

BLSG Board Meeting – 18 July 2019
Unapproved minutes

Present: Ben Lawton, Jeff Whiting, Jeff Smith, Brad Lawes, Wayne Rausenberger, Paul Vaczy, Rick Enser, Steve Belcher, Will Mathis

Visitors: Bruce Baccei (Proctor), Tom Hogan (Proctor), Jay Michaels (Lake Dunmore/BLSG PR), Barb Karle (Salisbury), Leslie Wright (Salisbury), Rebecca Holmes (Salisbury), Jim Goodwin, Ashton Bates (BLSG).

The minutes of July 2 should have acknowledged the work of Jay Michaels and Jeff Schumann, who at that time presented the BLSG brochures, for distribution through the towns.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm. Visitors introduced themselves.

1. The chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 20, 2019, and the special meeting of July 2, 2019. Jeff Whiting so moved, seconded by Jeff Smith, and the motion was approved with two abstentions.

2. Citizen Concerns

Barb Karle had questions about Lemon Fair, local mosquitoes, and the District's willingness to make home visits. She also cited an Addison Independent story. Will Mathis outlined the mosquito trapping and sampling practices: the District sets about 8 traps a week, with a total of 20 or more in the five townships involved. On the question of home visits, Will clarified that the District makes home visits, recommends mosquito abatement practices, and will spray. The spraying is done during the evening hours.

Leslie Wright intervened to ask about spraying on Leisure Lane (she was concerned about campers in tents), and Will said the District does not spray there, although they are still waiting for the no-spray request.

Ms. Wright continued, citing a recent study on the danger levels of pesticides. She repeatedly claimed the District was endangering children and pregnant women, and was clearly not satisfied by Ben Lawton's statement that the District conformed to EPA standards.

Rebecca Holmes had a question about the District's acquisition process, having noted the question at a Select Board meeting. Will Mathis explained that the District deals with a number of companies and goes with the best price for the materials desired, not through a broker but through the salesmen for the companies.

Ben Lawton noted that there was much misinformation presented on the Front Porch website.

3. Resolution of the Jim Ellefson complaint about hive loss

Ben Lawton and Dominique Golliot, a State employee, visited Mr. Ellefson's home to investigate the cause of bee deaths. Mr. Ellefson was uncooperative and abusive, and his dog bit Ben. They left without being able to complete the investigation.

4. A Tribute to Art Doty

Earlier in the day, Ben Lawton had sent out to the Board the text of his tribute to Art

Doty, whom he considers the ‘Father of Mosquito Treatment.’ He requested that this text be included in the minutes. It follows below.

5. Treasurer’s Report

Wayne Rausenberger gave the Treasurer’s report.

The General Account has \$52,446.87

The Equipment Fund has \$22,726.45

Total available funds \$75,173.32

These funds represent the Pittsford assessment and their buy-in contribution for the year (a combined total of \$52,585.61, divided between the General Account and the Equipment fund).

The District has invoices to the State for \$26,078.95, so far unpaid.

The State grant should give the District \$70,000 with an extra \$25,000, but the funds so far have not been paid out. The State would like the extra \$25,000 saved for a spring 2020 larvicide treatment.

The District has not paid back the \$36,000 taken from the Credit Line.

On a motion by Jeff Whiting, seconded by Ben Lawes, the Treasurer’s Report was approved.

6. Operations Report

Will Mathis noted that weather conditions had led to a roller-coaster series of conditions.

Applicators were dealing with small ponds and culvert areas. He noted that we are now seeing the emergence of disease-carrying mosquitoes. He summarized trap results and spraying activity, and moved on to the equipment.

One truck needs to be replaced. Will Mathis would like a full-size truck with extended cab (space for equipment, and separation from noise/disturbance). He would like to use the old green truck as a run-about vehicle. He will get some offers and report at the next meeting.

On the replacement of the roof, it was decided that the project should be advertised in newspapers, with some time-limits incorporated: the work should be completed before winter.

7. Resistance in Mosquitoes

Kerry White does not yet have the testing kits, as Cornell University is short, but they are on their way. There was some discussion on where the tests should be performed, and it seems best to do them in the BLSG offices with climate control.

8. Memorial to Art Doty/Drones

Jay Michaels offered a review of Art Doty’s contributions, and suggested that an excellent way to recognize his efforts would be to continue the last initiative he had launched: acquiring drones for the BLSG. Art had been in contact with drone-supply companies that worked in the area of mosquito-control; these contacts must be maintained and continued.

The proposals are so far only tentative; plans for a demonstration are on-going, and the Board will try to obtain information from other Districts (outside VT) that might be using this technology. The suggestion was made that the Board might inquire among VT State agencies that might be using drones for functions such as monitoring moose populations.

9. Wetlands Reclassification

The Board has not received a reply from the State on their concerns related to this

reclassification.

10. Bat Habitat

The Board has not been able to schedule a visit from the ANR specialist, and so no report is available.

11. New Business

Steve Belcher (Pittsford) requested that the BLSG sent the Argo to attend Pittsford Day on Aug. 17th, as part of outreach activities.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Submitted,
Stephen Belcher

A Tribute to Art Doty
by
Ben Lawton

Art Doty was indeed the father of mosquito control in the Otter Creek Valley. During the early 70s, the Lake Dunmore /Fern lake Association had been doing some mosquito control, primitive by modern standards. The group involved in the spraying asked Art if he would be interested in taking over the project. He agreed and formed the Insect control District consisting of the towns of Brandon, Leicester, and Salisbury. The BLS had two representatives from each of the towns. The equipment he inherited was a sprayer that put out a stream of pesticide, he said it was like using a howitzer to kill a sparrow (the district now uses ultra low volume misting foggers that use minimal amounts of pesticide).

Art recalled that he knew nothing about mosquito control, and so he enlisted the help of the state entomologist John Trumel. Over the years they became fast friends, and Art often referred to Jon as his second son because they spent so much time together. John, Art, and Paul Doty spent many hours in the wetlands of the Otter Creek floodplains, sampling and identifying the mosquito populations. Over 45 species were found. The Dotys – Art, Paul, Donna – and John Trumel were truly the pioneers of mosquito control in our valley. John soon realized that the mosquito populations could never be controlled with adulticides alone, but cost was the issue.

Larvicides had become available in the early 80's. Larvicides prevent the mosquito larvae from maturing and thus kill the mosquitoes before they become adults.

In 1989, following several summers of dry weather, there was a tremendous hatch of mosquitoes in the Otter valley flood plains . Responding to a call from a resident of the lake district, Art went down to assess the situation. It was nightfall and fairly dark. As Art approached the cottage he could see a dimly lit doorway. Art recalls asking the woman to put on the lights so he could see. She responded, "The lights are on." Art realize the the screens were so thick with mosquitoes that they were blocking the light!

At that time Art was also a lobbyist in Montpelier for the Credit Bureau Association and he knew his way around Montpelier. He contacted Governor Madeline Kunin and invited her to come down to observe the extent of the mosquito infestation that was affecting the tourist

industry. She came, and on June 14 was inundated by swarms of mosquitoes. The moment made national TV news across the country, and Brandon became “the Mosquito capital of the U.S.”

On returning to Montpelier, she convened the Emergency Finance Board, which appropriated \$100,000 for mosquito control and thus, thanks to Art’s ingenuity, the larvicide program was launched.

During that same spring, my wife developed viral encephalitis, from a mosquito bite, and she remained unconscious for a week. Coincidentally, there was a second case of viral encephalitis in Goshen that summer, so I petitioned the Select Board of Goshen to join the mosquito control district. The action was approved the following spring (1990) at the Town annual meeting, hence the acronym BLSG.

I was selected to represent the town of Goshen on the BLSG board and had the opportunity to work with Art Doty and Jon Trumel for many years . My thanks to Art for encouraging me to get my certification to apply pesticides ,which I have renewed every year since 1990. 16 hours of Continuing Education are required every five years. All of the applicators employed by the BLSG have become very knowledgeable in mosquito control techniques thanks to Art’s leadership.

The 1990 the Vermont legislature approved the Mosquito act and appropriated annually \$140,000 for Mosquito control, thanks to the initiative of our representative Bob Wood (unfortunately we have seen no increase in this amount of appropriation since 1990). Art Doty was planning to meet with Governor Scott later this year to advocate for increased funding for our mosquito control program, but fate intervened.

From 1990 to 2006 everything went smoothly and the funding was adequate. During this time the Agency of Agriculture, which controls the spending, permitted a carryover of the funds for the larvicide program, unused in the dryer years but available in the wetter years; the flexibility was very helpful. The larvicide program involves aerial applications of the product, and in this time Art employed Dick Quesnel to spread the larvicide. Dick ran a fixed wing agriculture business that could also spread the larvicide, and his system was much less costly than helicopter delivery and could also easily treat smaller areas, as needed.

Art retired in 1998 and spent winters in Florida and summers in Nova Scotia, while the district carried on under new leadership. In 2006 the Lemon Fair Insect Control District was formed and funds were divided as needed between the two districts. Lemon Fair purchased a fixed wing plane and both Districts made use of the plane. The BLSG paid a fixed rate per acre for the services to apply larvicides. Due to variability in weather (dry years versus wet years), the income to support the plane was also variable, and in 2015, Lemon Fair sold the plane. Since that time, the two districts have been unable to find any fixed wing planes in close proximity. They have been forced to rely on aerial treatments via helicopter, and the cost runs to \$21 per acre.

In 2002 there was a large infusion of Federal funds to combat the spread of the West Nile Virus, and the State hired an assistant Entomologist, Alan Graham, whose mission was to identify species and map the breeding sites of the mosquitoes in the Otter Creek floodplains. This mission has now been delegated to the BLSG and to the LFICD, and consumes a significant portion of the State funding intended for larviciding. Further, in 2018 the State informed the Districts that they would no longer carry forward unused funds. No ‘rainy day fund’ for bad, wet years like this one.

The State-appropriated monies of \$140,000 are now equally divided between the two districts. The BLSG, however, has more than 7000 acres to treat and Lemon Fair only 1600 acres (of which I believe they are only treating 800 acres).

The BLSG was fortunate that Art Doty returned to the local area to be closer to his grandchildren and so, in the past year, resumed his engagement with the District. Most recently, Art was investigating and championing the idea of using drones for surveillance and treatment and was arranging a demonstration of the drones by the supplier. He was also planning a trip to Montpelier to meet with Governor Scott to advocate for adequate funding for mosquito control.

Let us consider these efforts a legacy that Art has left for us to finish.

Sincerely,
Benjamin Lawton Jr, Chairman BLSG