

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

21Dec2020

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Jonathan Basch

Adam Burnett

Ron Strohsahl

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Review of action items from last meeting
- 3) Progress on "How to dispose of invasives properly" brochure
- 4) Multiflora rose in town forest - possible target for control
- 5) Plans for seminar at GPL/Prescott/elsewhere
- 6) Preparations for Garden Club event
- 7) Upcoming Groton Conservation Summit
- 8) Issue of town email address change on brochures

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 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.
- Richard Hewitt moved to accept the minutes.
 - Adam Burnett seconded.
 - The motion passed via unanimous roll call.

The second order of business was a review of action items from last meeting.

- Adam Burnett described a Tree of Heaven in the center of town.
 - He had not identified this tree (at Boutwell House) yet.
 - The Committee viewed 4 pictures of the tree live on screen.
 - There are about 4 trees along the parking lot.
 - Upon viewing a closeup of the bark, Olin Lathrop remarked that it did not look like Tree of Heaven.
 - A closeup of the branch ends was next viewed.
 - A stocky stem, huge compound leaves, came off the stipule scars. No terminal bud was visible.

- Brian Bettencourt asked: Are you trying to key it out?
 - Adam Burnett replied that he would try. He has a good key (book).
 - The consensus of the Committee was that this did not appear to be Tree of Heaven.
 - Adam Burnett next showed pictures of another tree, along Arlington St., the property Honeywell bought.
 - Brian Bettencourt added: This is the old Conductorlab site.
 - The tree was situated along the back side of parking lot.
 - The bark looked like Tree of Heaven.
 - The twig had a terminal bud and hairs.
 - Adam Burnett broke a twig live on screen for the Committee to see the inside.
 - He added that it had a strong smell, and could be a butternut.
 - Olin Lathrop and Brian Bettencourt remarked: Wait until spring. It's easier to ID when the tree is in leaf.
 - Adam Burnett said that he was still leaning towards Tree of Heaven, based on the bark.
 - Adam Burnett added that he'd also checked several other parking lots and behind town buildings; he'd found no definite Tree of Heavens so far.
-
- Richard Hewitt reported that he'd talked to Keith at the Transfer Station regarding an Invasives Disposal poster.
 - Keith said to talk to Tom Delaney.
 - Richard Hewitt asked for more clarity before going to Tom Delaney.
 - If people show up, is the Committee asking them to turn around?
 - When and how to get folks' attention?
 - Let them know before they show up?
 - Brian Bettencourt said that he would like to put up a poster on the way out of the Transfer Station. The poster would just contain general information.
 - This would be supplementary to the brochure discussed later in the meeting – those could be distributed at the Transfer Station as well.
 - Richard Hewitt asked: Who's going to give the new brochures out?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: There would have to be a box, and a sign.
 - Richard Hewitt said: The Committee could try to get an article in the Herald in the Spring and spread the word that way.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed that a sign with a box of brochures, on the way out, would be the way to go.
 - Richard Hewitt asked: Who's going to build that?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: I could.
 - Olin Lathrop added: And/Or, ask the Transfer Station employees --- where's a good place to post a sign where it would get seen but not get in the way?
 - Richard Hewitt said that he would talk to Tom Delaney and see what his ideas are. He would also work on publicity.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: The Invasives Disposal Brochure will be fully discussed as the next order of business after Action Item Review is done.

- Richard Hewitt reported that he'd talked to Mary Jennings about a class on invasives at Prescott.
 - They would like to do it; they're interested. Scheduling begins in mid- late- January.
 - A question was raised earlier about using the Library instead since it's free.
 - Prescott does a lot of internet programming; they are proficient at it.
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: The Library does all their programming on Zoom now too.
 - Olin Lathrop said: If he was doing the seminar, he would prefer the library.
 - But in general, he prefers a live talk.
 - He had wanted to arrange a quarterly or 2xYear type update on conservation, with some invasives work included.
 - He likes to see audience reaction.
 - Richard Hewitt replied: These are not mutually exclusive.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed.
 - The Committee discussed programming at Prescott in general - Brian Bettencourt volunteered to do the next seminar there.
- Brian Bettencourt added: This overlaps with an Action Item I had: To bring up cross-promotion/activity with the Groton Conservation Trust. He did, and the Trust was favorably inclined to proceed.
 - The Committee discussed cross-promotion and cross-production of a seminar on invasives.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to work with the Groton Conservation Trust on this seminar, and to draft seminar material and distribute.
 - Richard Hewitt took an Action Item to get Mary Jennings at Prescott in touch with Brian Bettencourt.
- Olin Lathrop was tasked with determining whether the Committee could leave brochures at the Nashua River Watershed Association.
 - He reported emailing to Stacy a couple weeks ago – this went unanswered.
 - Phone calls went to a broken sounding message.
 - He will try calling the main office and try leaving her a voice message.
- Ron Strohsahl reported on options for getting brochures into mailboxes.
 - By following a US Post Office link – he found 3rd party vendors for printing and mailing. There are lots of different choices and materials available.
 - One estimate was for 2500 homes: 40-76 cents per sheet. So, \$1000-2000 total for a 3rd party solution.
 - He continued and found the laws governing this activity. The US Post Office allows for special pricing for non-profit mailers. The Committee would have to apply to the Post Office, pass review and get approved. There are lots of categories (education/scientific) ... the price is 9-14 cents per sheet!
 - But: Municipal/government organizations are not eligible unless they meet certain criteria. They have to prove that they are an educational/scientific/agricultural organization, and prove non-profit status with qualifying documents.
 - Ron Strohsahl asked: Should the Committee continue to apply?

- He also found “every door direct mail” – 18 cents a piece, or \$18 / 1000. He didn’t figure out much more about that option; it looks like a lot of political campaigns use that option.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Can’t the Committee do something through the town?
- Olin Lathrop added: Just sit down with the postmaster in town!
 - Rates usually apply if they don’t need a specific address.
 - Ron Strohsahl took an Action Item to call the Groton postmaster and see what they recommend, with an emphasis on “the Committee is a town body”.
- Brian Bettencourt reported that he’d asked the Kazanjians at their home email about distributing brochures at the Groton Nursery.
 - He hadn’t heard back; he will call the Nursery if no reply comes through to email.
- Olin Lathrop was tasked with exploring the possibility of a joint site walk of the Priest land with the Conservation Commission.
 - The matter was still with Nik Gualco. He’d asked several times.
 - Jonathan Basch mentioned that he’d been up there on his own. It appeared that the North facing side wasn’t as bad as the South facing side. When the leaves were off the bittersweet – it didn’t look as bad as when leafed out - but it was definitely very extensive.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that he was working to submit a habitat restoration grant in Fall to Fish & Wildlife. The goal would be to chop down everything and restore the whole area. Both the Conservation Commission and this Committee would have to get their ducks in a row.
 - Access is a challenge. The town doesn’t own any driveway or road access at the current time. There’s an easement to build a road, but the town would prefer not to. The Conservation Commission is talking to the homeowner about using the existing road.
- Brian Bettencourt reported that he’d thanked the Commissioners of Trust Funds via letter (sent electronically) for the recent Brochures print run.

The third item of business was the new “safe disposal of invasive plant material” brochure.

- The brochure was reviewed live on screen.
- Alison Hamilton’s emailed comments were handled.
- Live edits were then made.
- A discussion was held regarding whether the use of herbicides should be described in the text.
 - This topic is discussed in the plant-specific brochures.
- Significant edits were made live on screen.
- Discussion next focused on follow-up steps.
 - The PDFs of the brochure needed to be posted on the Committee web page.

- Olin Lathrop Moved to approve the brochure as edited.
 - Jonathan Basch seconded.
 - The Motion passed by unanimous roll call.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to have the disposal brochure posted on the Committee website (hosted by the town).
 - The print version will be discussed at the next meeting.

The fourth item of business was multiflora rose in Town forest as a possible next target for control.

- Brian Bettencourt described the problem along the river by the Town Forest.
 - He asked - what does Committee think?
- Adam Burnett replied: It's tough stuff to pull and cut. The thorns are horrible. Herbicide spray is very effective.
 - Olin Lathrop asked: What herbicide?
 - Adam Burnett: Glyphosate works well as a foliar spray, best applied in late spring/early summer.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Could the Committee use herbicide along the river?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes, but it would require an RDA with the Conservation Commission, permission from the Town Forest Committee, and the use of the non-surfactant form of spray.
 - The Committee has that chemical and used it previously on Phragmites.
 - So doing the application is not the problem; it would just involve lots of paperwork and hearings.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: When could the Committee do a walk?
 - The Committee next discussed the trail.
- The Committee agreed to individually walk by over the winter/early spring, and to circle back with ideas/recommendations as to whether it'd be a good spot for control efforts.
- Brian Bettencourt said: It's a beautiful spot with high visibility, and would achieve good publicity for the Committee's efforts.
- The Committee viewed the map of the area live on screen and discussed the exact spot where the infestation was found.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to talk to the Town Forest Committee about getting the multiflora rose project on their agenda.

The fifth item of business was plans for a seminar at Groton Public Library/Prescott

- This was discussed earlier in the meeting (above).
- Brian Bettencourt is to spearhead the effort.

The sixth item of business was preparations for the Garden Club event.

- The Annual Lecture is in February.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that Lisa Murray had said (and the Committee agreed) that some Invasive Species Committee material could be showed in their slides, before/after the main event.
- Brian Bettencourt said he would send along materials (slides).
- Jonathan Basch took an Action Item to prepare a “Warning!” slide regarding Spotted Lanternfly for the Garden Club.

The seventh item of business was the Upcoming Groton Conservation Summit.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that the Groton Conservation Trust was running the show this year.
- The Committee discussed the event.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Does the Committee want to participate?
 - The consensus of the discussion was – Yes.
 - It would be all Zoom this year.
 - To take place in late winter/early Spring.
- Brian Bettencourt said he would report back to the Groton Conservation Trust that the Committee wants to participate.

The eighth item of business was the town email address change.

- Brian Bettencourt said: Official town email addresses are changing to @grotonma.gov ...
 - All the brochures have the old email address on them.
 - The question is - how long the email forwarding will last.
 - The Committee could put stickers on all brochures --- that would be laborious.
 - Olin Lathrop said: The Committee would like to have the printed material be valid for a few years.
 - It’s extremely cheap to keep the email forwarding going for 5-10 years.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to contact the town IT Department and advocate for an extended period of email forwarding.

General Updates:

- Olin Lathrop reported that the RDA for Phragmites control at Priest Conservation Land was approved.
 - So, the Committee can go treat the Phragmites there in early Fall.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: What about Lovers Lane?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: They also approved that one (for Japanese knotweed) – this would be done in the Spring.

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Richard Hewitt Seconded.

The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM.