

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 8, 2004

Council Members Present: Dr. Mehrhoff, Comm. Gresczyk, Dr. Magnarelli, David Goodwin, David Sutherland, Comm. Leff, Tom McGowan, Paul Larson

Members of Public Present: Donna Ellis, Bob Heffernan, Bonnie Burr, Eric Mosher, Sandy Breslin, Marie Lipski, Linda Kowalski

Chairman Leff called the meeting to order at 10:36 A.M.

Chairman Leff immediately discussed if there were any edits to the minutes from the last meeting. Seeing none, he asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes. Comm. Gresczyk made a motion and Dr. Magnarelli seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Eric Mosher of the University of Connecticut gave a presentation on the question are there significant relationships between different patterns of land use change and the distribution of invasive woody plants?

The council then reviewed their meeting last month with Dr. Mark Brand of the University of Connecticut.

Comm. Leff said the presentation by Dr. Brand was fascinating, however, it struck him how, with regards to his research, there is nothing on the immediate horizon for commercial use. The only thing the council could take out of that meeting was to insure that his team's research is able to continue for years to come.

Dr. Mehrhoff asked if Dr. Brand talked about invasiveness or non-invasiveness of the cultivars?

Ms. Ellis replied that the research is still ongoing so they are hesitant to conclude anything at this time.

Comm. Leff asked how the council feels about the idea of a tax as opposed to a ban. He said it would be tough sledding but it is possible. Is there serious interest?

Mr. McGowan asked how would it work?

Comm. Leff replied that a percentage of the sales of the particular invasive plant would get thrown into a fund. The fund could be used to combat the problem of invasive plants through education.

Mr. McGowan asked if the Department of Revenue Services had any issues with this.

Comm. Leff replied that DRS's issues would involve computers and that it would mostly be a technical issue.

Mr. Goodwin stated that he prefers a tax to a ban.

Dr. Mehrhoff asked what the nursing industries opinion is. He said he talked to people and they didn't like the idea of a tax.

Mr. Goodwin asked what is the alternative?

Comm. Leff asked is there something the council can propose that philosophically makes sense?

Mr. Heffernan said that the industry does not have a big objection at this time. He also said that the tax would be more effective at the retail level.

Mr. Sutherland said that the tax could generate a lot of money but you don't want to generate too much money or we will attract attention from the state.

Mr. Heffernan noted that the sales of plants are already subject to a 6% tax at the retail level.

Comm. Leff says that in the future the council needs to reiterate its recommendations about enforcement to store owners and education to planning land use commissions.

Dr. Mehrhoff said that guidelines be circulated to people being invited to speak at the December forum so that they don't suggest any plant to be put on the invasive list and catch the council off guard with some random plant. What they would like to have happen is the guidelines be circulated so that the public can see if the plant they were going to talk about meets those guidelines.

Ms. Ellis asked if there was going to be a public announcement?

Comm. Leff says that he is not sure if the newspaper is the best outlet. He said to the council that if you have access to a newsletter then go for it. He will be writing a press release on behalf of the DEP.

Comm. Leff then went on to saying that the council's annual report is due on January 1, 2005. It will comprise of a review of the council's successes, field trips, recap of their meeting in December and priorities for 2005.

Mr. Sutherland discussed the legislation that has passed on the federal level. He noted that just because the bill was authorized that it doesn't mean anything until you have the money. However, the passing of SB 144 does help and that is was important that it passed.

Dr. Mehrhoff then talked about the questions that he has raised before and said that come January we really need to think about these questions seriously. **The questions will be attached to this email.**

Ms. Ellis raised the point about how certain invasive plants can be used in decorating (such as a Christmas wreath) and said is it OK if you use only part of the invasive plant? Interpretation of the law could be an issue.

Comm. Leff agreed and said the wreath can do damage by spreading its seed so maybe we need more specificity when it comes to the law. He suggested that we put that topic on the agenda for January.

Dr. Magnarelli suggested that because the CT Experiment Station works closely with the nursery industry that the station take responsibility for inventory.

Comm. Leff asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting. Comm. Gresczyk made a motion and Mr. Sutherland seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Bloom
Clerk – Environment Committee