



Sustainability Commission

Economy • Environment • Society

Think long-term, act now

“Community Sustainability is the commitment to adopt practices that support and balance the social, economic and environmental aspects of our region, now and into our future.”

Groton Sustainability Commission, Winter 2010

Meeting Notice

Meeting Notification Date: Tuesday September 17, 2013

Meeting Date: **Tuesday September 24, 2013**

Meeting Time: 7:30 PM

Meeting Location: **Selectman's Meeting Room First Floor Groton Town Hall**

Meeting Type: Regularly Scheduled Commission Meeting Agenda:

1. Progress Report – Pollinator Preservation Project – Lisa Weisner/Carl Flowers - Guest Alison Dolbear – Monarch Butterflies
2. Progress Report - West Groton Dam/riverbank erosion – Carl Canner
3. Progress Report - the Groton Climate Change Adaptation Recommendations – Leo Laverdure
4. Progress Report - Groton Community Well Being Plan – Mike Roberts
5. Fund raising needs and plan.
6. New Business not foreseen at the time of posting.
7. Adjourn

Next meeting October 22, 2013

Meeting Minutes for September 24, 2013

Commissioners present: Michael Roberts, Chm.; Carl Canner, Carl Flowers, Leo Laverdure, Lisa Wiesner, and Carl Flowers. Jane Morriss was also present, serving in the role of communications liaison. Guests included Becky Barth and Alison Dolbear Peterson who presented a talk about Monarch Butterflies. Lorena Novak and Matt Novak were also in attendance. With a quorum present, the meeting officially convened at 7:40 p.m.

Quote: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that has.* –Margaret Mead

1. **Progress report—Pollinator Preservation Project – Lisa Weisner and Carl Flowers with guest speaker Alison Dolbear who spoke about Monarch Butterflies:**

Ms. Dolbear's interest in the plight of the Monarch Butterfly has involved her in many groups that are working to help endangered butterflies. This passion has lead her to various studies and affiliations. Most notably she has become involved with the New England Wild Flower Garden in Sudbury, and she is currently taking classes related to

butterflies at U-Mass Lowell. In addition she participates in several butterfly societies (the Monarch Task Force of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign; the Monarch Watch; The Xerces Society; and the Monarch Joint Venture, just to name a few.)

She also serves on the garden committee of First Church, Groton, and in this position she was instrumental in choosing the flowers to be planted in the Medicine Wheel Garden. The garden is thriving as living evidence of her keen understanding in the practical application of sound gardening practices that utilize the intricate interconnections offered by nature.

Ms Dolbear noted that butterflies and pollinators are facing very similar challenges. Like honey bees, Monarch butterfly populations are plummeting. Recent scientific research has clearly implicated the prevalence of new farming practices that incorporate Roundup®, Roundup-ready seeds, the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments, and genetically modified crops (GMO) in the drastic reduction of butterfly and bee populations. The elimination of bees and other species of pollinating insects threatens a cataclysmic collapse of agriculture as we know it.

In the case of the Monarch butterfly, milkweed has been eradicated from hundreds of millions of acres that are under commercial cultivation with heavy use of insecticides, and herbicides. Along with this challenge, the severe deforestation going on in Mexico has removed many of the over-wintering habitats of the Monarch butterflies from the face of the Earth.

Avoiding treated seeds and confronting the monolithic power of the chemical companies that have infiltrated agriculture (which includes the cultivation of private lawns and gardens) is a daunting task because most seeds are currently treated with these chemicals, and the use of chemical agents in our gardens and fields has become customary and systemic.

As challenging and global as this problem is, the Commission discussed ways we could influence sound farming/gardening practices within our local realm. They included:

- Educating people about the importance of planting native species of milkweed in their gardens;
- Developing a school curriculum that focuses attention on the complex interactions of pollinators and flowering and fruiting plants;
- Working with the DPW and private landowners to develop a “pollinator highway” and possibly combine our program with other towns to connect a safe habitat to encourage the propagation of our helper insects;
- Educate ourselves in the labyrinthine laws that bear on land use and endangered species.

N.B.: There are approx. 40 species of milkweed that are native to Massachusetts. For best results, you should plant the seed, as the plant does not transplant well.

Untreated seeds are available from the Park Seed Company and Audubon.

More information about Monarchs butterflies is available on-line at www.MonarchWatch.org, www.monarchjointventure.org, and at www.pollinator.org.

2. Progress Report – West Groton Dam/riverbank erosion – Carl Canner

Carl Canner reported that work to repair the dam in West Groton commenced about 10 days ago with stump pulling and the construction of a coffer dam. He said that in addition to the state, the Town of Shirley and Fish and Wildlife all seem to be involved. It would be a real problem for Groton and West Groton if the bridge were to wash out, but he was guardedly optimistic that actions were finally being taken to address the problems caused by erosion, shifting river course, and the old-age of the dam.

3. Progress Report – the Groton Climate Change Adaption Recommendations – Leo Laverdure

Leo Laverdure reported that the Commonwealth will be releasing, in October, its building-by-building analysis of the effects of climate change as it is/will be affecting Boston. Once that report is released, the Commission can use it as a model for drafting an adaptation plan for Groton which will involve several steps including drafting a letter to the BOS, a public education campaign, and bringing a resolution before Town Meeting based on the resolution that was adopted at the Lincoln Town Meeting this last spring that will urge the town to consider climate change in all of its planning processes. In addition to the challenges posed to our buildings, we also need to consider that Groton and the surrounding area will need to prepare for the eventuality of absorbing “climate refugees” into our communities.

Suggested reading: Diet for a Hot Planet: The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do About It, by Anna Lappe, in which she examines the environmental costs of our food choices and offers suggestions about what can be done about it.

4. Progress Report – Groton Community Well Being Plan – Mike Roberts

The “Happiness Initiative Project” is based on the Gross National Happiness Index used in Bhutan, and Mike Roberts would like to see the Commission begin a concerted campaign to get as many people as possible to take the Happiness Test. Once that is accomplished, we will conduct an inventory which will reveal a range of actions that can be addressed that will improve the quality of life for people living in Groton. This will involve writing a series of articles for the newspaper which will promote the happiness and well-being as a tangible goal.

To take the Happiness Test, visit www.happycounts.org

To learn how Seattle, WA, has incorporated the Happiness Initiative, visit:

www.sustainableseattle.org

To learn more about the origin of the Gross National Happiness Index introduced in Bhutan in 2008, watch a video available at: <http://www.bhutan2008.bt/en/node/661>

Suggested Reading: Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being, by Martin E. P. Seligman.

5. Fundraising Needs and Plan:

The Commission is down to its last \$400.00 and we all need to think about ways to raise money to keep our Commission afloat. We will be discussing this issue in more depth at our next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jane Morriss