**Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes**

**17Oct2022**

**Via Zoom**

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Charlotte Weigel

Jonathan Basch

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Ben Wolfe

Other Attendees:

Ann Carpenter

Richard Muehlke

Agenda:

1. Review of minutes and action items from September 19th meeting
2. Update on current projects coming up or seasonal work completed:

* Priest Phragmites
* Country Club knotweed
* Carmichael Phragmites (RDA status for new Phragmites stand if needed and mapping if done)

1. Discuss RDA status of Town Forest
2. Discuss progress and plan for upcoming work - Campbell well site/Nod Rd knotweed - include any requests for info for December update to Council and review receipts
3. Update on priority parcels exploration/mapping from sign up at July meeting
4. Discuss possibility for presenting Town Forest findings to other committees
5. Update on Carol Wheeler Park - revisit by Olin Lathrop

The Meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.

The first order of business was review of minutes and action items from September meeting

* The minutes were reviewed
* Olin Lathrop moved to accept the minutes as amended.
  + Ron Strohsahl seconded.
  + The motion to accept the minutes passed, Jonathan Basch and Brian Bettencourt abstained as they were not in attendance at the last meeting
* Olin Lathrop to meet with member of Park Commission at the park again to catalog the invasive plants in Carol Wheeler Park and move forward with the management plan to initiate treatment of invasive plants
  + Olin Lathrop completed, sent first pass management plan back to the parks department. Waiting for the parks department to comment.
  + Charlotte Weigel: What is your first pass estimate on the number of people and hours?
  + Olin Lathrop: As many people as we can get for two hours as a start and go from there
  + Brian Bettencourt: Would be a good project for boy scouts
* Olin Lathrop will see if RDA filed in 2021 for treatment of first stand of Phragmites in Carmichael swamp covers treatment of the second stand. If not, Olin will file RDA for vote at October Conservation Committee meeting.
  + pending
* Ben Wolfe is going to find out by November meeting cost to insure a pesticide applicator, and potentially inquire if the Wild and Scenic Rivers Council would be interested in sponsoring for treatments of private land along rivers.
  + Will update in November meeting
* Olin to talk to Michele Girard from Wild and Scenic Rivers Council to see what they think about taking on insurance for applicator
  + Pending
  + Committee discussed various approaches to this and the previous related action item
  + Ron Strohsahl: to inquire with supervisor regarding process to get insurance for applicator **[Action item]**
  + Charlotte Weigel: The context for these actions is that Ben Wolfe identified Knotweed location along the Nashua River on private land
  + Jonathan Basch: Historically, we have had some reservations regarding treating invasive species on private land
  + Olin Lathrop: Yes, if I was a commercial applicator, I am not sure I would like the idea of competing with the town for the same service
  + Jonathan Basch: Is there a way we could sponsor or facilitate vs treat ourselves?
  + Charlotte Weigel: What about the idea that the council would grant funds that we would treat along the river?
  + Ben Wolfe: Think the first step is that we should contact Michele Girard
* Olin to file RDA for treating knotweed in Town Forest
  + Olin Lathrop: Delayed, Town Forest committee thought we needed approval from state. Approval from the state not required, but RDA still needed
* Charlotte Weigel to reach out to Town Forest Committee to ask for approval to treat Japanese knotweed and stiltgrass at their next meeting
  + ongoing
* Schedule second treatment of knotweed at Campbell Well and Nod Rd.
  + Completed on 10/9 at Campbell Well, but did not treat at Nod Rd
  + Charlotte Weigel: How long did it take?
  + Jonathan Basch: About two hours
  + Olin Lathrop: we could have used more people as spotters.
  + Olin Lathrop: We did not treat again at Petapawag

* Request to attend Town Forest Committee meeting to report invasives found in Forest and to request MoU.
  + Charlotte Weigel: Was initially held up with the thinking that we needed approval from the state. Can now move forward. We never voted on establishing a MoU and should do that here
  + Olin Lathrop: Moved to proceed with establishing a MoU with the Town Forest Committee to treat invasive plants when we find them
  + Charlotte Weigel seconded
  + Motion passed unanimously
* Charlotte will look into getting stand for holding brochures.
  + pending
* Charlotte to write Mark Haddad to confirm process for reimbursement
  + Pending
  + Ben Wolfe: Richard proposed that the town should purchase eg the seeds directly
  + After some committee discussion reassigned to Jonathan Basch

Standing:

* Adam Burnett to become a EDDmapS verifier
  + Not in attendance

The second order of business was Update on current projects coming up or seasonal work completed:

* Priest Phragmites
  + No update- done for the year
* Country Club knotweed
  + Olin Lathrop: Visited on 10/9. Looked like they mowed the top of the hill and mulched. There is still Knotweed along the hill

***Committee discussion proceeded on how to treat the knotweed along the hill:***

* + Brian Bettencourt: Could we rent a cherry picker?
  + Jonathan Basch: Could we get longer applicator to reach down the hill?
  + Brian Bettencourt: Adam was thinking a stream nozzle applicator might be better than a spray
  + Ron Strohsahl: Can we treat earlier when the knotweed is lower?
  + Charlotte Weigel: We were there pretty early in June
  + Jonathan Basch: Treating early is a good idea, it grows pretty quickly in that location with good sun exposure, might be better to treat in May instead of June
* Carmichael Phragmites (RDA status for new Phragmites stand if needed and mapping if done)
  + Brian Bettencourt: Today visited Charmichael swamp with a drone to find additional Phragmites further out in the swamp. Not easily accessible.

***Brian shared image of drone path and then shared pictures taken with the drone***

* + Olin Lathrop: Might be access via Batten Woods
  + Brian Bettencourt: Growing among conifers, not a monoculture, stands out from the rest of the swamp
  + Brian Bettencourt: Is there any chance it is native Phragmites?
  + Olin Lathrop: How would we tell if it was? It was interesting, I don’t see any tassel. Does Phragmites have male and female forms?

***On further examination, found a few tassels in the images***

* + Ben Wolfe: There is diagnostic test to distinguish native form invasive Phragmites, could be tested in my lab
  + Charlotte Weigel: It would be over half an acre of treatment
  + Olin Lathrop: it would be beyond our capability
  + Brian Bettencourt: Wouldn’t want to kill the pine trees
  + Charlotte Weigel: We could do a treatment with a mitt, but would be labor intensive
  + Charlotte Weigel: Given the clonal nature, treating from outside might be effective
  + Brian Bettencourt: Will get a better look in the winter, strange that it has not covered more area
  + Ron Strohsahl: State has a mapper (Mass mapper) that enables to look at aerial photos from past years. **Action for Ron Strohsahl to analyze past images of Carmichael to determine the change in the extent of Phragmites**
  + **Action for Brian Bettencourt to visit in the winter if possible when the swamp is frozen**
  + Olin Lathrop: county does arial surveying I thought every year
  + Ron Strohsahl: It is NCRS and is every couple years, they usually do it when the leaf is on the foliage
  + Jonathan Basch: Is that available through the same state website?
  + Ron Strohsahl: It is federal – could not find it on the Mass mapper images
  + Charlotte Weigel: Will develop a treatment plan based on findings
  + Charlotte Weigel: Phragmites spreads by seed early on, but mostly underground

The third order of business was Discuss RDA status of Town Forest

* Pending, now know the next step

The fourth order of business was Discuss progress and plan for upcoming work - Campbell well site/Nod Rd knotweed - include any requests for info for December update to Council and review receipts

* Charlotte Weigel: Seeding is the last work for this year. Amy Ma will be pulling together the update to the council and will need the receipts. **Action for Olin Lathrop to email receipts to Charlotte Weigel.**
* Olin Lathrop: Will prepare a paper copy for Charlotte Weigel to sign
* Olin Lathrop: Request reimbursement for three items:
  1. Round-Up Pro Max (with surfactant): $75.33
  2. Back Sprayer with shipping cost: $200.02
  3. Round-Up custom (without surfactant): $137.50
* Charlotte Weigel moved to approve the reimbursement for the above items with grand total: $412.85
* Jonathan Basch seconded
* Motion passed (Olin abstained)
* **Action Olin Lathrop will provide the paper copy to the town accountant**
* **Action for Charlotte Weigel to go to town hall to sign the receipts**
* Charlotte Weigel: Amy Ma is working off the model that Pepperell used to document the grant work. Will develop and draft with Charlotte Weigel and Ben Wolfe and then share with the committee

The fifth order of business was Update on priority parcels exploration/mapping from sign up at July meeting

* Charlotte Weigel: Good portion of Town forest visited with Amy Ma. Northeast corner seems to the problem area, buckthorn, barberry. Parking lot has stiltgrass.
* Jonathan Basch: Pleasantly surprised so far with the surveying in Town forest. Walked the railroad trail along the Squanticook water department land. Some areas of bittersweet that could be spot treated, but on the whole not bad
* Ron Strohsahl: Are we sticking to trails? Trails end after a few hundred yards
* Charlotte Weigel: Start with the trails, once completed then look at other areas that are expected to be likely spots
* Brian Bettencourt: If there is a clearing, for example, would be a good place to check. River banks/ disturbed areas
* Charlotte Weigel: Check wetlands, bring binoculars
* Charlotte Weigel: Once we have the surveys, what to do with all of that information? More than we can treat, have to prioritize
* Jonathan Basch: Have a lot of good data now to discuss over the winter months
* Ron Strohsahl: Can get preapprovals for any treatments we will plan to do
* Charlotte Weigel: Could partner with Deb Fountain in Pepperell and possibly Shirley [*the town of*] for Weed Warriors. Could set up a day for hand pulling and put on Groton facebook
* Charlotte Weigel: If someone is passionate about an area I don’t want to stop them
* Charlotte Weigel: Could do a neighborhood effort in Hawtree- lots of barberry [clarified South of Hawtree]
* **Action to review parcel list at next meeting**

The sixth order of business was to discuss possibility for presenting Town Forest findings to other committees

* Charlotte Weigel: Discussed at last meeting, summarize information we have. Work with Amy Ma on this.
* Olin Lathrop: We will have to come up with our own treatment plan and present
* Charlotte Weigel: We have put some of the worst areas on EddMaps

The seventh order of business was Update on Carol Wheeler Park - revisit by Olin

* Met with Gail Chalmers, took some pictures and wrote up a management plan. working with parks department to reach agreement on management plan

Other Discussion:

* Charlotte Weigel: Olin did a fantastic job presenting at the conservation conference. Thanks Olin!
* Charlotte Weigel: Brian and Charlotte will be going to the middle school to teach 8! science classes. Will be classroom and outdoor scavenger hunt

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Jonathan Basch Seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:11 PM.