

## **WESTMORELAND CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

### **UNAPPROVED MINUTES 2-12-2026**

#### **In attendance:**

- Commission Members: Perry Sawyer, Anson Burt, April Ferguson, Nancy Ranson, Jean Rudolph, Joy Fletcher
- Guests: Harry Woldhandler, Harrisville Conservation Commission Chair
- Community Members: Harry Ackerman & Paul Steblein

#### **Meeting called to order by Perry Sawyer at 6:01PM.**

#### **The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Perry**

#### **Previous Meeting Minutes**

April made a motion to approve the January meeting minutes as recorded. Seconded by Anson. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Discussion with Harry Wolhandler (Harrisville Conservation Commission Chair) on the town's experiences with Japanese knotweed mitigation**

- Conversation ensued about the history of knotweed mitigation in Harrisville. The town started to look into mitigation in 2015. Conferred with the Town of Dublin on this since they had treated in their town recently, but the project was put on pause for ~10 years. The current makeup of the Harrisville Cons Com has a lot of experience in invasive mitigation.
- They discussed manual pulling of knotweed, but part of the issue with manual pulling is that the roots go 10 - 15 feet down and are hard to access. The Commission felt the need to do something to control the spread as small patches became large swaths, pushing out native vegetation and the insects that rely on that vegetation.
- Their philosophy was to act sooner rather than later to prevent further spread which would potentially lead to added time and costs in the future.
- They ran treatment test patches: One with an organic herbicide, and one with a chemical herbicide (glyphosate). They discovered the organic herbicide was not systemic and was only killing the portion of plant above ground. Even with the systemic herbicide, the application takes several years in a row to eliminate (3 - 5 years and then ongoing monitoring).
- The DOT has a limited budget for knotweed herbicide treatment.

- Foliar sprays are effective on first year shoots because they do not have roots established yet.
- Harrisville is a very conservation-minded town and has a lot of water resources.
- Harry discussed the origins of the concern over glyphosate use in agriculture and exposure by residents living near the spraying. His impression is that the handling of the herbicide is the most important part of the application.
- The Commission reported back to the town about the outcome from the test spray patches.
- Public feedback showed concern about bees and pollinators so they timed the spray based on Best Management Practices, choosing spray timing with the lowest impact on pollinators.
- Once they decided to move forward with spraying and spent time finding a licensed herbicide applicator. They ended up hiring Andy Power with Vegetation Control Services out of Massachusetts. Andy has done work for the USDA and the Forest Service. He was very pragmatic in his approach and comes with a deep knowledge base.
- They investigated cutting before spraying, but were advised by the herbicide technician not to based on the amount of labor required and the risk of spread in the process.
- The town had money in the conservation fund and used this to pay for the mitigation rather than trying to raise money and support it as a public effort.
  - There was a question about whether the funds from the Westmoreland Conservation Fund could be used for this purpose and whether a public hearing is needed. The rationale behind use of the conservation fund for Harrisville was to preserve natural landscapes.
  - Harrisville has also used this fund to pay for beetles to help control hemlock wooly adelgid and also for aquatic invasive species mitigation. These are seen as preventative benefits.
- Process overview for herbicide application:
  - Andy drove every mile of town taking photos
  - A deposit was made up front for the work
  - Andy coordinates all of the permit requirements for the state
  - Private landowners were provided with free spray service for their property and landowner permission for this was documented.
  - Was ~\$6K for the first year of spraying. Likely similar pricing for Year 2, and then pricing should go down in subsequent years.
  - A truck with a sprayer was driven down the roads and the spray happened simultaneously.
  - All spraying was completed in about 1.5 days and happened in October of 2025. Test spraying was done in the previous year (September of 2024).

- Waterways are avoided as part of this spraying. There were no patches where spraying was required directly adjacent to waterways.
- An anti-drift agent is added to the glyphosate and also an additive that helps the product adhere to leaves.
- Only sprayed in Right of Ways for the town roadways and private property where landowners indicated they wanted to take advantage of this service.
- The biggest challenge was getting the public to accept this strategy. Community conversations were held in August of the year before and August of the year of spraying (The herbicide technician attended the second meeting)
- During these meetings they discussed the test patches and those that worked and those that didn't.
- Based on the second forum, there were no noted complaints by the town and residents commented they appreciated the thoughtful approach (test patches with various strategies, consideration for pollinators, budgeting)
- The Harrisville Select Board had commented early in the process that if there's no large public pushback they would sign off on the strategy to spray with glyphosate.
- Harry feels there has been no public concern because they've been transparent about what the plans were and the rationale behind why they were doing it.
- They also have a Select Board member on each of their town committees.
- The issue of town liability did not come up for them. "The label is the law" - You need to do precisely what is on the label.
- Questions:
  - Does the town of Harrisville have a burn pile at their transfer station or encourage residents to burn knotweed? Knotweed by state law cannot be transported, but they do have a burn pile at their transfer station for other items.
  - Is there a plan to monitor the status of knotweed on an ongoing basis? Yes - the town committed to a 5-year plan and will reassess at that point.
  - What other types of plants have been regrowing in the areas of spray? Since spraying is ongoing, no bare areas have been observed by not sure on exact plant species that are growing back in.

**Discussion of inviting other guest speakers experienced in Japanese knotweed mitigation to join future Commission meetings**

- April's contact at Slippery Slope Goats has indicated she can likely join for the Commission meeting in March.
- Andy Power should be invited for April's Commission meeting.

**Update on roadway salting practices**

- No response yet from Westmoreland Road Agent related to questions on salting practices. This season has been very busy for him.
- Commission members continue to look at research and best management practices for this topic.

#### **New Business**

- FERC relicensing paperwork received from Great River Hydro on January 30th - Notice of Availability on Environmental Impact Assessment
- Next meeting - discuss plans for the Roadside Cleanup efforts.
- Determine how the Westmoreland Conservation Fund can be used and what the process is - Perry will reach out to Barbara Richter.
- Anson, Jean, and Alisha's terms on the Commission are expiring in March. Look to renew where indicated.

**April made a motion to adjourn at 7:13PM, seconded by Anson. Motion was passed unanimously.**

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, March 12th at 6pm** at the Westmoreland Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Joy Fletcher