

Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes

18Dec2023 (remote)

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt
Charlotte Weigel
Jonathan Basch
Olin Lathrop
Ron Strohsahl
Richard Hewitt
Adam Burnett
Ann Carpenter

Agenda:

1. Review of minutes and action items from Nov 27th meeting
2. Update on any progress on landscaping design standards
3. Update from Dec 14th site walk with Leonna from NRWA
4. Review letter for Sustainability Commission
5. Restoration at Surrenden - seed sharing for generating winter seedlings?
6. Discuss Tree of Heaven and burning bush at Lost Lake fire station
7. Review signage to use for upcoming work
8. All other business

The Meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

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

- The minutes were reviewed.
- Olin Lathrop moved to accept.
 - Ann Carpenter seconded.
 - The motion to accept the minutes passed by unanimous roll call.

New:

1. Charlotte to visit the GELD site and survey the knotweed
 - a. pending
2. Charlotte to add topic of town planting guide to the next meeting - done
3. Charlotte to schedule a site walk with Leonna and Marissa at the Town Forest in the next month. Will communicate time and date to the committee for any others who may be available - Done
4. Brian to put the NRWA (Leona and Marissa) in contact with Groton Conservation Trust regarding volunteer invasive plant treatment opportunities on GCT properties

- a. Done
5. Charlotte to further survey the Phragmites at the Casella site and bring the information back to the committee. – pending – will need a good freeze to get out to the location
6. Action item to any available committee members to visit the site near the lost lake fire station building to survey the Ailanthus. - Done
7. Committee members to email Brian opinions regarding the Ailanthus treatment information to include in the brochure. Brian will consider the input and will revisit the topic for next meeting - Done

Standing:

8. Action for Ben to order the Clethra - plan for March planting - pending
9. Adam Burnett to become a EDDmapS verifier - pending, Charlotte to follow-up with Adam

The second order of business was update on any progress on landscaping design standards.

- Charlotte Weigel: Lorayne Black from the Planning Board is leading the effort. Will start working on this after the new year. She would be happy to come to the January meeting. Potentially talking about it being an agenda item at the Conservation forum
- Ann Carpenter: Starting to look at stormwater regulations. They have to update erosion control. Could specify native species required. Is that the type of thing we are thinking of?
- CW: I think that is the kind of thing we want to recommend, would be good to talk to her about it. Not sure if it will be a topic at the conservation forum
- Richard Hewitt: When is the conservation forum?
- Olin Lathrop: Up to the trust, usually late February. It is up to the trust when the forum is and what topics there are
- **Action:** Brian to propose the topic of planting guidelines for the upcoming conservation forum- further discussion on this topic later in the meeting. The topic can be brought up at during the open discussion
- **Action:** Charlotte Weigel to invite Lorayne Black to next meeting
- Olin Lathrop: It is already in the town bylaw that only native species can be planted within 100 feet of a wetland/ 200 feet from a river
- Adam Burnett: Is it Groton's definition of a river?
- Olin Lathrop: Yes- [*Olin Lathrop read from the current Groton's wetlands bylaws*]
- Adam Burnett: Would this be waived for agriculture?
- Olin Lathrop: Yes, agriculture would have exemptions but would not apply to most homeowners
- Richard Hewitt: Landscaping design standards would be applicable beyond the buffer zone of the wetlands
- Adam Burnett: There are also some state guidelines

- Charlotte Weigel: It is not just about preventing invasives but promoting natives. If we can all weigh in on these guidelines as she (Lorrayne Black) is making changes we will have stronger guidelines

The third order of business was Update from Dec 14th site walk with Leonna from NRWA:

- Charlotte Weigel: Met Leonna and Marissa last Thursday [December 14th, 2023]. Took the trail to the river, past the glossy buckthorn to see the barberry. Some work to do on the exact approach. Will partly depend on the number volunteers. The Groton - Dunstable high school Environmental Club may be interested. Leonna will take the lead in identifying volunteers. Grant expires in May. Will be a busy April. Have swamp maple and clethra and maybe one other species for native plantings.
- Ron Strohsahl: Did she mention where they sourced the seedlings from?
- Charlotte Weigel: Didn't know but will ask

The fourth order of business was Review letter for Sustainability Commission

- Charlotte Weigel: Did not get to this item. The commission needs this by January 11th.
- Olin Lathrop: Moved that we vote to authorize the committee chair to send a letter of support to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for planting corridor at the Groton Center proposed by the Sustainability Commission (amended)
- Jonathan Basch: Seconded the motion
- Richard Hewitt: clarified that the letter of support was only for the planting corridor not the Groton carbon footprint proposal
- The motion passed with one abstention from Richard Hewitt due to technical difficulty

The fifth order of business was Restoration at Surrenden - seed sharing for generating winter seedlings?

- Planned for distribution at the next meeting.
- Brian Bettencourt: Request for instructions on planting (e.g., cold stratification if necessary)
- **Action:** Jonathan to send email to Ben requesting instructions on seed planting to maximize germination

The sixth order of business was Discuss Tree of Heaven and burning bush at Lost Lake fire station

- Olin Lathrop: Shared some pictures taken at the Fire station. Several small ailanthus trees identified. It is contained by the regularly mowed lawn, shouldn't be too hard to eradicate
- Charlotte Weigel: Do we need an RDA?

- Olin Lathrop: No. We can ask the Chief for permission when he comes to the committee meeting in January
- Charlotte Weigel: Did you notice the burning bush?
- Olin Lathrop: No, I wasn't looking for it, there were no leaves
- Ron Strohsahl: From the google maps it looks like the burning bush is in front of the building
- Charlotte Weigel: Can we cut and treat the stump
- Ann Carpenter: Question on how much they can damage a building. Ailanthus
- Adam Burnett: Yes, their roots are very extensive and grow into open cracks in concrete
- Charlotte Weigel: Is there an expected time to treat the burning bush?
- Olin Lathrop: After leaf out anytime, can pull the stump with a weed wrench
- Charlotte Weigel: Should they wait a period of time before removing the stump?
- Olin Lathrop: If we can remove the stump, we would not need to treat with pesticide
- Brian Bettencourt: Recommend just cutting and treating it rather than removing them
- **Action for Charlotte Weigel to email Lisa to inform her of our plans for treatment at the fire station**

The seventh order of business was Review signage to use for upcoming work

- Pending – propose for February meeting

The eight order of business was all other business

Review of Ailanthus brochure:

The brochure was displayed and review comments were discussed

- Olin Lathrop: moved to approve the brochure as amended
- Adam Burnett: Request on the discussion on use "Roundup" prior to approving the brochure
- Olin Lathrop: Withdrew the motion
- Brian Bettencourt: Moved to include the term Roundup in the brochure
- Ann Carpenter: Moved to second

The motion proceeded to roll call vote

- Charlotte Weigel: The ayes approved by a vote of 5 to 3 (Adam Burnett, Ron Strohsahl, Charlotte Weigel)
- Olin Lathrop: Moved to approve the brochure
- Brian Bettencourt: Seconded
- Motion passed, with one No vote (Adam Burnett)
- Brian Bettencourt: Will put it on the website. Do we want to print it?
- Charlotte Weigel: Do we need to get funds for this?
- Olin Lathrop: Yes, from the commissioner of funds
- Brian Bettencourt: We got ~ 500 last time

- Olin Lathrop: I move to authorize Richard to apply for a grant for a printing of up to 500 copies of the brochure
- Jonathan Basch seconded
- Motion passed unanimously
- **Action for Richard Hewitt to request for the funds for the printing of the Ailanthus brochure**

Conservation forum:

- Brian Bettencourt: Conservation forum at Lawrence Academy on February 13th. Speaker is already lined up
- Charlotte Weigel: Are groups allowed to stand up and make announcements?
- Olin Lathrop: If there is an open discussion opportunity, we will bring it up. There is always a lot of informal discussion
- Brian Bettencourt: Will be an interesting speaker

GFD Chief visit

- Charlotte Weigel: Looking to do some fire-based control at J. Harry Rich. Will be some further discussion with the state. Interesting conversation regarding fuel load and fire risk
- Olin Lathrop: Conservation commission has done this before. We burned the field at Shattuck homestead

Update on State legislation progress on invasive species bill(s).

- Jonathan Basch: Two bills are currently under discussion in the Natural Resources and environment committee.

MVP grant:

- Charlotte Weigel: Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant - watershed wide- lead town is Fitchburg. Looking to assist towns with nature-based solutions to climate change vulnerabilities. (E.g, planning/mapping/education) \$400,000 grant. Invasives could be a component. Could be contacted to provide input.

Seeding at Surrenden:

- Ron Strohsahl: With torrential rain should we check the status of the seeding at Surrenden?
- Summary of the discussion of the topic: River will be high and areas will likely be flooded. Some areas flooded last year had good germination. Will be difficult to visit the site when flooded. Not much that can be done now.

Olin Lathrop Moved to adjourn.

Richard Hewitt Seconded.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.