

Ecology Advisory Board Meeting Notes
March 20, 2019
Lyons Town Hall

Attendance: Steve Simms, Greg Lowell, Garima Fairfax, Fay Marshall, Kurt Carlson; Mike Karavas (BOT); Carse Pustmueller, public; Coco Gordon, weed subcommittee

Simms began meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Approval of minutes from February: Carlson made motion to accept January notes; Fairfax second; all aye.

Weed Management Subcommittee – Marshall said she sent email to BOT members asking for their comments on the revised weed management practices ordinance they were presented with at the January workshop; she said she received no response.

Lowell said the Parks & Rec Commission passed the revised ordinance at their March 11 meeting.

Gordon said she viewed Cosgrove's comments at the BOT workshop as positive.

Karavas said that the BOT said that going forward in 2019 weeds will be dealt with as they were in 2018, except for the three "test plots" requested by the Weed SC. He noted that the Town lawyer has not vetted the new weed ordinance, and that BOT has said they will not micromanage staff. He said notification of treatment and signage will be used to show any applications, even so far as taping off some treated areas.

Simms asked about recording of herbicide applications and if they are noted in the year-end insurance report. Marshall reminded that all applications were done by contractors, not town, and those contracts will have record of applications.

Consensus of board members was that qualified contractors properly applying proper chemicals using proper procedures is paramount.

Gordon said it will be important to show soil regeneration progress in the test areas.

Simms reiterated that 2019 will be "business as usual" but with proper signage and notifications in effect, the three test plots and contracts with Organolawn contractor.

Lowell said a methodology and proper signage needs to be in place for the three test plots.

Karavas said that Bohn Park, Phase II, still will have a contractor guarantee in place for 2 years from completion, and that Phase I still has one-year guarantee by contractor.

Simms asked Gordon if what we discussed was in line with her expectations; she said it was. Simms said an earlier Integrated Pest Management (IPM) document had been sent to the weed subcommittee with the idea that it could be used as a template; Simms said he would resend it. Gordon said the document was used and the current plan was strategic.

Carlson said that the issue of weed management is not about “absolutes” (such as complete ban on chemical herbicides), as weeds are also deleterious. Dealing with absolutes can make for a difficult situation, almost a “Catch-22” scenario. Gordon said the group doesn’t believe in and never suggested a complete ban.

Simms said it was encouraging that the priorities of weed management have changed as a result of the subcommittee’s work.

Marshall addressed the myrtle spurge pull event this upcoming weekend. She said the event was instigated by the weed subcommittee without the knowledge of the Ecology Board. Marshall said she was the only volunteer to show up earlier in the week for a walkaround/planning session with Town staff and Wildlands Restoration Volunteers coordinator. She said there was not a single member of the weed SC present, and she was concerned the weekend event might not go forward. Marshall expressed concern that there was no organization of the event, and that she was “embarrassed” because she had no prior knowledge of the event and no one else was present. Eventually, some potential sites for the event were found. (Carlson also suggested some private property near his house; Marshall said he should contact WRV.)

In light of this incident and the non-coordinated LCF grant application and award – all of which go against proper Town protocol - Lowell asked whether the weed subcommittee should remain under the umbrella of the EAB.

Carlson reminded that there are Town ground rules on things like publicity and education, that must be adhered to.

Karavas reminded all that the BOT is very strict about proper protocol and following the written rules.

Gordon pointed out in town code where subgroups presently have the same privileges for fundraising and educational activities as their commissions. Karavas said this way of working has been changed 2 years ago.

Simms said (addressing Gordon) that the intent of bringing these issues to light is not to “bash” the subcommittee but it does appear that they have gone “rogue.” (Gordon disagreed with that characterization.) Simms said the EAB’s perspective is that the subcommittee has done things like applying for an LCF grant without EAB knowledge, organizing the myrtle spurge event without consulting the EAB and handing out a presentation at the BOT workshop, which properly needed to be input to Town clerk so it could be included in the BOT information packet for that night. Simms said these are reasons for considering letting the subcommittee go forward on their own. Marshall reinforced that we all have to follow the rules and guidelines.

Gordon said she understood the board's guidelines but her past work on Town boards have not been regulated. Carlson said "bold steps" could be taken in the past, but not today.

Simms said that the EAB wants to work within the confines of the Town policy, and Karavas said subcommittee needs to work within the rules of all Town commissions and boards.

Lowell asked about social media policy; is it proper for members of Town board or commissions to represent their comments as a member of a board/commission? Karavas said it opens individuals up to open records laws – not just the posting in question but all their records.

Gordon asked what the best way to now go forward would be. She said Mayor Sullivan had asked those concerned about chemical usage to work with Town, thus the Weed SC was formed. Karavas said they had been asked to come up with a plan, which they did. Simms asked if the SC should be sunsetted. Lowell said they can't because of their upcoming work on the test plots. Lowell also asked if the SC would lose "gravitas" if they were no longer under EAB umbrella. Simms said keeping the structure in place makes most sense, but he warned that if they don't work with EAB on future issues, there could be vote to dissolve SC. He said the goal of reducing chemical usage is great, but needs to be properly run. Carlson said the scope of the SC's work needs to be clear and whatever is set forth should be followed.

Meeting with Dave Cosgrove – Marshall reported on her meeting with Cosgrove; she said it's easier for one of us to see Cosgrove on a regular basis following our monthly meeting to brief him. Marshall said at each meeting we should prepare a list of topics for him, then go see him. Marshall said she's happy to be the go-between.

She also reported that the idea of a combined SFC/Natural Resources person won't happen as the requisition is out. Lowell mentioned that at the PRC meeting there was a suggestion to combine a gardener/Natural Resources position; Karavas then cited Town budget figures that would likely preclude a new position.

Arbor Day Events – Marshall reported there was a proclamation by the Mayor read at BOT meeting. She said there would be two contests – one for younger kids, one for older kids. The 2nd graders will participate in planting willow cuttings later and 4th graders will do their annual tree-tagging event.

Marshall said she learned that all ash trees over 8 inches in diameter on Town property have been treated with Triage to combat the borer. She also said she and Cosgrove had discussion about researching grants for ash tree replacements.

Marshall cited Town ordinance 10.4.1 that clarifies that property owners are responsible for trees in the rights-of-way.

Lowell asked if EAB should have/could have a Facebook page, similar to other Lyons-specific pages. Would be used to educate and alert residents. Carlson suggested maybe it could be a "no comments" page. Lowell will ask Kim Mitchell about the possibility.

Tree Ordinance – Marshall said the tree ordinance was discussed with Cosgrove. She then cited sources she has researched on “heritage trees” – trees that are considered notable by their size, species, historical significance and other characteristics. Do we want to include a section on heritage trees in the revised tree ordinance? Pustmueller said it would serve to educate and encourage preservation. Karavas suggested that the tree ordinance – which has languished for more than 2 years – should go forward as is without a heritage tree section. Marshall asked if it was easier to amend an ordinance once approved or create a new ordinance. Unclear which is easier. Marshall said she would put together a section on heritage trees for inclusion in the tree ordinance before it’s sent to BOT for approval.

Liaisons

Lowell briefed on PRC meeting; notable was completion of River Park by end of month, then landscaping starts; go-ahead on Bohn Park Phase II and skatepark; and passage of modified weed ordinance after presentation to commission by weed SC.

Karavas said various town board/commissions are looking into the Dark Skies Initiative, but don’t expect any movement for a couple years.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

POST MEETING ACTION ITEMS

Action	Assigned To	Deadline
As noted above under “Action Item”		

DECISIONS MADE

As noted above

NEXT MEETING

APRIL 17, 2019 6:30 P.M., TOWN HALL

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Lowell

EAB Recording Secretary