

Minutes
Town of Acton Land Stewardship Committee (LSC)
Tuesday, March 21, 2017
Town Hall, Room 9, 7 p.m.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bob Farra (Vice Chair), Paula Goodwin, Bob Guba, Joe Holmes, Bruce Rachman (Chair), Jim Snyder-Grant, Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Elan Riesman, Sherman Smith

Nonmembers:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison), Jezanna Gruber (176 Central Street observer)

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:04 P.M. He brought cookies.

Review and approval of February minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously. Bruce gave a “shout out” to Bob F for chairing the February meeting.

LSC member roles, July 2017 – June 2018; Current statuses

The Chair is already decided (Bob F). Paula is willing to be Vice Chair. Joe W indicated that he would prefer to no longer be Steward for Wills Hole/Town Forest (WH/TF), but that he would be willing to be Steward for the Morrison Farm Woods, a parcel that has often been mentioned as a candidate for Conservation Land status. Jezanna would be interested in being Steward for WH/TF. She is currently monitoring the 176 Central Street parcel adjacent to Mt. Hope Cemetery. She would become an Associate LSC member if she were to be Steward for WH/TF.

Joe’s suggestion that he be Steward for the Morrison Farm Woods parcel that is not Conservation Land (CL) brought on a) a reminder that the LSC charter allows the LSC to steward land that is not CL, and b) a discussion about the Woods becoming CL. The LSC will inquire of Tom Tidman whether it can blaze trails, make maps, etc. Janet will check whether the Woods becoming CL would require a TM vote. Bettina will follow up on what the process would be in general for the Woods to become CL.

Paula and Bettina are in the process of certifying vernal pools in the Woods, and in adjacent Woodlawn Cemetery land. Joe suggested that the LSC might be interested in considering the Morrison Farm Woods and adjacent Woodlawn Cemetery Woods to be a situation parallel to the Mt. Hope Cemetery/Heath Hen Meadow/176 Central Street situation. The Committee expressed no interest.

Great Hill blazing

Joe H suggested that the LSC reconsider some of the colors used on some Great Hill trails. He shared a handout. Ensuing discussion suggested that the LSC keep a red trail along the west edge of the soccer fields from the Fire Station parking to the kiosk immediately north of the soccer fields, and that the red trail along the east edge of the soccer fields have no color, but still be represented with a dotted line. It was noted that the surviving red trail might be difficult to blaze, although John is cutting away the brush and the trees can be seen more easily.

There was discussion also on the location of the Great Hill kiosk that currently sits at the edge of the

woods above the upper meadow. Should/could it be moved to be near the Fire Station parking?

- If you put the kiosk near the parking, then the red blazing “would make sense.”
- Bettina will find the status of the land near the parking (whether it is recreation or conservation) and whether the kiosk could go there. If so, she feels that it could be moved there this summer.
- We could have kiosks at both places.
- Moving the kiosk would make its maintenance easier. Also, it (and its map box) would better serve the people (first-time visitors) who would really use the kiosk.

It was moved and voted unanimously that the kiosk at the upper meadow be relocated to the Fire Station parking entrance to Great Hill pending approval by Tom Tidman.

It was moved and voted unanimously that the red trail on the west side of the playing field be maintained, that there be some sort of blazing on the west side, and that the red trail on the east side of the playing field be eliminated.

It was noted that the short red trail that leads to private land off the east side of the playing field should also no longer be red. Also, the former red trails could still exist on maps as dotted black lines.

Joe H provided a map sketch of a possible trail that could serve as an alternative to the trail over the private Mill Corner land. However, it would still pass over some of the Mill Corner land. John observed that it would be really difficult to provide an alternative trail that would stay entirely on CL. Bettina will email an inquiry on this to Mill Corner's Susan Dalton, copying John.

Checking parcel boundaries

Joe W reminded the LSC that a Steward's responsibility is supposed to include monitoring CL boundaries for misuse of CL by abutters, a point being that some CL boundaries are difficult to know. For this, Bettina suggests that you have to “pick your battles”. Per Bruce, you should only be concerned with “major violations.” If you see something that could be an egregious encroachment (e.g., dumping stuff onto CL, installing a shed onto CL), let Natural Resources know and NR staff would research deed language and possibly talk with the property owner. If a Steward wants to know where his/her parcel's property lines are, Bettina and Tom will help you walk your parcel. Helping with property lines could be a possible task for NR's summer intern. Perhaps the LSC could come up with an “intermediate way” to walk the bounds that wouldn't require help from Bettina and Tom. An ensuing discussion included ways of finding bounds to CLs.

Nagog Pond permit update

This is still in deliberations. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday evening. Janet shared her observations on this and how land stewards could be involved pending certain outcomes.

176 Central Street (signs on Cemetery land, poster shelters, map boxes, kiosks) update

Paula has a map that suggests placements of a kiosk and poster shelters. It will be presented at the next meeting of the Cemetery Commission and also to the Conservation Commission. On merging the 176 Central Street land with Heath Hen Meadow, it is Bruce's understanding that this would have to go through the Conservation Commission first.

Garlic mustard update

Jim can tell us more about garlic mustard infestations next month. In response to the availability of some young boys (third grade) wanting to do some community service work in April or May, Jim

suggests that Cub Scout-age kids are probably not the right crew for picking garlic mustard (but they could pull buckthorn!).

Other parcel information

- Joe H attended last Wednesday's Conservation Commission meeting and shared the LSC's naming guidelines for CLs. He will have the Conservation Commission include it on a future agenda for further discussion.
- It was pointed out that at the previous LSC meeting, there was no conclusion to the discussion on the use of apostrophes in CL names. The state does not use apostrophes, one reason being the possible misuse in representing singular vs. plural possessives. After a brief discussion, it was moved and voted unanimously that there be no apostrophes in CL naming.

The LSC would take it under advisement if it would happen that some name, for good reason, has to have an apostrophe.

- At Grassy Pond, on the shore by the pier to the viewing deck, there is the whole roof of a shed, possibly left over from ice fishing. There is need for a cleanup detail in there. Bettina will contact Gary Kilpatrick on this.
- Bruce, Bettina, and Paul Malchodi (Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (FBFRT) Board member) will be meeting this Sunday to discuss connecting the BFR and our trail system — possibly Nashoba and Wetherbee. This is a reach-out to the LSC by the FBFRT and not a decision-making meeting; it's just to show FBFRT some possibilities. We have no idea what the FBFRT can do about something like this. Laurie should be invited to this, as he is the Nashoba Brook Steward.
- Bruce, reviewing: The LSC stand on the Bulette land extension is to wait. Joe H's blazes are on the possible extension now. Joe will send an email with a schedule for walking it.
- Re dog poop on CL: Let's have signs "Please remove dog poop from <wording as appropriate, e.g. trails, campground>." Should there be bags? No, bags get thrown into the woods. Joe H will put up a sign at Pacy, where there are no dog waste-bag stations, to let people know how to use dog feces bags.
- The Health Department is out of tick cards for now. It is working on getting more. Bettina will let us know.
- On the High School Senior Day, Ed Russell will build another boardwalk at Guggins. Bob G recommends that if he comes to trees in the way, cut them down.

LSC Website — Brainstorming WildAware stories

Paula has topics through the end of April, but needs more.

Paula is developing an article on early spring blooming (suggested by Jim) and will tell us why this is significant. If a Steward notices blooming plants (e.g., skunk cabbage blooms) in the next couple weeks, or knows anything else about early blooming, let Paula know.

Suggestions:

Last year's drought effect on apples, cherries, etc.

Why does my dog howl at something I can't see?

LSC Website — Workdate calendar

Joe H has scheduled 4 more workdates (now on both the Calendar and Facebook page):

- 04/08 garlic mustard pull (CL in general).

- **05/27** meadow brush clearing (CL in general; if no CL location, then will work at Morrison Farm).
- 06/24 and 08/17 at Canoe Launch.

Paula: Install beaver deceiver pipe under the bridge at Heath Hen Meadow. Bettina: This summer when water drops. Joe H: Could schedule now for late summer and publicize it.

April 18 agenda

- Bettina is following up with Scoutland Trustee Bill Klauer shortly. The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) wants to do a day project there May 13. Bob G has flagged the trail from Carlisle Road to Scoutland. There is a huge pine with three big trunks blocking the trail in from Carlisle Road. It needs a sawyer.
- How to get email to the sawyers? Bruce will put a link on the website, “If you see a tree down, click here.”
- Outcome of meeting with FBRFT.

Evaluate meeting

Bruce brought us back on topic a few times; appreciated.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 18, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.