

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL
MINUTES
JUNE 21, 2004

Council Members Present: Comm. Leff, Comm. Gresczyk, Mary Musgrave, Mr. Goodwin, Mr. Sutherland, Dr. Mehrhoff, Mr. Magnarelli

Members of the Public Present: Sandy Breslin, Donna Ellis, Robert Heffernan, Karen Weeks, Grace Nome, Harold Nome, Bonnie Burr, Betty McLaughlin

Absent: Mr. Larson, he had to fix a broken irrigation system.

The meeting was called to order at 10:45 A.M. by Chairman Leff.

Chairman Leff introduced Louis Magnarelli to the council. He will be replacing John Anderson. Chairman Leff asked if there were any volunteers for nominating a new Vice Chair to the committee. Seeing none, Chairman Leff nominated Mr. Sutherland and Mr. Goodwin to form a committee to nominate the next Vice Chair of the committee.

There was a motion by Chairman Leff to approve the minutes of April 16, 2004. There was no second because not all members had received copies. The motion was taken off of the table by Chairman Leff.

Chairman Leff discussed how the council made significant progress over the last year and hopes that the council will continue to do the same.

Chairman Leff talked about what steps in the future need to be taken in the planning process. He asked what kind of role education should play. With this being an election year, how will the changes in the General Assembly affect the council? Is the best policy banning versus non-banning invasive plants? Should we consider a tax? He proposed that for the next meeting that council members bring some "creative ideas" to the table to deal with these issues.

Mr. Sutherland discussed how we could put reading material together to educate the public regarding invasive plants.

Chairman Leff said another issue is that the council needs to alert planning and zoning committees about invasive plants in their municipality.

Dr. Mehrhoff asked how can we keep up on the federal issues that will affect Connecticut? Are there any bills right now that are pending that will give us funds? If we do receive funds, how do we access those funds?

Chairman Leff asked if the conservancy is following bills in D.C.?

Mr. Sutherland said we are trying to. He also mentioned that Senator Lieberman may have a bill that would benefit Connecticut.

Chairman Leff asked if Mr. Sutherland would put on a presentation about happenings in D.C. that could affect the State of Connecticut and the council.

Mr. Sutherland is intrigued with the idea of taxing invasive plants. How would they be administered?

Mr. Goodwin said that he would rather see a tax than a ban on invasive plants.

Dr. Mehrhoff suggested that the public needs to supply the council with documentation if they have a potential candidate, i.e. a plant that should be deemed invasive.

Chairman Leff agreed with Dr. Mehrhoff's statement and asked him to write up guidelines that would alleviate this problem.

Chairman Leff and the council decided on when other meetings would take place. They decided on September 13, 2004, October 12, 2004, November 8, 2004 and December 13, 2004.

The council then discussed taking some field trips during the summer months. Mr. Heffernan proposed having the council take a bus ride from the Capitol to nurseries in Granby and Suffield. They decided on Monday, July 19, 2004. Another field trip they discussed is to visit the campus of the University of Connecticut and check out the new Biotech building. While the council was there, Dr. Mehrhoff would show them some plantings around campus. For now they just decided on the month of August.

Chairman Leff then discussed the potential problem of historical plantings. He brought up a situation in Harkness Memorial State Park where landscapers have made plantings and some of the plantings are on the list of invasive plants. One example is Sycamore Maple. He went on to ask the council if there is any interest in pursuing this. If so, do we need guidelines?

Mr. Goodwin stated that if you allow landscapers or others to do this that it could open the door for the public in a negative way.

Mr. Sutherland said that are you marring the experience of being in a historic garden if an invasive plant has to be removed?

Chairman Leff asked if the council wants to pursue this any further. In addition, if the council gets any inquiries then they will bring it up again.

Chairman Leff stated that there is no old business but there is some new business to discuss.

Dr. Mehrhoff talked about how we need to find out what research is out there regarding invasive plants. We have to have a better idea of what is going on out there. We need to come up with a list of invasiveness versus non-invasiveness. What data are we looking for? What information do we really need? He went on to say that plants that were on the first list are being sold and that storeowners are not aware that plants they are selling are invasive. What we need to do is write up a letter to storeowners that plants they are selling are illegal. Do we need to pass legislation to give power to the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture?

There was a motion by Commissioner Gresczyk to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Goodwin. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Bloom
Clerk – Environment Committee