

# Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

15Feb2021

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Richard Hewitt

Jonathan Basch

Charlotte Weigel\*

Alison Hamilton\*\*

\* membership pending approval by Select Board

\*\* joined Emergency Continuation Meeting only (see below)

Agenda:

- 1) Review of minutes from last meeting
- 2) Action Item Review
- 3) Welcome to Charlotte Weigel
- 4) Garden Club Lecture wrapup
- 5) Letter of support for CPA project for Lost Lake/Knops Pond Watershed
- 6) Timing for online seminars with Groton Conservation Trust
- 7) Report on RDAs for upcoming projects (e.g. Priest, Surrenden, Carmichael)
- 8) Brochure distribution via USPS, and funding therein

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 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.
  - Ron Strohsahl seconded.
  - The motion to accept passed by unanimous roll call, Richard Hewitt and Jonathan Basch abstaining.

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

- Action Items:
  1. All Committee Members to send Brian Bettencourt bullet list of their favorite accomplishments via email. Brian Bettencourt to collate, send to Dawn Dunbar at town hall.
  2. Brian Bettencourt to talk to Richard Hewitt about Commissioners funding mailing address distribution of brochure(s), and more printing.

3. Brian Bettencourt to ask Lisa Murray if okay to insert Lanternfly slide(s) in the Garden Club lecture slides; ask about image rights; ask about size bar on nymph photo. (Brian Bettencourt to finalize Garden Club slides with addition of lanternfly)
  4. Olin Lathrop to take a hike along Nashua River in Surrenden Farm, scout out the knotweed location.
  5. Olin Lathrop, Adam Burnett to look at Carmichael Phragmites. Olin Lathrop can file RDA to control it.
  6. Brian Bettencourt to report to Carole Greenfield that there is interest with some reservations from Committee re/ Food Project distribution of materials --- check with her on what their board said.
  7. Olin Lathrop to contact Russ Harris at Groton Herald, float idea of article on Committee and what we're up to.
- 1 – Done: List of accomplishments was written up, formatted, and sent to Dawn at Town Hall for incorporation into Annual Report.
  - 2 – Done: Brian Bettencourt talked to Richard Hewitt (reviewed below).
    - Some concern exists about asking for more funding from the Commissioners so soon after recent funding of brochures print run.
    - Brian Bettencourt and Richard Hewitt said: We'd like to hold off for a bit.
      - Richard Hewitt: Allow some time in between – it's better to have infrequent larger requests than many small requests. For now, put the material online.
    - Brian Bettencourt asked: Are there any alternative sources for funding?
      - Olin Lathrop said: None are as straightforward as the Commissioners.
      - Richard Hewitt asked: Would the Groton Conservation Trust or Nashua River Watershed Association help fund the brochures?
      - Brian Bettencourt said: We're talking \$250 for printing, and \$850 for distribution via USPS.
      - Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to ask the Groton Conservation Trust via informal channels if they'd fund something like the brochure.
        - Olin Lathrop said he doesn't feel 100% comfortable with it.
        - Brian Bettencourt replied that he would just talk informally with Katy Coburn; if it's completely out of the question, no further pursuit.
  - 3 – Done: Lanternfly material was inserted into the Garden Club presentation slides. Slides were finalized and presented at rehearsal.
  - 4 – Nashua River: There's still snow on ground. Olin Lathrop hadn't gone yet. Similarly, he hadn't gone to the multiflora rose on the opposite bank; too hard to take pictures. He will wait until the snow is gone.
    - Ron Strohsahl reported that he'd hiked along the river and didn't find any multiflora rose.
      - Brian Bettencourt asked: How far did you get?
        - Ron Strohsahl replied that he'd done the loop up to the Dead River confluence.
      - Charlotte Weigel said that she'd done that loop as well. She did find the thorns by the intersection of the Nashua and Dead River --- along the bend, then it starts to clear up past the confluence. It's impinging on the trail. She reported

getting caught on it. She didn't think it was blackberries; it's quite an extensive patch.

- Ron Strohsahl mentioned that there is also some greenbriar too --- on the bank side --- in the northern 3<sup>rd</sup> of the trail from the Dead River.
- The Committee looked at a map of the area live on screen.
- Charlotte Weigel and Brian Bettencourt agreed that they were talking about the area South of the D2 marker on the map; in the "big bend" area.
  - Ron Strohsahl said he was talking about north of D2, before the dogleg back to parking.
- Olin Lathrop said that he would return once the snow melts.
- 5 – Olin Lathrop reported that he'd gone to Carmichael this past weekend.
  - Olin Lathrop showed a map of the area live on screen – he followed the trail in from Orion Way.
    - Olin Lathrop scouted to N and W of the trail; found no Phragmites.
    - Brian Bettencourt reported there was some to the S and E, down where the official trail ends. There's other water crossing there; basically the SE corner of Batten Woods --- that's where to look.
    - Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to notify Brian Bettencourt when he'd like to go look again at Carmichael; Brian Bettencourt will join.
- 6 – Done: Brian Bettencourt wrote to Carole Greenfield. He hadn't heard back yet; will wait for followup after their meeting.
- 7 – Olin Lathrop hadn't contacted the Groton Herald yet. Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to reach out to Russ Harris at the Groton Herald regarding an article on Committee.

The third order of business was a welcome to new (potential) Committee Member Charlotte Weigel.

- Brian Bettencourt asked: What happened with Dawn Dunbar and the Committee Interest form?
- Charlotte Weigel replied that she'd resubmitted the form, let Dawn know, and hadn't heard back yet. She will ping Dawn again.
  - Olin Lathrop asked: Was the form lost the first time?
  - Charlotte Weigel replied: Yes --- she did the online submission once, but never heard back.
  - Brian Bettencourt said that Dawn had reached out to him via email, asking him to have Charlotte re-submit the form.
    - He'd already asked Mark Haddad to put her membership on the agenda for the next Select Board meeting --- Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>.
    - Charlotte Weigel asked if she should attend?
    - Brian Bettencourt replied: No, you don't have to.
    - Charlotte Weigel took an Action Item to circle back again with Dawn Dunbar and make sure that she's good to go for Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - The Committee discussed that Charlotte Weigel would be the 8<sup>th</sup> member; there are slots for 9 on the current charter.

The fourth order of business was a wrapup of the Garden Club Annual Lecture.

- Brian Bettencourt gave an update: There had been a death in the family of the speaker; he found out during the rehearsal.
  - The talk was rescheduled for Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>.
  - Over 450 people had registered so far.
  - Brian Bettencourt sent a registration link to all the Committee members.
  - The Committee had a brief discussion regarding natural invasive plant control methods (the topic of the Lecture).

The fifth order of business was a Letter of Support for the CPA project for Lost Lake/Knops Pond Watershed.

- The Committee held a discussion of what the CPA (Community Preservation Act) is. Primary funding is tax revenue from town, with some state reimbursement.
  - Richard Hewitt provided detail, since he is on the Community Preservation Commission:
    - Typically, there is about 50%-65% match from State. The funds are used for historic, conservation, recreation, and affordable housing: Basically, various projects from community. If Town Meeting approves, the projects get funded.
  - Richard Hewitt described the project: Knops Pond and Lost Lake have been using herbicides to control invasive species. They're trying to figure out the actual sources of non-point-source pollution (including nutrients) getting into the lake. The nutrients fuel the invasive plant explosions. If they can figure that out, they could become eligible for federal funding.
    - Richard Hewitt added: As an aside --- this Committee could perhaps use a similar mechanism for terrestrial invasive plant control in the future if clearing of land for use along CPA approved uses was the goal.
  - The Committee discussed the history of the request: Alex Woodle had contacted Olin Lathrop. He asked if the Committee would sign on to a letter of support, recommending their project for CPC funding. (He provided a draft).
  - The Committee review the draft letter from Alex Woodle live on screen.

The Meeting was interrupted here by anonymous attendees who joined and "Zoom Bombed" the presentation with inappropriate content. The meeting was adjourned.

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The Committee rejoined the following evening, Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>, for an Emergency Session authorized by the Town Clerk, to vote on the time-sensitive issue of the Letter of Support for the Knops Pond/Lost Lake CPA project.

Attendees of the Emergency Session:

Brian Bettencourt, Adam Burnett, Richard Hewitt, Alison Hamilton, Ron Strohsahl, Charlotte Weigel, Jonathan Basch

The Committee picked up the discussion of the Letter of Support.

- Richard Hewitt reviewed the goals of the study and the eligibility for federal funding.

- The idea is to figure out how to divert the non-point-source pollution (including nutrients) flowing into the lake. Less nutrients → Less invasive plants → Less use of herbicides.
- Adam Burnett asked: What kind of invasives?
  - Brian Bettencourt replied: Water hyacinth I believe.
- Adam Burnett said that he's not convinced the nutrient inflow is from the streams entirely --- he believes it's also sewage coming up from the ground.
- Brian Bettencourt discussed the old septic systems in the Lost Lake area, and the number of new ones being built as houses turn over.
- Adam Burnett said he'd want to make sure the proposed study is unbiased.
  - The Committee discussed the relationship between old sediment and anoxic conditions.
  - Additionally, other invasives were discussed, e.g. Milfoil, Fanwort. Some invasive plants actually take nutrients out of water.
- Brian Bettencourt said: So let's edit the text of the draft, and add the Committee's sentiments to reflect our feelings about the study.
- Jonathan Basch said: Make sure to mention the link between herbicides and invasive species control.
- Edits to the draft letter were made live on screen.
- Alison Hamilton and Richard Hewitt said: There's no need to overwork this --- it's good to go in their opinion.
- Adam Burnett Moved to accept the letter as drafted and edited, for submitting to the CPC.
  - Jonathan Basch Seconded.
  - The Motion to approve passed via unanimous roll call, Richard Hewitt abstaining and Charlotte Weigel observing only.
- Brian Bettencourt took an Action Item to send the letter to Alex Woodle ASAP, such that it can become part of the application packet.

In other matters, Olin Lathrop provided quick updates on the RDA process for various Committee projects.

Richard Hewitt moved to adjourn.

Alison Hamilton seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.