

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

Full (voting) members: **Bettina Abe**, **Jon Campbell** (Vice-Chair), Dale Chayes, **Aaron Moore** (Chair), Bruce Rachman, John Watlington, **Joe Will** (Minutes), Tom Wolf

Associate (nonvoting) members: Stuart Amir-Lin, **Ken Appel**, Josh Haines, **Rebecca Harvey**, Everett Kenerson, Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, **Adam Nolde**, **David Pinsky**, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Jason Temple, Steve Trimble, Todd Tsakiris, **Bob Walton**

Others: **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Andrew Knight** (Acton resident), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT), **Alissa Nichol** (Select Board (SB) LSC liaison)

Aaron opened the meeting at 7:02 p.m. As attendance was one voting member short of a quorum, Bob was appointed to be a voting member for the evening. Ian Bergemann, Acton Land Stewardship Coordinator, was absent due to a schedule conflict.

Review and acceptance of March 19 and April 16 Minutes

April minutes were accepted as presented; March minutes not yet available.

Concerns from the public

Per Jody: ACT received an email stating that the homeowners at 6 Piper Lane would like a Great Hill trail relocated so that it's not so close to their fence. Ian should have received the note and should follow up.

Invasive plants, May 2024

John Watlington, presenter, was unable to attend the meeting.

Parcel notes

- Bulette: Scouts have finished the boardwalk.
- Camp Acton: Scout lean-to: tabled. Memorial bench: Nothing new.
- Grassy Pond: Jody points out that at the (underwater) east end of the boardwalk from Grassy Pond West there are some slats missing that people have creatively used to cross some mud. Also, there is one very large tree down in the parcel that needs to be cleared. Jody will share this with Ian.
- Guggins Brook: The beavers are working again and there is bad flooding. A culvert was plugged (Jon cleared it) and there has been some damage to some bridges. It remains to be seen how much the beavers go back at it. Also, mud is fully packed around the beaver deceiver by the “284 bridge” — the nicest bridge in the parcel. The pipe is still running, but if there is a really large rain event, it's going to overflow the bridge (which sits only about 8 inches above the mudline) and the bridge is gone. Should there be a volunteer workday? That would be possible, but if this flooding is the result of the beavers’ main dam (50 m downstream from their previous one), Jon thinks that the beavers will repair any damage to this dam very quickly. It would make sense to talk to the bridge builder (Bruce Rachman) to find out whether the bridge can be anchored to the ground (presently not so).
- Heath Hen Meadow: Per Bettina, the bridge project is “pretty much done” except for some cleanup related to the old boardwalk. Bettina also shared some thoughts about what yet could be done with the bridge railings, but any final decisions would be Ian’s.

Bettina asked: Did the LSC vote for an observation platform for this parcel? Joe thinks that it did not come up for a vote by the LSC, and Ian may be pursuing it as a Scout project. Per Bettina, this would be a very “major” project. The underwater Grassy Pond boardwalk should take priority.

The permitting process has started for a fishing pier.

- Jenks: The parking lot was regraded and the ditches along the trailhead are slowly being filled in.
- Nagog Hill: Most volunteer workdays have been cancelled due to the weather. Expecting this Thursday to be the first official day. There are lots of volunteer signups for work in June.
- Pratts Brook: We are waiting for bridge replacement plans from a Scout. Also, a professor wondered if the LSC would be interested in helping support the pitch pine population by removing competing species. Ian offered to meet with the professor to discuss the idea.
- Spring Hill: Rebecca has a video of Beech Leaf Disease at Spring Hill. She will send a link to the LSC.
- Stoneymeade: Eight employees from Bemis Associates (Shirley, MA) helped remove invasive species and rescue 3 trees from bittersweet and honeysuckle. Next steps there are to lay down wood chips, and cardboard.
- Wills Hole: A professor expressed interest in researching the mosquito population in Acton. At the bog, he will hang a device from a tree branch that will collect adult mosquitoes. Ian plans to make a flyer or sign near the device to explain its purpose. This work would begin in July and end by September.
- Wright Hill: A kiosk will soon be installed.

Other parcel notes

- Anderson Conservation Land steward: Jody would like to do this as the parcel is essentially “in my backyard” and she walks it almost daily. A discussion ensued as to whether Jody could be it steward without being on the LSC. Currently there is one opening for a Full member and no opening for an Associate member. A Select Board member thinks that to be a Full member one should first serve at least one year as an Associate. Joe points out that generally this has not happened. Moreover, Jody has regularly attended LSC meetings for some time now, a better record than most current Associates. At the previous LSC meeting, two current Associate members had expressed willingness to complete the Full member roster, but both are willing to step aside for Jody. Jody should submit a Town volunteer application asap.
- Poison ivy on LSC parcels: Adam wondered about the LSC stance on poison ivy as he has been asked several times if the LSC can do something about removing what appears to be a “bumper crop” at Pratts Brook, including in places where it hasn’t been seen before. Per Bettina: Generally. We don't do anything about it. If the steward is willing and able, they could put on bodily coverage and weed and hand-pull it, particularly if it’s along a trail. If someone has a health problem re poison ivy in general, they can write the Town Manager, the Select Board, or the Department of Public Works (DPW).

Would it be okay to organize a volunteer work party to remove poison ivy along trails? Everybody who volunteers and is not on the LSC would have to sign a liability waiver. Anyone who tries to tackle poison ivy should first put Tecnu on any exposed skin. Also, one cannot use any herbicide on public land without being State certified.

Other updates

- ABRHS Senior Community Service Day happenings: The seniors “did great” at the Arboretum. Another group brought in more fill for the trails at Guggins Brook.
- Acton Conservation Agent: A candidate formally accepted the position and will be brought on in July.
- 549 Main St CR: We are waiting to hear from the Water District on trail maintenance.

- Geocaching: Ian should have a policy draft ready for the June meeting.
- The LSC Mission Statement that Joe referenced in the April minutes and that one can link to via the Town website is a 2015 document. (Clerk’s note: At this meeting, Joe incorrectly stated that the Mission Statement required review by the SB at least every two years. What follows is correct.) The LSC Mission Statement is to be reviewed at least every two years by the LSC with recommended changes submitted for Select Board (SB) approval.

Alissa would like to know LSC plans for its review of its Mission Statement as she would have to put approval of any changes (e.g., increase the number of Associate members) on a SB agenda for the SB’s review and approval. Ian should be involved with this so the LSC should wait on it.

- Morrison Farm CR: The Ag Comm is “going back to the drawing board” to try to learn and address the concerns of Select Board members.

- Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP): The OSRP received conditional approval. Final draft will be ready this summer.

- Sawyers: Ian’s recent chainsaw training was a town-wide opportunity with enrollment that “filled up”. Adam “actually joined (the LSC) to become a sawyer” but he missed the training as his email wasn’t working. Other than Adam, who “will definitely step up and volunteer” to be a sawyer at the next opportunity, it is reasonable to assume that any LSC member who wants to be a sawyer would have said so by now.

- Scoutland: Ian and Bill Klauer (Scoutland Trustee) were to have met yesterday. That didn’t happen and Ian is working to schedule a time to meet with Bill.

- Town Meeting: The override passed, so budgets remain unchanged. Also accepted, a land gift at 38 Piper Road that abuts Great Hill.

- Website: Down last week; now up. Ian will work with Acton IT to see what updates are needed.

- Wetherbee Woods update per Susan: The Town Manager is planning to connect with the landowner’s representative after Memorial Day. One concern is that the Community Preservation Committee could play a very important role in the process, but its last meeting is coming up before taking the summer off. A hope is that this hiatus does not blunt the current enthusiasm for pursuing the negotiations.

The ACT had two service days at Wetherbee Woods in April, setting two trails that will make it possible to tour people through the parcel at any appropriate time in the future.

Next month’s (06/18/24) agenda

Election of officers for the coming year, Camp Acton lean-to, pitch pines, Scoutland, LSC membership and parcel assignments, Spring Hill boardwalk extension with basic information from Rebecca.

Evaluate meeting

“Well done, Mr. Chair.”

Adjournment

At 7:47 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, June 18, at 7 p.m.