

BEES Agenda for Wednesday 25 March:

LIST OF TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED

1. Public Speak
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Intro to Heather Tackle & Renewal Initiatives (Sophie)
4. Girl Scout garden dimensions, site prep, next steps (Jenny)
5. Update about ordinance (sean)
6. Review Bee City requirements and start discussing plan for May 31 report submission
 - a. Report back from Owen re: signs
7. Brainstorm list of possible outreach activities for remainder of year (Jenny, Renee)
8. Memorial garden in the same section as the GS garden
9. Points to be read for the city council
10. Pick next meeting time and date

Participants: Sean Abbot (chair), Jamie Paquette, Renee Hill, Jenny, Goldleaf, Tamara Smith, Sophie Protano (remote)

Remote participants: Lawrence Rhone, Heather T

The meeting was called to order by Sean Abbot at 1836.

Public Speak

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the 18 February 2026 meeting were approved unanimously.

2. Public Speak

There were no public comments on non-agenda items.

3. Renewal Initiative Proposed Project to Redevelop Easthampton Town Farm and Lodge

Heather Takle (Renewal Initiative) and Lawrence Rhone (Farm-Veteran Coalition) described their organizations desire to redevelop the Easthampton town farm and lodge property on Oliver Street to affordable housing and an training center for military veterans transitioning into agricultural careers. They expect to respond to a request for proposals from the City Council (addressing disposal of surplus property) and if successful, engage in funding and permitting processes to transition this property.

Their request of the BEES Committee is for a letter of support (and possible testimony to the City Council) in support of this initiative.

Jenny Goldleaf asked if they could provide additional information on land and conservation planning that would bear on the BEES Committee charge. Heather responded that part of the initiatives plans is to form a community advisory board if they are successful in the City's RFP process.

Sean Abbot noted that there are two possible processes for the Committee to follow: 1) a possible action as a City Committee to obtain and review descriptive materials of the proposed initiative and vote on a letter of support and/or 2) using the same materials, the Committee could vote on a recommendation to the City Council on this decision.

Heather T provided the requested supplemental information to the Committee on Friday, 27 March.

4. Garden(s) by Mill Pond Outside of Eastworks

A. Garden to be developed in collaboration with Girl Scout Troop

Jenny Goldleaf showed images of possible areas adjacent to the rail trail that could be developed as a native plant and pollinator garden project in collaboration with the Girl Scout. There are two areas that can be considered: one to the left of the walk way on a slope and comprising about 520 square feet, and a second to the right of the walkway that is more level and comprises 280 square feet. Positioning relative to the walkway is from a view below the railtrail and looking to the north. There are tradeoffs with respect to steepness and possible erosion.

The two sites – individually and combined – are small and could likely be planted in an afternoon. Jamie Paquette and Sean Abbot expressed a preference to work on both areas. This was ratified by a vote of the Committee (unanimous).

Sophie Protano indicated that she had the information needed to get the ball rolling with DPW and to arrange for a delivery of wood chips for site preparation.

B. Memorial Garden Proposal

Brad Riley – former Easthampton City Council member and now volunteer City Health Worker – outlined a proposal to create a Memorial Garden in the same stormwater basin adjacent to Mill Pond. The garden would be created with funds from an opioid abatement settlement and create a space for gathering, healing and connection. The project has been approved by the City DPW and Planning Department, and will work with the Conservation Commission to ensure compliance with wetland conservation concerns. They envision a garden of 400 – 500 square feet, plantings of native species, and open area suitable for small gatherings with a bench and boulder holding an explanatory plaque.

The organizers are working to get buy-in from stakeholders, with information and opinions obtained to inform final design plans. They are soliciting letters of support for this project.

Jenny Goldleaf encouraged the project to consider plantings of a broader ecological palette, possibly including native grasses and sedges, and a groundcover layer.

5. Update on Proposed Ordinance to Expand BEES Committee

Sean Abbot reported that he had communicated with Councilor Kiam Jamrog-McQuaid (Chair of the Ordinance Committee) and that the draft ordinance is with the Committee.

6. Bee City Report Requirements

The Committee's report to the Xerces Society on activities as a Bee City is due on May 31. Jenny Goldleaf reported that the Xerces Society reporting requirements are articulate as five questions. Answers will most likely take the form of lists of activities, estimated number of participants and photographs. These can be found in a folder on the Committee's shared drive.

Committee members are to (individually and collectively) providing initial (partial answers in response to the questions. These will then be compiled and edited into the report to be submitted to Xerces.

7. Possible Future Outreach Activities

In a lightning round of discussion; the following ideas were presented:

- put up Xerces Society BEES City signs that are presently in Owen Zaret's garage;
- species baseline survey of the proposed garden sites
- night-time critter event – possibly using the Arcadia vernal pool
 - o note April school vacation is the week of 20 – 24 and Earth Day is April 22
- iNaturalist bio-blitz

8. Next Meeting

The next BEES Committee meeting will be Wednesday, April 15th at 6:30 p.m.in the small conference room adjacent to the City Council chambers.

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.