attractive chemicals?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes, but they’re not effective enough to actually control the flies.
- Adam Burnett asked: How fast do they fly and move?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Not fast at all, but people move them in plants.
 - The adults lay eggs on just about anything. Not just plants.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Do NY/PA have any methods to control the spread?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes, but they are not terribly effective - typically involving a quarantine area, inspection of plant material, etc.
- Jonathan Basch said: The Committee should add a slide to the Garden Club lecture material, to get the word out about the lanternfly.
 - Lisa Murray replied: Good idea.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that he had presented a slide in his library invasives course, asking to see if anyone had spotted any lanternfly.
- Adam Burnett said: There are Tree of Heaven down by the railroad tracks in Ayer.
 - Ron Strohsahl asked: If we know of/find such stands of trees, can we let the state know?
 - Richard Hewitt replied: Yes, if they’re in Ayer, we could let their Conservation Commission know.

The third order of business was a followup on Garden Club items, including invasive plant removal.

- Brian Bettencourt said that he’d circulated a couple different sources about the state guidelines for disposal.
 - He spoke with Tessa David from Recycling Committee.
 - Basic guidelines were: Do not transport, do not dispose in open piles; cut the plant at the base, do not bring to transfer station...
- Olin Lathrop said: This is not really the rule in MA, but it is in NH.
 - In Concord (MA), they have a program to bring your invasive plant material to a central site.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: What are they doing with the material in Concord?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: It’s part of their composting program. It is legal – but is it a good idea?
- Richard Hewitt said: If you put it in a truck, it will fall off.
 - Adam Burnett agreed, stating: That’s why Phragmites and Knotweed grows in ditches along the highways.
- Brian Bettencourt asked Lisa Murray: What have you heard from the Highway Dept.?
 - Lisa Murray replied: The composting program is happening, yes. But the Highway Dept. is currently just adding invasive material to their brush pile.
 - She was waiting to hear from this Committee about official word.
- Brian Bettencourt said: So the basic question is how the Committee could best help with education At the Transfer Station.
 - The Committee next had a discussion on the matter.

- The Committee agreed that it's generally too much trouble to have people move their own invasive material.
- Richard Hewitt said: Yes, but the Committee needs to do outreach and education on this topic.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: So, would you (Richard Hewitt) like to be point on getting a poster or similar info material at Transfer Station?
 - Richard Hewitt said: Will do.
 - Lisa Murray mentioned that the Garden Club will also help distribute information at their lectures, at their Plant Sale, etc.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What if the Committee made their eighth brochure about invasive plants "in your yard --- what you do with them, how to dispose of them safely"?
- Richard Hewitt took an Action Item to talk to the Transfer Station about putting up a poster on how to (or how not to) dispose of invasive plant material.
- Jonathan Basch took an Action Item to draft text and find some pictures; Brian Bettencourt will edit the material and put it into the brochure template, for a Committee brochure on how to properly dispose of invasive plants.
- Lisa Murray said she would stay in touch regarding lecture slide material (for the Garden Club).

The fourth order of business was followup on Phragmites.

- Olin Lathrop said that he'd filed the RDA with the Conservation Commission for Phragmites along the Trimper driveway.
 - Brian Bettencourt clarified: "Trimper" is synonymous with the Priest Family Conservation Area.
- Olin Lathrop said: This work is not a hurry, because activity won't happen during the winter.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed: No Phragmites activity during the winter (it's dead anyway).
- Adam Burnett said he would like to inventory the Pacer Way area again in the spring, to see if followup is warranted, and asked whether the Committee would need Conservation Commission approval again?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No, the approval is good for 3 years.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that he'd gone and looked again at Pacer Way last week: None of the Phragmites was alive. He is convinced that the standing stalks are from 2019 – they display no new growth.
 - Adam Burnett said: So next spring, the Committee should check it out and see if there is any more growing – a final checkup.

The fifth order of business was Plans for our big batches of brochures, including the "invasive@townofgroton.org" address change impact.

- Brian Bettencourt said that he had all the brochures in boxes at his house.
 - Olin Lathrop said that he had a few more to drop off.
- Brian Bettencourt mentioned that he'd given some to Carole Greenfield, and asked: what else to do with them?

- Richard Hewitt said: Town Hall, GCT, Library, NRWA, places where you can leave them out. Also, particular events such as given by the Garden Club, River fest, etc. --- these would all be good avenues to distribute brochures.
 - He felt that a focus of the Committee should be education and motivating local action.
- Richard Hewitt said: The Committee should also do another class in the spring.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Zoom only for the classes, correct?
 - Richard Hewitt said yes, and that brochures could be sent to the attendees.
- Richard Hewitt took an Action Item to contact Mary Jennings at Prescott about an Invasives class in late winter/early spring, and Brian Bettencourt as well, to discuss cross promotion with the Groton Conservation Trust.
- Olin Lathrop said: Rick Muehlke is doing some outreach work on the topic with the New England Forestry Foundation.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to contact Stacy and/or Al at the Nashua River Watershed Association and see if the Committee could leave them some brochures.
- Ron Strohsahl asked: Is it legal to do mailbox drops of brochures?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: The material has to be solicited, or the sender must pay postage.
 - Ron Strohsahl added: It's an easy way to get to lots of people.
 - Olin Lathrop said: Once face to face meetings start up again, that's really the best place for brochure distribution.
- Ron Strohsahl took an Action Item to research legal and inexpensive ways to get printed material into mailboxes.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: What about how local nonprofit groups do the food drives etc. - dropping off material at houses? That requires the Committee physically bringing them.
- Ron Strohsahl said: The Committee should try to reach the people that don't have a clue about invasive plants - not the "already interested".
- Brian Bettencourt asked: What about commercial nurseries!? That's where people run into these types of plants.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to ask the Kazanjians if the Committee could distribute brochures at the Groton Nursery.
- Richard Hewitt said: Person-to-person dissemination of information is the best.
 - He relayed a story regarding some new neighbors...
 - The focus should be on networking, talking to neighbors in presentation.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed, and mentioned that he was doing exactly that in his neighborhood.
 - Brian Bettencourt also relayed a story about a recent guided walk with the Webelos scouts.
- Jonathan Basch said that the Committee should also cultivate connections with other groups in town --- the Trails Committee is a natural.
 - Trails Committee are good people to educate on invasives since they are out there looking around all the time. This Committee could work with them on joint clearing efforts.

- ItmBrian Bettencourt relayed the history of the GrotonFest tables and Committee participation there.
- Brian Bettencourt said that in general, he encourages Committee members to talk/share online and in person.
- Adam Burnett mentioned, regarding disseminating information at nurseries: You can buy burning bush at Home Depot in NH.

The sixth order of business was discussion of invasive control methods at the Trimper (Priest Conservation area) land.

- Olin Lathrop said that he had an action item to get a joint site walk with the Conservation Commission scheduled.
 - He reported mentioning it to Nik Gualco, but that there was still no action.
- Alison Hamilton said she thought that Nik had said he was putting it on next weekend's Conservation Commission site walk list.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: So when do we find out?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Typically the Saturdays before coming Tuesday meetings - so that's this coming Saturday.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Could anyone else make it?
 - Olin Lathrop and Alison Hamilton would be there in their Conservation Commission capacities.
 - Jonathan Basch said that he could probably attend.
- Olin Lathrop added: The property is public land at this point, so anyone can go check it out on their own. You park on Martins Pond Rd. or at Williams Barn. There are trails out to the new land.
- Olin Lathrop said he would let the Committee know ASAP.

The Committee had a general final Discussion:

Richard Hewitt said that the Committee should send a thank you note to the Trustees (Commissioners of Trust Funds).

Richard Hewitt moved to authorize the sending of a thank you to Karen Toumi for funding another batch of brochures.

Olin Lathrop Seconded.

The Motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to send a thank you note to Karen at Commissioners of Trust Funds thanking for brochure print run funding – he will circulate a draft.

Alison Hamilton moved to adjourn.

Richard Hewitt Seconded.

The Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.