

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 20, 2018, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Dale Chayes, Zanna Gruber, Bob Guba, Joe Holmes (Chair), Bruce Rachman (Vice Chair), John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Sherman Smith, Jim Snyder-Grant

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President)

Joe H called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. with a quorum of 7 voting members present — Dale, Zanna, Bob, Joe H, Bruce, John, Joe W

Citizens' Concerns

Per Susan, anyone interested in conservation restriction monitoring, particularly the monitoring of the new Central Street addition to Heath Hen Meadows, can attend a future training meeting sponsored by the ACT. Stay tuned.

Review and approval of September and October minutes

Approval of September minutes with one change (fix reference to ARCGIS map-making software produced by ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute)) was moved and voted unanimously.

Re October minutes: Joe H asked for the following two changes re the “Dog Park Presentation”:

1. Reword

- Great Hill (GH) is probably second on the list. The land being considered at GH is Article 97 land, not CL. The use of article 97 land remains to be cleared up.

As

- Great Hill (GH) is probably second on the list. The land being considered at GH is listed in Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) 2014-2021 Table 5.C.2 as Article 97 land, which would probably prevent it being used for a dog park. However, that is probably a mistake in the OSRP. Once the protection status for the 9 pieces of GH are cleared up, the OSRP database needs to be revised.

2. Omit the parenthetical comment in

- On dog parks in general, the LSC would become less neutral if such a facility would interfere with Acton's current trail system. For example, there could be strong objection from the LSC if the dog park would use the Quarry Road site (not one of the 6 “final” sites) because a major trail goes through that parcel.

Approval of October minutes with the above changes was moved and voted unanimously.

<https://youtu.be/fUQcEalqOiw>

This is the link to the YouTube video done at Acton TV with Joe H presenting information about the LSC. It is “really good.” Acton TV will put subtitles (e.g., for the hearing impaired) on the video and then it will be permanently linked to the Town website. It is not known yet whether it will be on the LSC website. (Note: As of December, 2018, the video is linked to the Acton Trails website (<http://www.actontrails.org>), but not to the Town’s LSC website, <https://www.acton-ma.gov/633/Land-Stewardship-Committee>)

Acton Trails website

Repeating what he had said in an email, Jim reminded the LSC that Del Friedman has volunteered to be the LSC Webmaster. Jim is meeting with him tomorrow. There will be a form and spreadsheet to keep track of web requests and changes. Jim will be available to help Del. Jim also gave some examples of where things are on the Acton Trails website.

It would be good to have a hot link from one’s mobile phone to the Acton Trails maps. More generally, someone should review the site for “mobile utility.” Making the site better for phone access will “pay off.”

The Acton Trails site has some other mobile phone issues. At present, clicking (on your phone) on Heath Hen Meadow (HHM) in the Acton Trails list of parcels does not take you to the HHM map. One gets the message “Not Found.” Other newer maps are not accessible as well. Perhaps there are even more missing items of this type. A discussion ensued. Some detailed issues were noted by Jim who will forward them to Del.

Can the LSC get the Town to make parcel maps? Joe H has gotten a “somewhat positive response” from the Town, but he has not yet gotten a good conversation going, and the Town would have to worry about budgeting for this. There are about 20 maps and about two change per year. Speculation ensued on how the Town might proceed with this.

Bridge update — Heath Hen Meadow

The HHM bridge has been repaired by volunteers Bettina, Zanna, her husband David and son Pippin, Joe H, Bruce, Greg Sutherland, and a local resident, Jennifer, who happened to be passing by while work was underway. “Yea!” from this meeting’s attendees. Discussions ensued on how it was done, the need for proper beaver control at the site, and the possibility of a work effort at the site next spring or summer. This would include possibly raising the bridge (~ 8 in.), redoing the boardwalk and all the sills, and replacing some rotted stringers. Re the beavers: Perhaps the LSC should visit with the Conservation Commission about possible solutions.

There are lots of mosquitos at HHM.

The New England Aquarium *live blue* Service Corps will be at HHM in December.

Bridge update — Nashoba Brook

The trusses were finished (in Bob’s backyard) in the nick of time (before the recent rains). In the spring, the LSC will get the trusses to Wheeler Lane using Bob’s son’s trailer, line them up with the cement pads, and Tom Tidman will get a crane to the site to drop the bridge on the pads. Lumber for decking and railings will come later (and still has to be ordered). It was agreed that no one should go down into the sluice during this installation. A discussion ensued on bridge abutments, buttresses, and Simpson ties.

It was noted that while the LSC will put the bridge in place, any issue re accessibility is the Town's problem.

Bridge update — Chinese Bridge (at the Arboretum)

Bruce is working on this 12-ft long arch bridge. He shared a picture of such a bridge and gave an update on the state of the construction. On a map of the Arboretum, Bettina located where the bridge will span a branch of Marys Brook. It will sit on two pieces of granite on a concrete headwall. The footings are not there yet, and the bridge won't be installed until the spring.

Parcel Business – Wright Hill-Guggins Brook trail easement

A number of folks walked the easement today with nary a concern against keeping it the way it's worked out.

Jim showed on a map the trail linking the two parcels. He pointed out that the Committee had formally agreed on the part of the trail on private land, but not on the part on Conservation Land that has now been walked by a good number of committee members.

Approval of the trail, that there should be a work party to finish it, and its proper blazing was moved and voted unanimously.

As for documentation of the easement, the lawyers have shared same with the Town and are waiting to hear back from the Town. Then some more signings are needed.

Parcel Business – Bulette boardwalk repair

Done. The Town bought the materials for Andy Gatesman this fall and Andy rebuilt the whole thing, elevating it in the process, in 2-3 weeks. Thank you, Andy!

Parcel Business – Nagog Hill

Dale reviewed the plan he had e-shared for cleaning up the debris resulting from a tree falling on and demolishing a horse run-in shed at the edge of Hybid Farm. Farm owner Rita McConnon had asked Dale for help with this. The top of a giant ash tree has to be cut up and laid down, and plywood from the shed has to be cut up and carried to the edge of the Nagog Hill parking lot for the Town to remove. The tree fall did not impact the nearby boardwalk. The timing for doing this hinges on the adjacent meadow being frozen and the farm's fences being fixed, the latter happening right now. Dale would like to schedule a workday with volunteers, including some sawyers, to cut up and move the debris.

Also, Dale had question on whether it's an LSC goal to maintain the Nagog Hill meadows as meadows. It was pointed out that the Town has a Meadow Management Plan.

Parcel Business – Great Hill

Re the 40B development proposed for Great Hill, Bettina shared what happened when this was discussed at the Board of Selectmen (BoS) meeting. The BoS will recommend against this project to Mass Housing. However, some complained at last night's BoS meeting that the BoS letter to Mass Housing was not strong enough. The LSC had sent a letter re the project to the BoS. It, and all other letters submitted, are on DocuShare.

Parcel Business – Grassy Pond

On proceeding with the trail over the Newtown Road addition to the Grassy Pond parcel: The whole site is peppered with Native American stone piles. The trail should be kept away from them.

Bob, Bettina, and Bruce will flag the trail, with Bob leading. There is a lot of dead stuff on the site, but it won't be dealt with until the trail is marked. This is something that the Cub Scouts, who will be maintaining the trail, could do after the trail exists.

Parcel Business – Camp Acton

Upcoming use of Camp Acton by Minute Man Arc prompted a discussion on use of the campground — land that is under the LSC jurisdiction, but with its organized-public-use managed by the Acton Recreation Department. For normal use, Camp Acton campsites are available first come, first served.

Parcel Business – Jenks

Water is high due to a downstream beaver dam.

New Business

Does the LSC want sheet rock inside the new shed at Morrison Farm? No, anything resembling dry wall will just mold. Put up a peg board. There could be a subcommittee that could meet at the site and determine what's needed. There should already be insulation as the shed was heated in its previous life. Bettina has two plaques for the shed.

Is the LSC finished with its mower use this year? If yes, it should be run dry (i.e., with engine running, shut off the gas and let it burn out all the gas in the engine). A discussion ensued on warming up and shutting off the mower.

Two map parking symbols were demonstrated (for discussion): Encircled P for on-street parking, and uncircled P for a nearby parking lot (for the former, see Wills Hole/Town Forest map for parking provided by the turn-around circle at the end of Nagog Park Drive; for the latter, see the same map for the parking provided by the upper parking lot at NARA). Pro: Encircled P is helpful. One should find no "No Parking" signs. Con: Encircled P might mislead people into thinking there is a parking lot at the marked location. Let the people decide whether it's okay to park on the side of the road.

Put this on the December agenda.

2019 Schedule:

01/15, 02/19, 03/19, 04/16, 05/21, 06/18, 07/16, 08/20, 09/17, 10/15, 11/19, 12/17, 7-9 pm.

Approval of the above dates for LSC monthly meetings was moved and voted unanimously.

December 18 meeting: For 12/18 evening, the Town is planning Open Meeting Law training for committee members.

Among other things, this will include updates to the Open Meeting Law. As best known right now, the LSC obligations on this are not clear. The meeting will be in Town Hall Room 204.

December 18 agenda

Meeting norms and expectations — Joe H

Burn piles — Do we know where all burn piles are to be?

Parcel parking — To denote parking on a street for an adjacent parcel?

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 18, at 7 P.M., in Room 121.