

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

15Mar2021

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Charlotte Weigel

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Jonathan Basch

Richard Hewitt

Agenda:

- 1) Review of Minutes from Last Meeting
- 2) Action Item Review
- 3) Groton Conservation Summit
- 4) Garden Club lecture followup items
- 5) Carmichael site walk planning
- 6) RDA update, overall progress on Priest, Surrenden, Carmichael, and Town Forest site planning
- 7) Open Discussion

The Meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM.

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

- The minutes were reviewed and edited live on screen.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept.
 - Jonathan Basch 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. Brian Bettencourt to ask the Groton Conservation Trust via informal channels if they'd fund something like the brochure.
 2. Olin Lathrop to notify Brian Bettencourt when he'd like to go look again at Carmichael; Brian Bettencourt will join.
 3. Olin Lathrop to reach out to Russ Harris at the Groton Herald regarding an article on Committee.
 4. Charlotte Weigel to circle back again with Dawn Dunbar and make sure that she's good to go for Feb. 22nd Select Board meeting.
 5. Brian Bettencourt to send the CPA letter to Alex Woodle ASAP, such that it can become part of the application packet.
- 1. Done – Brian Bettencourt asked Katy Coburn. She was not sure what is and what is not fundable. She suggested to reach out to Ted Lapres.
 - Olin Lathrop said he was not terribly comfortable with this.

- Brian Bettencourt agreed, and said he wasn't really either; he views it as a last resort. Town, or Commissioners of Trust Funds, are the preferable source of funds.
- 2. Olin went on his own to Carmichael and will report.
- 3. Conservation Summit: Rotates through Groton Conservation Trust, Conservation Commission, Trails Committee each year as hosts.
 - Brian Bettencourt reported: This year's Summit is April 14th at 7 PM. The Agenda, copied from the email sent to Trust members:
 - The 2021 Groton Conservation Forum will be taking place on the evening of Wednesday, April 14th at 7pm. The Groton Conservation Trust is hosting this year, and we are pleased to announce that we have invited a special guest speaker, Sophie Ehrhardt, who coordinates the Wildlands Partnership at Northeast Wilderness Trust. Sophie will present her talk *Why Wilderness*, followed by a Q&A moderated by Groton Conservation Trust Vice President Mark Gerath.
 - Brian Bettencourt led a brief discussion on the Summit; why it's done; to talk about various topics, get us involved and discussing as like-minded groups.
- 4. Done. Charlotte Weigel is now an official member. The announcement was published in the Herald.
- 5. Done. Brian Bettencourt reported receiving a nice letter of thanks from Alex Woodle.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Was the letter presented okay to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC)?
 - Richard Hewitt said: It was part of an overall packet; all CPC members get it for review. Public support is a factor in fundability.

The third item of business was Groton Conservation Summit.

- This topic was handled in Action Items Review (above).

The fourth item of business was the Groton Garden Club (GGC) Lecture followup items.

- Brian Bettencourt reviewed what happened at the lecture; it was very enjoyable.
 - Jonathan Basch agreed; he enjoyed it a lot. He felt there were some items for the Committee to discuss, including the safety of glacial acetic acid as an herbicide. Also, it was interesting how the speaker admitted some herbicides were needed to control Bittersweet.
 - Charlotte Weigel said she was interested in the timing aspect ... the speaker mentioned how his methods can take years.
 - Brian Bettencourt agreed and said he appreciated that sensitivity; also, he appreciated the discussion regarding flooding as a control method.
- Brian Bettencourt reported that he was contacted by Margaret Sisson on the Harvard MA Conservation Commission; he shared the editable brochures with her. She wanted to edit them to remove "Groton"; she will get back to him with her edits.
- Brian Bettencourt said that he'd joined the Garden Club now and can serve as a liaison between the Club and this Committee.
- Richard Hewitt asked: Is the GGC lecture available online?
 - Brian Bettencourt said Yes, at the GGC web site.

The fifth item of business was the Carmichael Swamp site walkthrough.

- Olin Lathrop reported that he had found the Phragmites in question; Brian Bettencourt was right, it's where the Southern stream comes in.
 - Olin Lathrop showed pictures of the Phragmites online.
 - The Committee will get wet working on it.
 - It's time to get rid of it!
 - The map of the area was also viewed online, with Phragmites marked.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: This is all accessible, and on town land, correct?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Yes.
- Charlotte Weigel asked: What's that dividing line on the western edge?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Batten Woods and Carmichael Swamp --- both are Conservation Commission parcels, strictly on town land.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: The Committee would treat it in late summer? He was tempted to try in spring.
 - Olin Lathrop agreed: He would like to try --- to hit the leaves with herbicide when they come out in spring, to evaluate efficacy of early treatment.
 - Richard Hewitt agreed.
 - Brian Bettencourt reported that Michael Nadeau (the GGC lecture speaker) said late summer/early fall is best --- like what the Committee found at their sites.
 - Olin Lathrop said that the Committee's method of let grow/lay it flat/spray worked well.
 - However, he wants to try an early application and see what happens.
 - Charlotte Weigel said that Nadeau also said in a thinly invaded area, one could dig it out, but plan on 3-5 year process.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: How big is the infestation? He didn't get a great look at it.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: About 30-50 feet, but thin and in clumps. It's not a full stand yet.
 - The infestation is largely confined to the N/NW side of the brook.
- Ron Strohsahl pointed out on the map --- it looks like there's an old road or Right Of Way between two lots immediately to the S of the Phragmites area.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: Also, look at the brook draining to the SE into the circled area --- the Committee will have to check that area (SW of the circled area on the map) for more Phragmites --- there could be more upstream.
 - Jonathan Basch asked: What else is in the swamp, cattails?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: There are lots of species --- it's a very diverse permanent swamp.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: So what are our actions here?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: He will file an RDA in the next month.
 - So hopefully, permission to treat will be in hand before new growth.
- Brian Bettencourt asked: Is there a need for any more herbicide or other supplies?
 - Olin Lathrop replied that he didn't think so. This project will use Roundup "custom", with no surfactant.
 - The Committee held a discussion regarding the use of other mixes, like acetic acid, which are contact not systemic treatments.
- Ron Strohsahl asked: The problem with Phragmites is the rhizomes ... how to get to them?

- Brian Bettencourt replied: Time and labor! Or ...
- Olin Lathrop filled in: Roundup. The roots are connected. So the herbicide spreads from plant to plant.
- Brian Bettencourt and Olin Lathrop discussed timing. The idea would be to spot treat when leaves first come out.
 - April or May time frame --- the Committee will have to scout.
 - Charlotte Weigel was curious about spot treating, and asked: If experience teaches that September treatment worked well, why bother in spring?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: 1) As an experiment and 2) This isn't a big stand, so it'll be more work regardless of timing (can't flatten it out easily).
 - Brian Bettencourt added: Since it's not dense, and since not leafed out, the Committee will have to be very careful not to hit other plants and get the herbicide into the water.
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Correct. If the plant is sticking out right above water, we might not treat it at all.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Is this a cut and treat method?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: No, not cut; direct spray on leaves. Care will have to be taken.
- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to let other Committee members know when he plans to try first treatment of Carmichael Phragmites and ask for help.
 - Olin Lathrop said: We'll need someone to help keep track of where we've treated.
 - Brian Bettencourt added that he has many "sprinkler guy" flags for marking if need be.
- Olin Lathrop added: As Committee members find other Phragmites in town, let him know.
 - The Committee briefly discussed and reviewed previous work on Phragmites.

The fifth item of business was an RDA update: Overall progress on Priest, Surrenden, Carmichael, and Town Forest site planning.

- Olin Lathrop reported:
 - Priest – no RDA filed. What's going on: The Stewardship Committee was going to go look --- and have to wait till after snowmelt. This Committee will be invited.
 - Carmichael – covered above.
 - Surrenden: This is the Japanese Knotweed at Nashua River.
 - Olin Lathrop showed pictures live on screen. It is a relatively small stand, not right up against the river.
 - The stems are relatively small; it's a shady spot. The weed is not super healthy looking.
 - Brian Bettencourt said: This makes one wonder how it got there in first place.
 - Olin Lathrop showed a map with the Knotweed circled.
 - Olin Lathrop said the RDA is not filed yet. It is required because it's less than 100 feet from wetland.
 - It's on the Campbell Well Site. This is Water Dept. land. The Committee will have to ask them. The Conservation Commission is not the landowner.

- Olin Lathrop took an Action Item to talk to the Water Dept. about treating knotweed on the Campbell Well Site.
 - Richard Hewitt moved to approve Olin Lathrop to file an RDA to treat Japanese Knotweed on the Campbell Well Site.
 - Ron Strohsahl seconded.
 - Discussion:
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: When to treat? Before flowering?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Late May/Early June ... this would be cut and drip with glyphosate. Next, a followup foliar treatment with triclopyr in early fall.
 - Brian Bettencourt asked: Since it's on a heavily trafficked trail, will the Committee have to put up signs?
 - Olin Lathrop replied: Technically, that's not an official trail. Also, no signs were put up post treatment on Hayden or Martins Pond roads.
 - Brian Bettencourt said the idea here would be publicity, not a warning.
 - Olin Lathrop felt that it was not worth the work ... just not a lot of visibility.
 - Richard Hewitt agreed, and said that he didn't want just one person getting upset about it.
 - Olin Lathrop said: This project might have to be approved by MA Fish and Wildlife, who hold the Conservation Restriction.
 - The Motion passed by unanimous roll call.
- Olin Lathrop said that the "multiflora rose" in Town Forest is green briar, not multiflora rose.
 - The area was shown on the map on screen; basically, the entire trail along the river North of the Japanese Knotweed.
 - The Committee viewed pictures back and forth --- greenbriar vs. multiflora rose.
 - Ron Strohsahl added: There is Japanese barberry in that area, definitely ... but that's everywhere.

The last item was Open Discussion.

- Brian Bettencourt said: The Committee can talk here, but not vote.
- Brian Bettencourt gave a brief Groton Conservation Trust Bates Land cleanup recap.
- Charlotte Weigel said: For the agenda next time --- on the Bertozzi land --- she had found a small spot of multiflora rose.
 - Ron Strohsahl said: That's right in his backyard. He goes back there all the time.
 - Charlotte Weigel described the site: Head straight back from the parking lot, about halfway to the river, on right hand side.
 - Charlotte Weigel asked: Are the berries diagnostic?
 - Charlotte Weigel shared a picture live. Looks like rose hips on the ends of stems.
 - Elongated, curved thorns
 - Mixed in with other plants perhaps?

- Ron Strohsahl took an Action Item to informally go take a walk down the Bertozzi path, past the monument, and look for multiflora rose on the right. He will contact Charlotte Weigel and the rest of Committee to see if they want to come.

- Ron Strohsahl said that he'd been seeing online groups of people doing "detrashing" along the side of the road.
 - He was wondering if groups in town do this?
 - Brian Bettencourt replied: Yes, for example the Cub Scouts.
 - Richard Hewitt said: Around Earth Day every year, it's part of a townwide cleanup day.
 - Olin Lathrop added: Different groups get involved. He didn't know if the Nashua River Watershed Association or the Greenway Committee run it.
 - Charlotte Weigel asked: Ron Strohsahl --- are you looking to have groups be on the lookout for invasives?
 - Ron Strohsahl replied: He's looking to get involved. He could point out to other groups, have them log locations for us.

Richard Hewitt Moved to adjourn.

Olin Lathrop Seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.