**Groton Invasive Species Committee Meeting Minutes**

**22Jan2024**

Committee Members Present:

Brian Bettencourt

Charlotte Weigel

Olin Lathrop

Ron Strohsahl

Adam Burnett

Ann Carpenter

Ben Wolfe

Members of the public present:

Lorayne Black

Agenda:

1. Visit from Lorayne Black to discuss landscape design standards
2. Review annual report

3. Discuss MVP-NBS grant and upcoming Community meetings

4. Restoration at Surrenden - seed sharing for generating winter seedlings?

5. Review of minutes and action items from Dec 18th meeting

6. Review signage to use for upcoming work
7. All other business

The Meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

The first order of business was a visit from Lorayne Black to discuss landscape design standards

* Planning Board members Lorayne Black and Russ Burke will update the landscaping standards. The plan is for them to be voted on at the Fall 2024 Town Meeting.
* The group discussed the desire for the new standards to exclude the use of all plants on the MIPAG list categorized as invasive, likely invasive or potentially invasive, 72 plants total. Lorayne was already planning to include this.
* Adam mentioned that there may be additional plants listed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. **ACTION:** Charlotte will cross check EEA list with MIPAG to ensure both lists are included.
* The group stressed that our priority is not only to prevent the introduction of invasive plants, but also promote the use of native plants in landscaping.
* Olin asked if landscapers could be restricted to only using native plants. Lorayne said that requiring only native plants will likely be too restrictive, but she has seen a 60% requirement in other places.
* Charlotte noted that Pepperell recently updated their design standards to include a 60% native species requirement. **ACTION:** Charlotte will send the new Pepperell standards to Lorayne.
* Brian mentioned the important distinction between a percentage of species versus a percentage of biomass in a landscaping installation. We prefer that the new standard specifies a percentage of biomass to be native plants.

The second order of business was to review the annual report.

* Olin had many suggested edits on the draft of the annual report that Charlotte completed with edits from Jonathan.
* Charlotte moved for Olin to edit the annual report as he sees fit after the meeting and submit it to townhall by the deadline without further review.
* Brian seconded the motion.
* All voted in favor of the motion except for Olin who voted against the motion. The motion passed. **ACTION:** Olin will edit the draft annual report and send to town hall.

The third order of business was to discuss Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness-Nature Based Solutions (MVP-NBS) grant and upcoming Community meetings

* Charlotte provided more details about the MVP-NBS grant that is being directed by the Nashua River Watershed Associations for Fitchburg, Groton, Pepperell, Leominster and Ashburnham.
* A few members have signed up for the upcoming community meetings on February 1 and February 13th.

The fourth order of business was restoration at Surrenden - seed sharing for generating winter seedlings

* Ben brought two types of aster seeds requiring C60 treatment (cold stratify for 60 days) + vermiculite, which he distributed to all members in sandwich bags
* The instructions for all members taking seeds home are to put them in a refrigerator for the next 60 days. There were other methods discussed but this is the protocol most are following.
* We are still saving some fraction of the seeds to spread next fall.

The fifth order of business was to Review the minutes and action items from Dec 18th meeting

* The minutes were reviewed.
* Brian Bettencourt moved to accept the minutes. Adam Burnett seconded. The motion to accept the minutes passed by unanimous roll call vote.
* Action Items
* Charlotte Weigel to invite Lorayne Black to next meeting - DONE
* Jonathan to send email to Ben requesting instructions on seed planting to maximize germination – DONE
* Charlotte Weigel to email Lisa Theall (president of the garden club) to inform her of our plans for treatment at the fire station - DONE
* Richard Hewitt to request for the funds for the printing of the Ailanthus brochure – DONE – Richard brought the printed brochures!
* Standing:
* Charlotte to visit the GELD site and survey the knotweed.
* 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 – the group decided to abandon this plan and attempt to access the stands in the spring. **ACTION: try** to access stands in the spring.
* Action for Ben to order the Clethra - plan for March planting.
* Adam Burnett to become a EDDmapS verifier - DONE

The sixth order of business was to review signage to use for upcoming work

* Ann shared a potential sign for the Committee to place in areas where we are working that is regularly accessed by the public.
* The group remarked on what a great job Ann’s daughter did making the sign and thanked her for creating the design.
* **ACTION**: Ann is working on getting pricing for creating the sign.

The seventh order of business was all other business

* Ken Horton is a newer Groton resident whose property backs up to James Brook. Since relocating here 2 years ago, he has been working to remove invasive plants from his property including Buckthorn and honeysuckle. He is interested in adding more native plants to his landscaping, and has run into difficulties finding landscapers who are experienced in planting natives. He also thinks he has identified mile-a-minute vine on his property. If he is correct, this is the first known stand of mile-a-minute vine in Groton. **ACTION:** the group will follow up with Ken to take a look at it in the spring when it grows back.

Charlotte moved to adjourn.

Ron seconded.

 The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.