

MINUTES OF A MEETING AS HELD BY THE  
TOWN OF AURORA PLANNING & CONSERVATION BOARD

March 7, 2018

Members Present: Donald Owens, Chairman  
Douglas Crow  
David Librock  
Jerry Thompson

Alternate Member: Alice Brown

Absent/ Excused: Timothy Bailey  
Richard Glover  
Laurie Kutina  
Norm Merriman

Also Present: William Kramer, Code Enforcement Officer  
Chuck Snyder, Town Councilman  
Sharon Bachmann, Agriculture Educator Cornell Cooperative Extension  
of Erie County  
1 member of the public

Chairman Don Owens presided over the meeting which began at 7:01 p.m. at the Town Hall, 300 Gleed Avenue, East Aurora, NY. He led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**Doug Crow made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 8, 2018. Seconded by Jerry Thompson. Motion carried.**

Don Owens noted that Alice Brown would be a voting member for the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Presentation by Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (WNY PRISM). Andrea Locke appeared for the organization.

Don Owens discussed several common invasive plant species in our area.

Andrea Locke for WNY PRISM, noted this is one of 8 PRISM offices in NYS that are tasked with fostering public/private partnerships to improve invasive species management. One of the primary functions of WNY PRISM is early detection of species, such as Japanese stilt grass. An early detection species is one that is known in three or fewer locations within a given area, which

is the 8 WNY counties. They have known that Japanese stilt grass is on the way here as it is common to the south and Midwest. They have been educating the public about this plant and it has been located in East Aurora along Cazenovia Creek. The infestation is located on private property in the Village. It is unknown when it first appeared, but was first observed in 2016 and first reported to WNY PRISM last year. Last summer they visited the site, and it is a sizeable infestation and has likely been there for longer than a couple of years. They performed a preliminary survey of the area and only found it across the creek. They were limited in the scope of the preliminary survey because of property ownership.

Jerry Thompson asked for clarification on the location.

Ms. Locke noted that it is near the Oakwood Cemetery property. She further mentioned that because it is a high priority species her office reached out to the Highway Department to inform them of the species and come up with a plan for a survey. Before they can come up with a management plan they have to know how much is present. She discussed the process of mailing a postcard to targeted property owners where this species would show if it were to spread. It is often spread by mowers, human activity (walking, etc), and water. Japanese stilt grass has a robust seed. The survey would be targeted: 1-along the stream and flood zone from one mile upstream to two miles downstream; 2- neighboring lawns since it can hide in turf grass; and 3-along roadways. They would in effect be radiating out from the location of the infestation. If the plant is found elsewhere, the survey would expand accordingly.

Ms. Locke noted that the postcards are to notify property owners about this plant. The grass is distinctive with the offset silver midrib and easily identifiable. The East Aurora Advertiser will also run a story around the same time of the postcard mailing for additional notification. She mentioned that they hope to have volunteer groups involved in completing the survey, such as the Boy Scouts. She further mentioned that she has reached out to the Village but has not had a response.

Ms. Locke stated that WNY PRISM is grant funded and they have funds available to pay for postage but they do not a printing budget. She is requesting assistance to pay for a portion of the printing cost. A minimum of 1000 cards would be mailed to Town of Aurora residents affected, but they would prefer to mail 2500 cards. For the Village, 850 would be the minimum mailing and 1400 would be the preferred mailing. Liz Deveso looked into printing costs [email regarding the quote attached].

Jerry Thompson asked about the plant size and how to get rid of it.

Ms. Locke stated that if it is not mowed it can get up to 2'-3' tall but it generally falls over then. If it is mowed, it will form a turf even though it is an annual. She further noted that if it is a small infestation, you can hand pull them as they are weakly rooted and place the plant in

garbage bound for the landfill, not a compost pile. Mowing tends to spread the plant because it has the ability to flower below the mower deck. The amount of seed produced will be reduced, but it still produces seed. For a large infestation, chemical methods of removal are utilized. When treated early, the plant is highly susceptible to low concentrations of chemicals.

Dave Librock asked if it flowers all season.

Ms. Locke stated that it tends to flower at the same time, later in the season; however, mowing the plant may cause flowering earlier.

Jerry Thompson noted that there isn't a budget for a request of this nature and that the planning board would have to make a recommendation to the town to approve printing costs.

Chuck Snyder mentioned that he has had a discussion with the Town Supervisor. He asked about the process after mailing.

Ms. Locke stated that if they receive a call or email that a property owner may have the plant, they would request a couple of pictures to make a determination. If the plant is confirmed or even if questionable, they would make a site assessment and then advise the property owner on proper action to eradicate or contain the plant. She further mentioned that PRISM is not passive in that if they can see the plant on an adjoining property, they will reach out to the owner of the adjoining property directly.

Chuck Snyder noted that the work session for the town Board has been moved up to Monday, if the planning board wants to make a recommendation.

Jerry Thompson moved to recommend the Town Board consider funding postcard printing as presented by WNY PRISM. Seconded by Dave Librock.

Don Owens asked for further discussion.

Doug Crow noted that he struggles with spending government funding on this but that considering the nominal amount, he agrees with the expenditure.

Ms. Locke mentioned that this argument is a common one. There are natural areas throughout the Town, where the Town is responsible for maintaining those areas. Stilt grass has the ability to kick out all other species in an area and suppress seedling growth as well. Stilt grass has an added erosion issue because it is a weakly rooted. There is a cost issue with erosion down the road.

Doug Crow agreed with the idea that this can't be dealt with solely on the Town owned properties that may be susceptible and all other property ignored.

Chuck Snyder mentioned that if the infestation was on Town property, people would want the Town to do something about it.

Bill Kramer asked if the planning board would like suggest the level of funding.

M. Locke indicated that WNY PRISM is requesting 2500 postcards be printed for town residents.

Jerry Thompson suggested let the Town Board decide the level of funding.

Dave Librock asked where this plant came from.

Ms. Locke stated that it came from Asia and that it was used as packing material because it forms a thatch and the seeds survived the trip. Since it arrived, it has been moved by humans. This plant can't be passively composted, so it should go to the landfill.

Upon a vote being taken:

ayes – five

noes – none

Motion Carried.

Sharon Bachman from the Cornell Cooperative Extension office in East Aurora. She is an agriculture educator and has worked with invasive species, as well as the Master Gardner program. They have pitched the project with the Boy Scouts.

Jerry Thompson asked if there may be a conservation badge available to Boy Scouts who get involved with the survey/removal project.

Ms. Locke stated that Finger Lakes PRISM is working on creating a Girl Scout badge for invasive species.

Doug Crow noted this would be a wonderful Eagle Scout project.

A motion was made by Jerry Thompson and seconded by Doug Crow to adjourn at 8:30PM.

**THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY April 4, 2018 AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE TOWN HALL, 300 GLEED AVENUE, EAST AURORA, NEW YORK**