

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Virtual Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 17, 2020, Virtual Meeting, 7 P.M.

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: **Dale Chayes, Bob Farra, Zanna Gruber (Chair), Joe Holmes, Bruce Rachman, Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington** (Vice-Chair), **Joe Will** (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Jon Campbell, Andy Gatesman, Josh Haines, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, **Mel Lima, Aaron Moore**, Jim Salem, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Alan Ankers** (Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF)), **Steve Hinton** (CCF), **Everett Kenerson** (Acton citizen), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President), **Franny Osman** (Acton citizen), **Steve Spang** (CCF)

Opening

Zanna opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m., with all voting members present.

Zanna read the script provided by the Town for remotely-conducted open meetings.

Regular Business

Review and approval of October 20 minutes

Approval of the minutes was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call.

Citizens' concerns

Franny Osman asked that the LSC consider some sort of preservation of the “little shack” at the top of Wright Hill. She would be willing to spearhead a restoration/rebuild/replacement effort. She had taken her idea to Tom Tidman, and Tom suggested that the LSC is the committee to start with. The LSC will include this on its December 15 agenda. There would need to be an assessment of the building for a December discussion.



New/Special Business

New trail link with Carlisle

Three members of the CCF (see Attendees) participated in this part of the meeting.

At present, the Acton and Carlisle trail systems connect through the Robbins Mill Conservation Land (CL) in Acton and Ben's Woods in Carlisle. Now Carlisle is looking at another possible connection of the towns' trail systems. Two maps were shared (see below), one of Acton, showing two parcels of municipal land (13 at the end of Marshall Path, taken for tax purposes, and 19, acquired as part of the Marshall Path development, and now conservation land); the other of Carlisle showing possible new trails in Carlisle. The question is: Would Acton be interested in having a trail on parcel 19 (and possibly 13) that would connect with a trail in Carlisle at its Pannell parcel?

Points made:

- This proposal has nothing to do with the Robbins Mill/Ben's Woods trail.
- All trails shown on the Carlisle map are proposed (except those that are way down on the map). At present, there is no trail in Acton to link with any of the proposed Carlisle trails. The present discussion is whether to have an interconnecting trail. Carlisle wants to learn what the options are.



Acton



Carlisle

- Parcel 19 is about 12 acres. Parcels 13 and 19 could be all one parcel of about 16 acres. The parcels are “locked in” by the subdivision. There is access from both Marshall Path and Canterbury Hill Road. Acton would have to go through proper procedures to make all of this CL.
- Parcels 13 and 19 are pretty much plain woods. Acton’s Blueberry Path (road) touches parcel 19 and provides a two- or three-car parking space. Presently, there is no trail from the parking space.
- There could be a loop trail. No boardwalks would be required. A trail here would essentially result in the same situation as at Stoneymeade.
- The Tennessee Gas pipeline runs along the town line. Is a trail along the gas line possible? Right now, one can walk the gas line; but even that red trail (Carlisle) would have to be developed. So a trail is physically possible, but we don’t have legal rights.
- Contrary to what occurs at the Robbins Mill/Ben’s Woods connection, a connection in parcel 19 would be easy and involve no special requirements with respect to the gas line.
- Per Steve (of CCF), a walk of the parcels shows upland oak and hickory. The parcel is “completely available” for a trail. It’s large enough for a trail on which one wouldn’t see any homes. There is a parking space on Blueberry Path where there is basically no traffic. Carlisle is interested in seeing if there is any excitement on Acton’s part for a trail that would easily cross over the gas line and connect with Carlisle’s proposed Pannell loop. Eventually these trails could integrate with larger systems. If the Carlisle trail along the pipeline would go all the way to Acton Street, it could cross over and could eventually go out to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the Bay Circuit Trail.
- Linking up with the Robbins Mill trail is a little more complicated.
- Bob (who lives in the area) may want to discuss essentially a neighborhood trail system with the neighborhood homeowners’ association(s). If there is interest, what about parking? Should a trail be straight through, or a loop?
- Bob will be happy to talk with neighboring residents and report back (December agenda item),
- The question would be, are you interested in having a trail that would link to Carlisle in this neighborhood, or do you want to leave things as they are?

- If there is interest, the next steps could include walking the site (Laurie would like to participate), proposing a trail, its layout, and getting necessary approvals.
- If there would be trails on the Acton parcel, access to a larger trail system makes sense.

Green Acton Ecosystems Initiative

Postponed until December meeting.

Safe footing on boardwalks and bridges

This is postponed until the December meeting, but Alan of the CCF suggests that Acton may be interested in checking out a project by the Carlisle Trails Committee on Carlisle's Twin Peaks Trail (an extension of Marion's Trail) off of West Street to the north. About 100 yards in from West Street on the Twin Peaks Trail there is a boardwalk with about six different test systems (chicken wire, asphalt shingles, etc.) for slippery footing. They will be there for about a three-year period. One of most effective ways to keep boardwalks from getting slippery is to rake leaves off in the late fall so the walks can dry. Raking leaves off a boardwalk also extends the life of the boardwalk.

Additional Regular Business

Covid19-related issues, if any

- A big “Thank you” to all for putting up the new coronavirus signs. Great Hill, with 6 or 7 entrances, needs more signs. Bettina will put more signs on her porch and John can take what he needs. At Great Hill, John found one sign torn down (after two days). Stewards should check that their signs are still posted.
- An article in the Boston Globe on the Trail Through Time (TTT) caused hordes to descend on the Nashoba Brook CL trail. Parked cars jammed Wheeler Land. Neighbors contacted police. Police, neighbors, and Bettina put up signs with Bettina’s directing drivers to alternate parking locations. Bettina contacted the Globe and suggested an addendum for the Globe to publish. Didn’t happen.

Parcel issues

- Nashoba Brook

At Wheeler Lane and Davis Road, should there be a map box for the TTT map? Bettina: That’s a good idea. I’ll do it.

- Canoe launch

– Joe H shared information on a Planning Board/Select Board hearing on the “ultimate gerrymandered” parcel at 67 Powder Mill Road. The Canoe Launch easement has land in common with the parcel, which has frontage on Powder Mill Road only on the Assabet River bridge. Joe pointed out, however, that the development’s plans show entrance to the parcel at its other end, through the Council of Aging parking. Joe W said that access to the parcel is not yet settled as the developer may have a problem in getting the Town to agree to the developer’s plan.

– Joe W pointed out that the Acton town website shows there is a Public Forum on 12/03 on “Revisioning of the Powder Mill Road Corridor”. The corridor runs from Maynard center to the Stop and Shop plaza and includes 67 Powder Mill Road.

- Stoneymeade

Bettina introduced Everett who is expected to become the steward for Stoneymeade.

- Camp Acton

There has been some trash dumping again at the entrance road (also at the Great Hill Main Street parking). The dumping at Camp Acton has been going on for years. Bruce will haul this trash to the transfer station. Maybe it’s time for the Town to use a camera to catch the culprits. There was ensuing discussion on the use of a camera. Per John, we should check into the legality and practicality of, and Town policy for, such use of a camera. Bettina will check (for next month’s agenda).

- Great Hill

Are there any special plans for Great Hill re the newly-purchase land there? Natural Resources, the Open Space Committee, and Acton Conservation Trust may have some say on this. The trail east from the playing field still goes over some private property. There could be a route around it. Also, the new parcel gives Great Hill more frontage. The LSC should save this for discussion next month.

- Other

– The Board of Selectmen approved 348 Main Street as the site for the Acton Community Dog Park. 352 Main Street is not part of the dog park, but its development will likely be integrated with that of the dog park.

– On the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail, Michael Hu did a really good job with a whole bunch of new boardwalks as his Eagle Scout project. He has a little more work to do there. At that site, it is not clear where the trail ends and which boardwalks are “official”. Joe H would like to walk with Bettina the route that goes up to Adams Street.

– Scoutland seems to be getting more use. There are no new developments re LSC’s interests.

Website issues

– Morrison Farm is not yet on the website. Bettina will nag Peggy Sestrich again. If Peggy needs something from Joe H, let him know.

– Someone has “stolen” the (old) actontrails.org site. It is now a cartoon/gaming site, possibly based in Indonesia. It still shows the Acton Trails logo, our email address, and the Natural Resources Department phone number. Per Bettina, Matt Frost of Acton IT said it didn’t matter, we don’t care, and it doesn’t have any reflection on us. Also, the logo is not owned by the Town. Whereas we should be cautious about taking an IT person’s word, this could be shared with Town Counsel who could send a Cease and Desist order on the use of the phone number and the logo. Per John, we should be cautious about releasing any url.

– Because of the above, all of the LSC QR codes (that link to the old website) should be taken down from wherever they are posted, principally CL kiosks. Should they be replaced or should we simply give the website for access to the interactive maps? What is the process for creating a QR code (which is simply a url of the web page)? Joe H will work on this. Bettina can laminate any QR codes we want.

– Natural Resources has an intern, Abby Beilman from Clark University, who will update the new content re the TTT on the Acton Trails website.

Maps update

There is no update to online maps. A large copy of the Morrison Farm paper map, approved last month, is on the Farm kiosk, a culmination of three years of work. The map box there also has paper maps. The next new paper map will be of Great Hill. There are mistakes in current versions that the LSC will work with the Town to correct.

Next month’s (December 15) agenda

- The Green Acton Ecosystems Initiative
- Plans for the newly-purchased land at Great Hill.

Adjournment

At 8:19 p.m., the meeting adjourned.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, December 15, at a time to be announced.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of October 20, 2020