

Hanover Biodiversity Committee

Minutes October 16, 2014

Attendance: Barbara McIlroy, Gail McPeck, Vicki Smith

Minutes from May 27 and September 4, approved as circulated.

Old Business

Plants in holding beds, and destination plan. It was determined that any plantings installed next to substation were in limbo, as there would be neither maintenance nor clear ownership of the plantings. If restoration work were initiated at Mink Brook, it made sense to start from the border on town land, and then shrubs from holding bed could be moved to replace invasives. It was observed that herbicide work might make sense to deal with very large invasives on/near the stream bank, as cut stem treatment wouldn't disturb soil / streambank. Shrubs can be used at Rinker or Hayes as well, if a workday is planned. NOTE: at the Sept meeting, it was suggested that we at least dig holes for these plants dug now in preparation for spring transfer. It was noted that the existing plants are being badly browsed by deer at the water treatment plant, and there is concern that any of these plants would not thrive elsewhere due to the problem of excessive deer browse. Vicki suggested that we think of netting or small fences to protect these plants; or, if there were neighbor stewards we could have volunteer apply deer deterrent spray to protect these plants.

Garlic Mustard Wrap up for 2014. Several new garlic mustard populations were found in 2014, several of these have been adopted, and some older populations now have stewards. Barbara will work with Michael Lunter to put the 2014 data into a newly formatted Excel spreadsheet.

Reply to Ellen Snyder (UNH) . Barbara will contact Ellen Snyder again, re spring stewardship training meeting in Upper Valley. It would be good if the workshop would include a session on how to assess deer damage. This does not require knowledge of native plants, although that is helpful. It was noted that damage to landscape plants such as hosta are an early indicator of too many deer.

New Business

Follow up from the Deer Management / Forest Health session of Sept 8

CATV recording: Barbara will investigate where to locate this. UPDATE: here is URL for the recording of the evening session of the meeting: <https://vimeo.com/106180289>

Website: The list of references that were on the agenda handouts are now with live URL links are now on the Biodiversity website; other related materials can be added during the winter. Michael Lunter took notes at the meeting and some form of this might get posted.

Training to assess deer browse: See the reply to Ellen Snyder, above. Barbara would like to see this happen on a regional basis, for landowners, stewards, interested public.

Input for NH Big Game Plan: Since the NH Big Game Plan will be updated in 2015, it might be good to have a list of some suggestions as formal input for the planning process.

Balch Hill hunt proposal Gail reported that the hunt on Balch Hill is now open for hunter sign-up, the hunting season will be from Nov 15 to Dec 15, and the DPW will collect and direct inquiries to the Conservancy. They will share the list of hunters for landowners who want hunting on their land in the future. The Balch Hill subcommittee will assess the results to help in planning for the future. At the very least the town will have a list of hunters who are interested. Hunters will be encouraged to take doe, and are expected to report their harvest. It remains to be seen if this approach is a model for other neighborhoods. Gail suggested that any future program have input from hunters.

Hunting on other conservation areas / neighborhoods It is pretty clear that Mink Brook West and East of Rte 10 should be open to hunting, as there is significant evidence of browse and many neighbor complaints about damage to ornamental plantings. The remarkable plant community at Tanzi is seriously browsed and several special populations may be lost if no hunting is not initiated promptly. The need for formal deer-exlosures was considered unnecessary, since neighbors are probably already aware of the deer problem. Neighbors would need to be involved in any decision-making on this matter.

Citizen training for browse evaluation This notion will be explored as something possible with the Stewardship Network. Barbara will discuss further with Ellen Snyder.

Mink Brook West Plan

While Jim Kennedy made a plan for the parking area and entrance, that plan is now out of date, since details of access have changed. Vicki reported that:

- The ownership of the entrance seems to belong to Liberty Utility (even though the tax maps indicate that the state owns the land).
- For some reason, Liberty Utility was exempt from needing a site plan for its work. Vicki said that William Desch approved the selection of shrubs and trees, and that Chippers did the work at the substation.
- Therefore, the town has no leverage over the steep raw bank on E side of the substation, nor any screening of the wire fences on the N and W faces of substation from the entrance to the Mink Brook conservation area.
- New signs will indicate parking area and handicapped parking spot.
- Liberty Utility will not mow the new lawn, since they don't do maintenance outside the wire cage.
- The DPW will not mow the lower slope next to the substation, since town doesn't own it.
- The DPW does not want to remove the gate from the sewer line or even replace the gate with a post to deter un-official wheeled access to the trail.
- The DPW may install some large rocks to deter parking on the upper portion of the S side of the main entrance road. Vicki will determine if Liberty is OK with this idea.
- The power company has been asked by DPW to repair the eroding swale on upper lawn area with jute matting.
- A meadow planting in the grassy slope is a nice idea, but the town wouldn't mow once a year. Thus, it isn't clear that this idea would work out.
- DPW built an ADA-compliant path from the parking lot to the sewer-line trail, creating a fore-bay for sediment from surface drainage prior to entering the stream.
- The town won't make further improvements to the lower parking lot or remove the concrete bridge abutment, nor will Liberty Utilities.

Can plants from holding bed be used at Mink Brook West? The answer is yes, for restoration work on Hanover's land, and not for Liberty Utility land. The shrubs in the holding bed won't adequately screen the utility, nor will there be any maintenance there. It seems clear that the town should negotiate for a better solution at this site. Someone in the town should have signed off on the project, and it is not clear that this happened. The current situation seems inadequate.

Goals

Notes from Michael Lunter are below¹. This topic was tabled, as Mike was away.

Other

This committee needs leadership from the Conservation Commission. Until that happens, there will be no future formal meetings. Some work will continue to finish up projects started in 2014, and this may involve small subcommittee work. Workday assistance is a possibility, should this materialize.

Next Meetings – no meeting in foreseeable future.

¹ A review of our goals and proposed action items, how well we preformed based on expectations. This is what in the Software Field is termed a Post-Mortem report.

But really before we can fully self assess we must define our goals and then the means to measure them. Metrics really. Our GM spreadsheet is a fine tool and one method we track our progress. We might wish to expand this in the work we perform on other conservation properties and invasives. Data collection is how we can help build consensus, especially in gaining support from the City leaders in expanding our efforts.

We need to discuss this with the group because I'm certain the others will have good input. I'm still at the point of fleshing this out in my mind so it's a work in progress. I want to look deeper in how similar groups as ours achieve successful results.