

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

25Jan2021

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Adam Burnett

Alison Hamilton

Also attending:

Charlotte Weigel

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Action Item Review
- 3) Annual Report: Progress and due date
- 4) Garden Club Lecture material review
- 5) Co-sponsored online seminars with Groton Conservation Trust
- 6) Japanese Knotweed along Nashua River at Surrenden Farms
- 7) Phragmites in Carmichael Swamp
- 8) Possibility of Brochure Distribution via Groton Food Project
- 9) Possibility of article on the committee in the Groton Herald
- 10) Possibility of Committee input on Invasive Species Plan for Shepley Hill proposed development

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM.

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

- The minutes were reviewed live on screen.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept.
 - Alison Hamilton seconded.
 - The motion to accept passed by unanimous roll call.

The second order of business was Review of Action Items from last meeting.

- Action Items:
 1. Richard Hewitt to get Mary Jennings at Prescott's contact info to Brian Bettencourt --- Brian Bettencourt to draft seminar material and distribute.
 2. Ron Strohsahl to call Groton Postmaster and see what USPS recommends for distribution of printed materials, with an emphasis on "we are a town body".
 3. Brian Bettencourt to have the Disposal of Invasives brochure posted on the Committee (town) website --- discuss print version at next meeting.
 4. Olin Lathrop to talk to Town Forest Comm. about getting multiflora rose project on their agenda.

5. Jonathan Basch to prepare a "Warning!" slide regarding Lanternfly for the Garden Club lecture.
 6. Brian Bettencourt to contact town IT Dept. and advocate for an extended period of email forwarding.
- 1 – Brian Bettencourt reported that he'd heard from Mary Jennings – Prescott willing to work with the Committee and the Groton Conservation Trust on seminars.
 - 2 – Ron Strohsahl reported that he went to the post office and talked to the clerk there.
 - USPS recommended doing the "every door direct mail" – it's set up online. There are 9 routes in Groton, including post offices.
 - The cost for 4422 addresses would be \$850.
 - Olin Lathrop asked: Who supplies the printed material?
 - Ron Strohsahl replied: The Committee would --- the brochures. 8.5x11 sheets are fine. The Post Office employees put in the doors of postal patrons.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: No addressing is needed?
 - Ron Strohsahl replied: None at all.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Who could the Committee approach regarding funding? (The original item under discussion was the disposal-of-invasive-plants brochure)
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The Commissioners of Trust Funds. Portrait view version (one page) of the brochure would have to be made.
 - Alison Hamilton said: The Disposal brochure should have a link on it to all the other brochures.
 - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to talk to Richard Hewitt about the Commissioners of Trust Funds potentially funding mailing address distribution of brochure(s), and more printing.
 - Ron Strohsahl added: The Committee can pick the day for distribution – he would recommend waiting till spring.
 - 3 – The Disposal of Invasive Plants brochure is up on the website. If it is to be printed, the Committee will ask the Commissioners again for funding as discussed above.
 - 4 – Multiflora rose in Town Forest.
 - Olin Lathrop reported that he got a reply from Steve Babin: Nothing committal yet. They had gone back and forth a couple times. The Committee's request might not need another full meeting. But, it's on their radar and Olin Lathrop is managing it.
 - The Committee next discussed the location along the Nashua River where the multiflora rose grows.
 - Charlotte Weigel reported that she would be hiking there next week.
 - Olin Lathrop mentioned that the Committee could use Boy Scouts for volunteer labor.
 - Adam Burnett replied: It is nasty stuff to rip out --- have to be very careful of thorns.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed, and suggested multiflora rose is a better candidate for herbicide.
 - 5 – Warning slide for Lanternfly.
 - The candidate slides were reviewed live on screen.

- Brian Bettencourt asked: Should these be shown just in the Garden Club material, and/or as an independent publication?
- Ron Strohsahl added: The Committee should also make sure to let the state know if the lanternfly is seen.
 - Olin Lathrop and Alison Hamilton agreed: This fact should be in the Garden Club material.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to ask Lisa Murray if it'd be okay to insert the Lanternfly slide(s) into the Garden Club lecture slides; also, to ask about image rights, and ask about a size bar on the nymph photo.
- 6 – Email forwarding at town IT Dept.
 - The Committee heard a report back from Brian Bettencourt and discussed the findings – that email forwarding would continue for at least another year.

The third order of business was the Annual Report (Progress and due date).

- Brian Bettencourt said: The Annual Report material is due to Dawn Dunbar by Friday the 29th.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Any volunteers to help with preparation?
- Alison Hamilton asked: Are there any old examples?
- Olin Lathrop said: The Committee can just send a bullet list of accomplishments to Dawn.
- All Committee Members took an Action Item to send Brian Bettencourt bullet lists of their favorite accomplishments via email. Brian Bettencourt will collate and send to Dawn Dunbar at Town Hall.

The fourth order of business was review of the Garden Club Annual Lecture material.

- Brian Bettencourt showed the material he'd prepared, live on screen.
- The Committee discussed the slides.
- Edits were made live on screen.
- The Committee reached agreement: Shorten the material in Slide #12 by quite a bit.
 - Also, they agreed to add in one slide on Lanternfly.
- The Committee also had a discussion on the Japanese knotweed and Phragmites slides.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to finalize the Garden Club slides, with addition of lanternfly material.

The fifth order of business was co-sponsored online seminars with the Groton Conservation Trust.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that the seminars can happen: He had briefly discussed with Katy Coburn, Michelle Ruby and David Black at the Trust.
- The Committee had a discussion and agreed that it was okay to hold off for a bit (per Groton Conservation Trust's timelines).
- Olin Lathrop asked: Would this be run through Prescott or Groton Public Library?
- Brian Bettencourt replied: It should be fine either way – both have good technical support, and there's good publicity at Prescott.
- Olin Lathrop said: Programs are free at library; he will do one there in person once it opens up again.
- Brian Bettencourt said: If the Trust likes Prescott, the Committee should go there.

- Ron Strohsahl said: if Olin Lathrop does a seminar, he should do it in late summer when people should be treating their invasives anyway.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: The same would apply for the joint lecture with the Trust. The lecture could likely be joint with Michelle Ruby.
- Olin Lathrop said: Whatever Brian Bettencourt is comfortable with, do it that way.

The sixth order of business was Japanese knotweed along the Nashua River at Surrenden Farms.

- Brian Bettencourt showed a map of the area on screen and reported on what he'd found.
- Brian Bettencourt led a Committee discussion. He views the knotweed as a big problem, and would like to eliminate it, if possible, this summer.
- Olin Lathrop said: The Committee has signed up to do a lot, but this project would be a good one.
 - The Committee would have to file a RDA with the Conservation Commission, and also get permission from Fish & Wildlife (state of MA) because they hold the conservation restriction.
 - In fact, the land might even be on the Groton Water Dept piece.
 - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to take a hike along the Nashua in Surrenden Farm, and scout out the knotweed location.
- The Committee discussed the Japanese knotweed and agreed controlling it would be desirable.
- Olin Lathrop reported that he'd also found multiflora rose, in the two areas in Surrenden where diseased red pines were harvested, and bittersweet was cut.
 - Brian Bettencourt said he'd noticed that as well.
 - Olin Lathrop added: Multiflora rose is really taking over in those cut areas.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Would you propose to go in and spray?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: It might be beyond the Committee's capability. There are lots of different opinions on how to control multiflora rose. Cut and paint seems to work. Differing ideas on spray mixtures exist.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Will it die eventually due to shade?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Eventually ... but that takes a long time. It could be mowed 5 or 6 times --- the Committee can't do that. He might look into a controlled burn.
 - Alison Hamilton asked, regarding a controlled burn: Done in season only?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: That would have to be done with the Fire Dept.
 - Adam Burnett added: Lots of wildlife issues would have to be looked into. Plus, it wouldn't likely kill the rose all the way back; it resprouts from roots.
 - Adam Burnett said he'd has found glyphosate to be very effective.
 - Olin Lathrop said he'd be worried about overspray.
 - Adam Burnett replied: Burning would be just as bad (collateral damage).
 - Olin Lathrop said: This might be something the Conservation Commission has to handle – he would talk there (the forestry company has to handle).

The seventh order of business was Phragmites in Carmichael Swamp.

- Brian Bettencourt described going on a recent hike around Carmichael Swamp, and led the Committee on a discussion of his finding of Phragmites at one end.
- Adam Burnett mentioned that one can look for different colors on Google Earth views, to tell the difference between Phragmites and other plant cover.

- Brian Bettencourt showed a map of the area live on screen.
 - There is access to the site on Orion Way.
- Adam Burnett said: It'd be easy to walk – it's frozen now – if the Committee wanted to check it out.
- Brian Bettencourt sent coordinates of a photo he took to the Committee.
- Adam Burnett moved to have Olin Lathrop file an RDA to control Phragmites in Carmichael Swamp.
 - Olin Lathrop – seconded.
 - The Motion passed unanimously via roll call.
- Olin Lathrop and Adam Burnett took an Action Item to look at the Phragmites in Carmichael Swamp. Olin Lathrop can file an RDA to control it.
- Brian Bettencourt said: The Committee needs to get down there and decide on best methods of control.
- Olin Lathrop said: The likely best time to treat would be Fall, or perhaps a spring/fall dual treatment.

The eighth order of business was the possibility of brochure distribution via the Groton Food Project.

- Brian Bettencourt reported that Carole Greenfield had emailed him and asked whether the Committee could distribute brochures in their Groton Food Project tote bags.
 - The Committee had a general discussion regarding the idea.
 - Olin Lathrop asked about the numbers of people participating in the Food Project.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: If the Committee did this, would that be viewed as an endorsement of their project?
- Ron Strohsahl asked: Are they comfortable doing this --- how do they pick and choose who to work with?
- Adam Burnett asked: How do the missions overlap?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: The Committee could make a garlic mustard brochure with recipes.
- Ron Strohsahl said: There's no need to do this if the Committee is going to direct mail.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to report to Carole Greenfield that there is interest (with some reservations) from the Committee regarding the Food Project distribution of materials --- and check with her on what their board said.

The ninth order of business was the possibility of an article on the Committee in the Groton Herald.

- Brian Bettencourt said the issue had been raised to him by a couple people.
 - He asked: Who does the Committee contact there?
- Olin Lathrop said: Talk to Russ Harris ... that's the easy part.
 - The hard part is the writing of the article.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Doesn't the newspaper ever interview folks?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes, but it's better to have some editorial input into the process and the content.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to contact Russ Harris at the Groton Herald, and to float the idea of an article on Committee and what we're up to.

The tenth order of business was the possibility of Committee input on the Invasive Species Plan for the proposed Shepley Hill development (items from Richard Hewitt).

- Brian Bettencourt said: Richard Hewitt reported to me the following (slightly off topic but will precede the below topics):
 - He'd been in discussion with Tom Delaney.
 - He'd also gotten a call from Paula Taurasi in Pepperell (on their Conservation Commission). The Pepperell Selectmen want to work on Invasives.
 - He'd sent her the brochures.
 - He'd invited her to our meetings in general.
- Brian Bettencourt also reported that Richard Hewitt was wondering about the Invasive Plant Plan in the Shepley Hills proposal.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: It's boilerplate; it talks about species that aren't even there.
 - It's not at all what he'd like to see. A page and a half. Nothing wrong there, but it's clearly not tailored to the site.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Would the Conservation Commission ask for more?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: So there is no role for this Committee on the matter right now?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: The Committee can come to the Conservation Commission meeting Jan 26th, 6:30 PM.
- Charlotte Weigel mentioned a comment at the Planning Board meeting regarding potential invasive plants at the 1:1 slope at rear of development.
- Olin Lathrop showed the invasives plan document live on screen. The section on Phragmites says hand methods only will be used.

The Committee next had a discussion with Charlotte Weigel about her interest in joining up.

Olin Lathrop moved to endorse Charlotte Weigel for Committee membership if she chooses to notify the town of interest via the Volunteer Interest Form.

Ron Strohsahl seconded.

The Motion passed unanimously by roll call.

Adam Burnett moved to adjourn.

Ron Strohsahl seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.