

BLSG Insect Control Board
Meeting of June 20, 2019
Unapproved Minutes

Present: Ben Lawton, Jeff Whiting, Wayne Rausenberger, Brad Lawes, Jeff Smith, Art Doty, Rick Enser, Jeff Schumann (Salisbury Alt), Mike Blaisdell, Steve Belcher, Will Mathis

Guests: Jay Michaels (Lake Dunmore and BLSG PR), Bruce Baccei (Proctor), Tom Hogan (Proctor), Jim Ellefson (Leicester), Benjamin Glass (reporter, Addison Independent), Richard Russ (Forest Dale)

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Citizen Concerns

Jim Ellerfon spoke to complain that he had lost a hive of bees and blamed the BLSG for spraying them. He asked that the no-spray boundaries marking his property be moved. Will Mathis denied that Mr. Ellefson's property had been sprayed, and noted that one of the stakes was already on a neighbor's property. In the course of discussion, it emerged that the bee-hive was not at the back of J. Ellefson's property, but on the roof of his house to keep it away from bears. The board determined, without a vote, to call in Dominique Golliot, in the VT Agency of Agriculture.

3. Minutes of May 16, 2019 Board Meeting

On a motion by Art Doty, seconded by Jeff Whiting, the minutes of the May 16, 2019 meeting were approved without discussion.

4. Treasurer's Report

Wayne Rausenberger reported that we have:

General Checking	\$41,045.17
Equipment/Capital Fund	\$ 4,976.25

Total:	\$46,021.42
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This total includes \$15,000 received from Proctor for contract work and \$36,000 borrowed from the Line of Credit. The Pittsford payment is expected on July 5 and will include the second portion of their buy-in, \$17,500, that will go into the Equipment and Capital Improvement Fund.

On a motion by Art Doty, seconded by Jeff Whiting, the report was accepted.

5. Operation Director's Report – Will Mathis

Will Mathis noted that the crews have been working non-stop in surveying, collecting, analyzing, and treating hot spots by hand, which is less effective than aerial applications. The crew estimates that we are on the 10th wave of mosquitoes. Given the recent wet weather, a very large hatch can be expected.

Brad Lawes asked about the state grant that funds aerial larviciding; it should arrive after July 1 and may include a small increase. A few days advance notice would be required to schedule an aerial treatment.

The equipment report noted that Truck 4 (Grey Ranger) will need to be replaced by the end of the season. There was discussion of what sort of truck was required; Will Mathis stressed that a reliable full-size truck was needed because of the loads it would tow. The possibility of leasing a truck came up. Steve Belcher noted that it might be awkward to return a truck that had been used for pesticide applications, but others said it could be completely cleaned up.

The tracking systems for the trucks have been installed.

Two quotations for the roof replacement were passed around, one for \$6,800 and one for \$8,000. Mike Blaisdell may add a third. Art Doty asked if work had already been done on the roof, and was told it had been patched many times and now offered a mix of colors.

6. Class I Wetlands Proposal for Otter Creek

Ben Lawton had sent out an email to Town Managers, Select Board Members, BLSG Board Members, and others expressing his concerns about the proposal to reclassify parts of the Otter Creek watershed from Class II to Class I Wetlands. He reviewed the concerns he had expressed with the Board: as the USDA has acquired wetlands for the purpose of flood control, the Board has been able to continue its mosquito control activities (larviciding) but at the cost of a more complicated process that requires more staff time from the BLSG. No funding has been provided, in the wetlands management program, for mosquito control. He anticipates that a reclassification would make the permit process almost impossible, and may also be a step towards eventual designation as a Wildlife Refuge area. He suggested this effort was an end run to impede effective mosquito control.

Jeff Whiting noted that the Board's concern was only with mosquito control, but that landowners might have many other concerns. There are eight special habitat zones in the state, but they are all very small compared with the extent of this proposed area which is around 15,000 acres. In his view, this looked like a taking of that would limit the use of lands. He noted that towns were asking the BLSG for its position.

Rick Enser at this point noted that through his letter, Ben Lawton had already committed the BLSG to a position. Ben Lawton asserted that he had stated in the letter that it was his personal opinion. Rick Enser disagreed and challenged Ben Lawton's right even to send out such a letter without Board approval. Steve Belcher noted that as Chair, Ben Lawton had the responsibility to speak for the Board when time was pressing. Rick Enser denied that there was urgency to this matter.

The question was put who was driving the movement. Rick Enser noted that it had been in the works for a while. Americorps volunteers were involved, as were state employees, private citizens, and organizations. Presentations had been made at Select Board meetings.

Brad Lawes noted that the effects upon landowners would be a major issue.

Rick Enser noted that he had received emails from people reacting negatively to Ben Lawton's letter and the position that they assumed the BLSG had taken, and that there would be repercussions. The Nature Conservancy, for one, would not take this lying down and might well go to the Governor. He said the letter was inappropriate and the Board should vote to repudiate it.

Jeff Schumann suggested the Board should wait until two informational meetings (June 25 in Cornwall, June 27 in Salisbury) had taken place, and that members should attend them. The Board could then hold a special meeting.

Mike Blaisdell moved to hold a special meeting for the purpose of discussing the wetlands reclassification and, should state funds be available, the larvicide program. Art Doty seconded

and the motion passed.

7. Lemon Fair Insect Control District

There had been contact with David Dodge, director of the LFICD and discussion involving comparison of challenges and methods. There is a considerable contrast in the situation of the two districts, but many areas where cooperative action would benefit both districts. Further informal discussions are planned.

8. Mike Blaisdell offered suggestions for habitat reduction and wondered about the possibility of spraying one side of the road, so that people across from no-spray zones might still get the benefit. Will Mathis noted that the crews go out and hand-treat those areas.

9. Public Relations

Jay Michaels spoke about PR efforts. Two short columns on mosquito control activities have appeared in the Brandon Reporter; he and Kerry White had taken two interns from the Addison Independent to observe sampling and testing. He also handed out a draft flyer to be printed up and distributed around towns. Printing costs for 2,500 copies would be around \$300. To the question whether a vote was needed, Will Mathis noted that there is already a line item in the budget for Public Relations. Jay Michaels then handed a check for \$2,000 to Wayne Rausenberger, from the Lake Dunmore Association; the gift was unrestricted, but there was a request to apply some of it to PR.

Mike Blaisdell moved to approve the brochure, subject to possible corrections; Art Doty seconded and the motion was approved.

10 New/Old Business

Art Doty noted that he was in daily contact with the California maker of drones, who was eager to schedule a demonstration. The part of the cost of the drone devoted to training was also intended to ensure the operators would have the necessary FAA clearance.

Bruce Baccei and Tom Hogan of Proctor reported that they had a count of 0 mosquito larvae and the people of Proctor were very happy.

Art Doty moved to adjourn, seconded by Jeff Whiting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.