

Task Force on Pesticide Ordinance Public Education (POPE)

October 22, 2009

Meeting Notes

Notes compiled by Mary Ellen Manock

Meeting called to order by Jay @ 6:10 PM

Present: Jay Vos, Fern Crete, Jean Markey-Duncan, Denis Pobric intern at Board of Health, Sid Bosworth, Mary Ellen Manock, Jim Flint

Minutes/notes for 09/23/09 meeting approved.

Agenda approved.

LAWN SIGN IDEA:

- Jay gave a brief review of research related to Castine, Maine; San Francisco, CA and Toronto,
- In Ontario, Canada. People put signs on their lawns identifying what they spread on their lawns.
- Sign could read: natural garden or pesticide free garden or lawn.
- Denis liked the concept - encouraging people to put up signs on lawns to show pesticide free.
- Positive way of raising awareness.
- Sid: suggested some thought should be given to branding the campaign. Our own logo or city logo? San Francisco has their own logo for their campaign.
- Living lab and sign project will give us momentum and focus.
- Money in budget for signs? Jay reported there are funding sources (January grant opportunities)
- Federal grant money: WPTZ.com for the betterment of man....
- Will people want a sign in their yards?

COMMITTEE MAKEUP: Currently ten people have been contacted to be part of this task force.

- Jay expressed his frustration regarding the fact that people were not responding to e-mails or attending meetings. Jay heard from Derrick on a phone message and thought he would be at the meeting. He wondered if we should drop people from the e-mail list.
- Jean said that many people do not live in Burlington. There is the possibility that individuals have not seen how they could be of assistance. She stated that as the group becomes clearer in its focus, we can ask for specific help and in that way, we may be more likely have more involvement.
- Jim Flint offered that having a small core working group is probably all that can be expected. However, he felt that it doesn't hurt to keep others informed by ccing. He also said that 6 to 8 PM meeting time is tough.

LIVING LABS:

- Sid said that he had two undergrad students (juniors) who could be involved in the Living Labs. Some students do summer interns. Sid will also speak with the horticulture club to see if there is interest.
On possible working group would be master gardeners, students and interested members of the task force.
- Jim Flint wondered if we could name the project something other than “Living Labs”
- Jean reported on her conversation with Frank Rossi, professor of turf management at Cornell Univ. Frank is not a purest when it comes to chemical use but he was quite clear with Jean that a lawn can be grown without the use of chemicals. (Frank’s current research is on nutrient management, improved mowing technology, non-chemical management programs for golf and sports turf.) Jean reported that Frank warned against scaring people about chemicals. Jean informed Frank that the Burlington BOH has the responsibility to inform people about the health risks associated with the use of chemicals and that the Breast Cancer Fund had recently articulated that small doses, over long periods of time, at certain developmental stages and in combination with other chemicals do make the difference and they recommended that municipalities ban the use of lawn care chemicals for aesthetic purposes. (Beyond that, we do not plan to make any uninformed and outlandish statements.)
Frank is interested in “resource efficient lawns”. Proper mowing, seed and 2X a year fertilizing will offer a lawn with curb appeal. A lawn can look good for 8 to 10 years before renovation may be needed. In Frank’s opinion, no one is growing a “progressive” lawn. (Lawns make good environmental sense. Healthy lawns act as buffers in ways that bare garden soil does not.)
Frank said that Vermont has little restriction on the use of lawn care chemicals compared to N.Y. Frank suggested a campaign something like “cash for clunkers”. How to get folks to turn in their “industrial strength lawn”, for something more environmentally friendly?
Frank suggested that we might plan an event and invite him to be the speaker. His fee is \$1200 plus expenses. He has published a guide, “Lawn Care Without Pesticides” which can be found on the Cornell website. www.hort.cornell.edu/turf/. When you reach the site, type in “Lawn Care Without Pesticides” in the search box. This is a comprehensive guide that Jean suggested Sid’s students might use to design direct the planning for the Living Labs.

Marketing of Living Labs:

- Who speaks to the homeowner? Bring in Charlie Nardoizzi, National Gardening. VPR.
- Candace Page – news coverage.
- ME will speak with husband, Jerry Manock – Industrial design class??
- People have to apply, be willing to spend some money – labs in three different areas of the city. Advertise for applicants....
- Potential \$ in Committee for Lake Champlain. Get sponsors such as

- Gardener Supply.
- Lisa Coven/Burlington Parks & Rec
- Lawn Care Industry – Who would be interested?
- Marketing

Action on Living Labs:

- Sid will talk with the faculty advisor for Horticulture Club, Mark Starrett.
- Jean will contact Jurij Homziak again. Try to schedule a brainstorming session.

GROUP STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS:

- Managing lawns can start with good species and organic additives.
- Green mowers are an initiative. Only affects a few people /year.
- Convert your lawn into a wildlife lawn.
- Tracy Drive converting in new North End. Neighbors moving from lawns to gardens.
- **Change by example.**
- **Let's tap into the domino effect.** Real life people doing something. Living labs could have that effect.
- Living Labs in different wards. Students document outcomes.
- Attitude change.
- Like an art hop only lawn hop.
- People are busy. They want their front yard to be pretty, work free etc. Keeping up with the neighbors. **Change the culture.**
- CBS guy in LA loves plants; converted neighborhood by donating and helping plant trees. Reverse the trend of “vandalism” to something productive.
- Grubs feed the moles, skunks...voles get into the mole tunnels and eat the roots. Vole guards are used at hort farm. First half of the farm is being certified organic. The back half is not.
- City property could be part of Living Labs.
- City Market is a good example. (for ambitious gardener.)
- Community Gardens (Lisa Coburn) concern that people from different ethnic backgrounds, using CG's may not understand the rules or the ordinances and could be using chemicals. Hard to manage or insure what people do in relation to the ordinance.
- Hardware stores still sell pesticides/herbicides and chemical fertilizers. Confusing to consumer. **How do we get hardware stores on board?**
- How do we identify the difference in neighborhoods? Tracy Drive vs Apple Tree Point.
- Spear Street development with commonly owned and managed land 18 of those homes – a portion of the residents chose to cancel a contract with True Green (formerly Chem Lawn) services. Experiment is in progress using corn gluten regardless.
- Cornell adds nitrogen when required and at optimum times. This practice alone goes a long way to create a healthy lawn according to Frank Rossi.
- There is a balance in what you have growing in your yard, the right seeds, time to

mow, what you are willing to put up with. **We need to engage those wanting to convert - those who wanting to do a better job.** Maybe we ignore heel diggers and minimalists.

- Candace Page could trace lawns and what we are talking about.
- Nancy Hewlett coordinator for Master Gardener Program could be contacted.
- Buffer zones, defining, enforcing. **We now have an excellent tool, a list of all properties in the buffer zone.**
- Inert ingredients. Frank Rossi did not address this issue.

PESTICIDE ORDINANCE REWRITE:

- **Phosphorus inclusion in the ordinance???? NEED VOICES.**
- The ordinance committee is going to hold hearings on the ordinance rewrite.
- There was agreement by those who tried to read the pesticide/herbicide ordinance that the rewrite was difficult to read and understand. Seemed cut and pasted. Information plunked down randomly in the document. Won't be understood by the average gardener or homeowner. Not geared to the people who need to know. Will affect compliance.
- Allen Sousie (former BOH chair) gave Jean a version of the ordinance that was simpler and more readable. What happened to that?
- Whose job is it to make the ordinance understandable for all? It is not workable. Who authored the current rewrite? (Have any of the BOH member read it?)
- Kathleen Butler, former code enforcement officer was very knowledgeable on this issue and had written a simplified and clearer original version.
- Chemical compounds list, definitions are confusing. Kathleen did do a revision.
- Shouldn't someone from the committee speak to someone on the Ordinance Committee and let them know what we are trying to do? Give comments on the ordinance?