

PESTICIDE SAFETY ON ISLESBORO (PSI)
Meeting – Friday, February 21, 2020– 3:00 pm, Town Office

MINUTES

Present: Nancy Alexander, Lauren Bruce, Linda Gillies (chair), Marilyn Smith (by phone)

Absent: Anna Congdon, Helen Elkins, Jennifer West

Linda Gillies called the meeting to order at 3:10 pm.

The minutes for the PSI meeting of January 17, 2020 were approved as written.

Website. Linda reported on an email exchange that she had in early February with island resident Catherine Demchur-Merry, whose business, My Technology Teacher (MTT), includes website design and maintenance. Catherine said that she would be interested in taking on the redesign and maintenance of the PSI site and submitted a scope of work and a summary of what her charges would be. PSI would supply the text revisions and any images. The new site would be ready by July 1, 2020. Linda said that MTT's prices are reasonable. Lauren said that when possible, PSI should give paid work to island businesses.

The committee decided to give the job to MTT. Linda will contact Catherine and Peter Palermo of Elm Street Printing, who did the original website and designed/printed the PSI brochures. Elm Street will continue to print the brochures.

Linda said that work on the new website should begin soon. With committee members' help, she will be able make the necessary changes. One of the first steps will be to decide on the number and content of the "pages." The Blue Hill website will be helpful in that respect; Linda will send the link to the site to committee members.

Blue Hill Healthy Ecosystem (BHHE). Linda reported that she and Arch Gillies had attended another Second Tuesday Educational Evening at the Blue Hill Library on Tuesday, February 11. This was the third of three informational events organized by BHHE in preparation for a vote on a Healthy Ecosystem Ordinance for Blue Hill on April 3, 2020. Heather Richard, M.S., Research Project Coordinator, spoke about the impact of man-made chemicals on the environment.

Updates

Public meetings

- Winter Information Meeting. Linda said that PSI is on the agenda for the meeting, scheduled for Thursday, February 27 at 5:30 pm. She will speak on behalf of PSI and in advance will send a draft of what she plans to say to committee members for their review/suggestions.

- Summer Workshop. Linda had two suggestions:
 - Venue. Although the concept of a morning-long workshop on a Saturday is appealing, there are bound to be conflicts that will cut into the size of the audience. For years people have put a mental circle around the Forum schedule – 5:30-6:30 on Sundays – as a time when they will “learn something,” so the Forum slot might be preferable. Linda has contacted Forum chair Amanda Hobart, who would welcome PSI; July 12 and 26 and August 2, 9, 16, or 23 are available. The Forum would cover the costs of renting the ICC and the audio/video. Amanda says that we could expand the amount of time by half an hour or so, something like 5:15 – 6:45.
 - Speakers. The Forum should focus on three subjects - the impact of synthetic chemicals on the environment, the impact of those chemicals on human health, and alternatives to pesticide use. Because our time is limited, we should not enlist experts “from away,” as the Blue Hill Second Tuesday evenings did, for they each had two-hour sessions and included a great deal of detailed information – probably more than the Forum audience needs to know or could absorb. An alternative would be to invite three local professionals to summarize key points about each of the subjects. Possibilities for speakers: Jon Kerr on the environment, Janis Petzel on human health, Anna Congdon or another landscaper that she would recommend for alternatives to pesticides.

The committee agreed that we should opt for a summer “Forum” rather than a “workshop” and that if possible the speakers should be professionals from Islesboro rather than experts “from away.” Linda will follow up with Amanda Hobart about dates, etc. and will begin looking into potential speakers.

Water quality – general

- Linda, Nancy, and Lauren reported on a conference call that they had on January 27, 2020 with Lissa Robinson, hydrogeologist at GEI Consultants in Portland and a fellow staff member, Leila Pike (who grew up on Islesboro). They advised that while site-specific pesticide testing on coastal water quality and/or well water quality is possible, it is costly, and it is difficult to capture detectable levels of pesticides because the testing is so dependent on timing of placement, timing of a rain event, and testing in the right location. Programs such as the one operated by Friends of Casco Bay, which tests constantly and broadly at great expense, have the most success. In a follow-up email Leila reported that she had spoken to Curtis Bohlen, Director of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, who confirmed this. He added that if we did test, we would likely not find the pesticides that are of particular concern to PSI.

The committee agreed that PSI should probably not do testing for pesticides. Rather, we should follow Blue Hill Healthy Ecosystem's lead and rely on the research done by Casco Bay and other organizations indicating that synthetic pesticides do find their way into bay water and the aquifer. Linda pointed out a recent article published on January 12, 2020 by the U. S. Geological Survey confirming that pesticides can reach water-bearing aquifers below ground, though it can take decades.

Linda said that we should wait to make a final decision on the testing issue until after we hear the upcoming talk by Mary Tomlinson, Maine DEP's Pesticide Registrar and a water quality specialist. Arranged by IIT, it will be held at the ALP Library on Monday, March 5th at 5:30 pm. Lauren suggested that PSI try to schedule some time with her before or after the talk. Linda said that she would contact Chloe about this.

Water quality – Penobscot Bay

- Nancy said that she had contacted Dennis Apeti, chief scientist for Mussel Watch at NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science. He said that as the program had been defunded in 2016, there was no recent information about the presence of pesticides in mussel tissue. Nancy plans to do more analysis of Mussel Watch's data on "legacy" pesticides.

Landscaping care – best practices.

- Anna Congdon, who has been away, will report on the information that she has gathered about which products should not be used and alternatives to them at PSI's next meeting.

PSI budget. Linda circulated draft budget options. She said that given the committee's decisions about website design and the summer Forum, the budget, which will total about \$4,000, can be finalized. She will submit it to Janet Anderson; the Select Board will meet to put together its budget recommendations in March.

Next meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 27 at 3 pm in the Town Office.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies

To Do

Nancy Alexander

- Continue to analyze "legacy" chemicals in NOAA report.

Anna Congdon

- Continue putting together information for landscapers about products that should not be used and alternatives to them.

Linda Gillies

- Contact Catherine Demchur-Merry and Peter Palermo about the website.
- Circulate text of Winter Info Meeting talk to committee.
- Confirm with Amanda Hobart and Sara Babbidge that PSI will use the Forum for a panel discussion of synthetic pesticides and alternatives to their use. Choose date.
- Ask Chloe about scheduling time for PSI with Mary Tomlinson on March 5th.
- Submit PSI budget to Janet.
- Begin work on new website. Send link to Blue Hill website to committee members.

All committee members

- When work begins on the new website, help to decide on the number and content of the “pages” to be included. Linda will be in touch about this.

Approved 3/27/20