**Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes**

**28Nov2022**

**via Zoom**

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Charlotte Weigel

Jonathan Basch

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Ben Wolfe

Adam Burnett

Other Attendees:

Amy Ma

Agenda:

1. Review of minutes and action items from October 17th meeting
2. Discuss Town Forest invasive species management approvals - Town Forest Committee and Con Comm
3. Discussion on insurance for applicator
4. Update on current projects coming up or seasonal work completed:

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

1. Discuss progress and plan for upcoming work for grant: deer tongue seeding and report status
2. Review parcel list - discuss findings and prioritization for mapping/treatment
3. Discuss possibility for presenting Town Forest findings to other committees
4. Review receipts from Adam Burnett
5. Update on Spotted Lantern Fly from Adam Burnett

The Meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

The first order of business was review of minutes and action items from October 17th meeting

* The minutes were reviewed
* Olin Lathrop moved to accept.
  + Jonathan Basch seconded.
  + The motion to accept the minutes passed with one abstention, Adam Burnett, who did not attend the October 17th meeting.

Action items:

New:

* Action for Ron to inquire with supervisor regarding process to get insurance for applicator
  + Supervisor not able to attend the meeting tonight, but is willing to attend in the future
  + Olin Lathrop: One question is how much does it cost? {Answer obtained via text during the meeting: $500- $700 for one applicator}
  + Discussed Action for Ron to see if his supervisor is available for the next meeting. Committee to prepare a list of questions, he might be able to answer {after further discussion it was determined that we have the critical information to move forward}
  + Adam Burnett: What does this topic relate to, what is the objective of this?
  + Charlotte Weigel: relates to discussions regarding what it would take to treat on private property
  + Adam Burnett: We are licensed but not insured
  + Olin Lathrop: Difference between a regular license and higher-level license that allows use of certain restricted chemicals. A person who has the higher-level license can supervise another applicator. Higher level licensee could potentially provide insurance.
  + Charlotte Weigel: If we do this Olin you would be taking on personal responsibility, would it be like your own company? Who would pay for the chemicals?
  + Olin Lathrop: No difference there, this is the just the insurance end of this.
  + Ben Wolfe: Which companies provide this type of insurance? This is probably low priority.
  + Jonathan Basch: I think the scenario was that if we could get money from Wild and Scenic rivers to sponsor someone to do this, we could treat the spot of Knotweed that Ben identified on the Nashua River that is on private land or others like it.
  + Charlotte Weigel: Should we follow up on this i.e., ask follow-up with Ron’s supervisor?
  + Olin Lathrop: I think we have what we need. I bet Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) has a list of companies that provide this type of insurance. Wild and Scenic council could potentially buy the insurance.
  + Charlotte Weigel: Have we approached Wild and Scenic council?
  + Olin Lathrop: Not yet, since we did not know how much it costs.
  + Adam Burnett: We have so many spots to treat already [identified on Town land], we could focus just on Phragmites, for example and have enough to keep us busy
  + Charlotte Weigel: Agree, we have plenty to already but this was to treat a specific spot of Knotweed that was found
* Action for Ron to analyze past images of Carmichael to determine the change in the extent of Phragmites
  + ***Ron shared google images***
  + Ron Strohsahl: Not all images taken at the same time. Resolution not good enough to see the change
  + Adam Burnett: In winter you can see Phragmites really well, as opposed to the pines, it turns to a tan color.
  + Brian Bettencourt: The pine trees are more than 10 years old; it is expected to be green way back in the images.
  + Adam Burnett: Signature of Phragmites in winter is it will be blown over – different than cattail.
  + ***Conclusion that images were not definitive but appeared to show Phragmites in most recent winter view***
  + Brian Bettencourt: Maybe we can get someone who takes drone shots for the town to image for us {John Ellenberger}. Agriculture companies that specialize in drone services do this all the time
  + Jonathan Basch: Still an open question if it is native Phragmites?
  + Brian Bettencourt: Absolutely, that is what I want to examine when I can get out there. Will bring back some samples to examine.
* Action for Brian to visit Carmichael in the winter when frozen to observe the area more closely
  + tabled until relevant
* Action for Olin to email receipts for herbicide and sprayer purchases to Charlotte
  + Olin Lathrop: Found that something was missed in the expense requested for reimbursement, one jug of the herbicide. Need to revote so we can endorse the final amount; $642.06.
  + Adam Burnett moves that we authorize reimbursement for receipts submitted by Olin Lathrop to the town accountant of $642.06.
  + Ron Strohsahl seconded.
  + Motion voted on by roll call and passed (Olin Lathrop recused himself)
  + Olin Lathrop: Charlotte Weigel to go to town accountant and sign receipts
  + Charlotte Weigel: Already signed based on previous vote, but will check if anything was missed
* Action for Olin to provide paper copy of receipts to town accountant
  + Done
* Action for Charlotte to go to Town hall to sign receipts
  + Done- but will check to make sure everything has been assigned
* Action to review parcel list at next meeting – On agenda, see below
* Action for Charlotte to work with Amy on presentation on findings in Town Forest
  + On Agenda, see below

Standing:

* Olin 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.
  + Olin Lathrop: Definitely does not cover. Let’s wait until we have additional information, like what Brian can determine from his survey and then file RDA
  + Charlotte Weigel: We already voted on this and would not need to vote again
* Ben 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.
  + Complete, see above
* Olin to talk to Michele Girard from Wild and Scenic Rivers Council to see what they think about taking on insurance for applicator
  + Now have the information to move forward
* Olin to file RDA for treating knotweed in Town Forest
  + Olin Lathrop: Started to write up, but thinking we should ask for permission to treat anything along the Nashua River.
  + Charlotte Weigel: This is beyond the MoU we were going to ask the Town forest committee?
  + Olin Lathrop: This would be beyond the initial RDA proposed, should ask if we can have an RDA for treating anything we find along the river. Would be good to show what we found already
  + Adam Burnett: Permission would be about the methodology, how we would treat?
  + Olin Lathrop: Approval for the location
  + Adam Burnett: inclusive of the corridor within x number of feet from the river…?
  + Olin Lathrop: We are going to Town Forest committee anyway and once decided, file RDA for treatment
  + Charlotte Weigel: We voted to establish a MoU and an RDA for knotweed, do we need to vote on an RDA for treating any invasive species within 100 feet of a wetland in Town Forest?
  + Olin Lathrop: proposed motion as stated above
  + Adam Burnett: seconded
  + Motion passed by unanimous vote
  + Olin Lathrop: Will wait until we hear more from the Town Forest Committee
* Charlotte to reach out to Town Forest Committee to ask for approval to treat Japanese knotweed and stilt grass at their next meeting
  + Charlotte Weigel: Steve Babin is willing to meet with us. Amy prepared maps to share. We will have to go to one of their meetings
  + **Charlotte to follow-up with Steve Babin**
* Request to attend Town Forest Committee meeting to report invasives found in Town Forest and to request MOU.
  + Discussed – see above
* Charlotte will look into getting stand for holding brochures.
  + Done, identified stands. Haven’t gone to garden centers yet. Target for the spring
* Jonathan to write Mark Haddad to confirm process for reimbursement - Done
* Adam Burnett to become a EDDmapS verifier
  + -ongoing

The second order of business was Discuss Town Forest invasive species management approvals - Town Forest Committee and Con Comm

* Covered above

***Amy shared the map of the Town Forest on the screen***

* Amy Ma: Walked the trails in the Town Forest with Charlotte Weigel ~ 6 times. Marked the location of invasive species. Stilt grass, barberry, Asian honeysuckle, Oriental bittersweet. Buckthorn widespread. More invasive species in areas of disturbance and along the river. Knotweed in one spot along the river.
* Adam Burnett: Was there bittersweet along the railroad track?
* Jonathan Basch: I walked the railroad track and it was surprisingly better than expected. I did take a few location recording for bittersweet – I can send.
* Adam Burnett: No Phragmites?
* Charlotte Weigel: No. Interior is pretty good. One spot of barberry where we had treated previously
* Olin Lathrop: This is great, want to show the ConCom why we need the blanket RDA
* Adam Burnett: The vernal ponds are wetlands
* Olin Lathrop: Much of the town forest is within 100 feet of wetland
* Charlotte Weigel: The honeysuckles were along the water district access rd at every pole.
* Adam Burnett: Could be seeds coming in with the equipment or birds depositing seeds
* ***Big thanks to Amy – great map!***

The third order of business was Discussion on insurance for applicator

* Covered above

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

* Country Club knotweed
* Carmichael Phragmites (RDA status for new Phragmites stand if needed and mapping if done)  - See notes above

The fifth order of business was Discuss progress and plan for upcoming work for grant: deer tongue seeding and report status

* Ben Wolfe: Spread seeds heavily along the river edge. Herbicide treatment looks effective. We can count the plots when we return in the summer
* Brian Bettencourt: Was there bare soil?
* Ben Wolfe: yes, lots of bare soil and animal activity. Spread in the 4- 5 plots that were treated
* Adam Burnett: Will be perfect environment for seed germination, predict good germination

The sixth order of business was Review parcel list - discuss findings and prioritization for mapping/treatment

* ***Parcel list reviewed***
* Charlotte Weigel: We pretty much hit everything that is town property
* Ben Wolfe: at Campbell well site there are other invasives – e.g., garlic mustard, definitely some barberry
* Brian Bettencourt: When I mapped Sabine woods – I used survey 1, 2, 3 and logged invasive species observed. Massive amount of work at Bates and have been pulling invasives out of the edge of the meadow where James brook and mowing and keeping clear as a meadow.
* Charlotte Weigel: Should we only focus on town land on the list or should be looking at everything we have prioritized?
* Jonathan Basch: The total acreage should be considered. The Wharton plantation, for example, is significant portion of the land in town. Mapping and surveying and documenting what is there is still valuable
* Adam Burnett: Part of the cost of doing business is to consider invasive species as part of forestry activities
* Brian Bettencourt: Rick Muelke is the person to speak to. The problem is if you are going to cut timber there is going to be invasive species introduction
* Adam Burnett: If it is done correctly, it can be addressed. Part of the cost of doing business is post cutting management
* Olin Lathrop: Surrenden farm clearing did have a management plan and made a big difference
* Charlotte Weigel: Should we monitor the NEF land or should we move to other lands on this list on Groton land?
* ***Topic tabled - agreed to focus on town land***
* Charlotte Weigel: We could perform the prioritization again with just town land
* **Action for Ron to prepare a map of town land with just the town of Groton lands**
* Olin Lathrop: We have plenty to keep us busy. Surrenden farm is going to be a multi-year effort
* Charlotte Weigel: Next year when things green up again, we can visit these properties again, see what is there if we want to treat it
* Jonathan Basch: If we have weed warriors up and running, some of these areas may be good for weed warrior efforts
* Ron Strohsahl: Mass wildlife is planning an oak barren restoration in Townsend and Shirley adjacent to Squanticook. They are planning cutting and burning, opening the area for potential invasives
* Charlotte Weigel: They are going to manage the invasives in the area- correct?
* Olin Lathrop: Has anyone seen Montague plains? Went out there to visit. Very interesting ecosystem
* ***Discussion continued on how invasives will be controlled and how the project will proceed. Will be interesting to monitor, but not in Groton Town property***

The seventh order of business was Discuss possibility for presenting Town Forest findings to other committees

* Olin Lathrop: will present to Town Forest committee first and see how it goes

The eighth order of business was review receipts from Adam Burnett

* ***Adam shared screen showing expenses***
* Olin Lathrop: moved that the committed approve the reimbursement of expenses to Adam as shown of $474.11
* Ben Wolfe seconded the motion
* The motion passed unanimously
* Adam Burnett: Will need annual reimbursement for licensing for each year
* Olin Lathrop: Annual licensing not covered by the grant, previously covered the cost personally.
* Olin Lathrop: Could go straight to the town

The ninth order of business was Update on Spotted Lantern Fly from Adam Burnett

* Adam Burnett: Major infestation in Fitchburg, might be in Ayer. Concentrated where the Ailanthus is found. Lots of Ailanthus in Fitchburg. Egg masses are deposited widely. Good thing is that there is not a lot of Ailanthus in Groton. Will likely spread via railroad tracks and other disturbed areas
* Charlotte Weigel: Have seen some Ailanthus in Pepperell. Are the egg masses easily to see?
* Adam Burnett: look like small brown masses – look like bark
* Olin Lathrop: They don’t fly very far, mostly transported by egg masses
* Olin Lathrop: State is doing the front-line monitoring/treatment

Other Discussion:

* Amy presented the brochures with improved lay out/graphics:
* Charlotte Weigel: Amy also prepared a template for brochures
* Reviewed brochures – consensus that they looked great!
* Two proposals for new brochures: Spotted lantern fly and Japanese Stiltgrass

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Jonathan Basch Seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM.