

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2012, 4:00 PM
Acton Town Hall

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Laurie Ullmann

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Tom Arnold, Bob Guba

Nonmembers present: Janet Adachi (LSCom's Board of Selectmen liaison), Hart Millett

September meeting minutes: A number of changes have been suggested to the September meeting minutes sent out on October 7 but updated minutes have not yet been circulated, so approval was postponed until the November meeting.

Possible community service projects for teen offenders: Det. Keith Campbell had planned to attend today's meeting but was unable to; he will reschedule.

8 Green Community Service Day: The 8th-grade work day, rained out on September 28, will go ahead on October 23 with Tom A. at Nagog, Jim at Pratt's Brook, and Ann Shubert at Grassy Pond. Bruce Rachman may be planning to supervise some painting at Camp Acton, but Jim has not confirmed this.

Signs: Bettina said that she maintains a list of signs that need repair or replacement and asked whether anyone has anything to add to it. She is presently in the process of refurbishing (sanding and repainting) signs at Heath Hen and Jenks and will give the list of those needing replacement to Shawn at the Natural Resources Department. Two requests were made. First, Philip suggested that signs be posted at either end of the long boardwalk on the loop trail at Spring Hill to indicate that the boardwalk is in poor condition. "Unstable Boardwalk" and "Caution" were suggested as possible wordings, but Philip thinks that the decision should be left up to Tom Tidman, as this is an issue of potential Town liability. Second, Jim stated that a sign (with wording yet to be determined) is needed to direct people from Hazelnut Street to the new Nagog Hill access trail via the Concord Water District access road. Bob added that the sign put up by Pulte at the beginning of the trail, which reads "Nagog Hill," should instead read "Nagog Hill Conservation Land."

Boardwalk at Spring Hill: Philip's request for signs for the Spring Hill boardwalk led to a discussion of the boardwalk itself. Philip, Bob, and Bettina have recently taken a walk there to consider once again what might be done. Philip's current proposal is a new one: that this particular project is too difficult for the committee to undertake and that the Town should instead allocate funds for it to be done professionally. Jim suggested that the company that has just completed the Quail Ridge boardwalk might be a possibility. Tom A. made a motion that we make this recommendation to Tom Tidman, and those present agreed. He also suggested that Bettina bring an update on Tom Tidman's response to next month's meeting.

"I Hiked Acton's Conservation Lands" program idea: Bettina has passed along several ideas about the layout of the program document from Bob to Maura Haberman and has taken note of his suggestion about dropping the idea of stewards leading walks. There will be links to the document from both the Recreation Department's and our websites, and she is looking into ordering stickers and patches for those who complete the program.

New steward needed for Pratt's Brook: Charlie Carlson has told Jim that he needs to step down as

steward of Pratt's Brook, although he hopes to volunteer as his time allows. Jim will send out an email about needing a new steward; it was also suggested that notices be placed on the parcel's kiosks and at the Senior Center. A fourth avenue, if these three don't bring a response, is the Town website's Employment and Volunteer Opportunities page.

Wheeler Lane kiosk location: The kiosk at Wheeler Lane is rotting and needs to be replaced, and Forrest Gill, a Sea Scout (a division of the Boy Scouts of America) who is looking for a project for the Quartermaster rank (similar to the Eagle Scout rank), has indicated that he is interested in building a new one and is working on a proposal. The one potential problem is that the permanent location of the kiosk is currently undetermined because of drainage work that is planned as part of the Trail Through Time project and some other possible changes. However, Bob, Laurie, and Linda McElroy have agreed that a new kiosk could be installed at the present location with the understanding that it might be moved later if a new location is chosen.

Great Hill access from Mass. Avenue: Jim has been investigating the possibility of creating an easement at the Mass. Avenue entrance to an access trail to Great Hill that is not currently shown on the map. The trail goes from the bulge in the yellow trail in the northeast section of the property to the parking area behind 380 Mass. Avenue. Jim is proposing an easement that would go from Mass. Avenue through the parking lot to the entrance to the trail, which is just inside the border of the building's property. He has spoken with the property manager of 380 Mass. Avenue, and has gotten a positive response, but he has found that the occupants of the building next door (number 360, almost at the Rt. 2 merge) would also have to agree to the arrangement as they all own the property jointly. There are two possible entrance points for the trail, one from the back of the parking lot behind number 380 and the other from a grassy picnic area beside that parking lot. The property manager has indicated that he doesn't want the buildings' parking lots advertised for use by Great Hill walkers. Jim indicated that he has a preference for the picnic area as the location where the trail would begin/end, and those present indicated that this would be satisfactory. Jim will therefore pursue the possibility of an easement to the picnic area with all the buildings' occupants.

Stepping stones for loop trail at Great Hill: A walker at Great Hill has made the suggestion that stepping stones would be a useful improvement in a frequently wet area along the northern part of the loop trail. Jim questioned how difficult it would be to move and successfully place stones for this purpose. Philip judged it to be difficult but doable. The general feeling was that it is not a high priority. It is probably too small a project for an Eagle Scout, but it might be a possibility for a project for the high school's senior work day.

Status of bench policy: Tom A. requested a quick update on the bench policy. Bettina said that she has the information that had been requested by the ConsCom and is incorporating it into a document, and Jim indicated that he has a few more things to add. The issue is not yet on the ConsCom agenda, but she indicated that she would try to put it on the next agenda.

Parcel updates: Canoe Launch: Bettina reported that there is lots of frost-damaged Japanese knotweed on the site, some coming through the tarps that have been put down to discourage it, but none in an area that earlier had had some.

Grassy Pond: Bob has found graffiti spray-painted on some rocks near the Newtown Road entrance, and he plans to remove it with a chemical spray that he has recently purchased.

Guggins: Jim reported that there are two knotweed sites at Guggins, one near the Rt. 111 entrance and one near the interior meadow, just off the blue trail as it goes into the woods (in an area that is an old dump site, with some items still visible). He also noted that the Town has mowed the meadow

bordering New View. Bob then reported that other areas mowed so far this fall by the Town are Grassy Pond, Nagog, and probably Heath Hen Meadow.

Jenks: Jim reported that woody growth around some boulders in the meadow needs to be removed with the brush cutter and suggested that Bob might speak to Josh Haines about doing this work.

Nashoba Brook: Laurie reported that he has removed several blowdowns (as well as others at Spring Hill and Nagog). Also, he has found no more beer cans near the Wheeler Lane bridge.

Spring Hill: Philip reported that things are in good shape, there have been no blowdowns, and the “You Are Here” signs are working well.

Wetherbee: Bob has mowed the small meadow beyond the kiosk, including the buckthorn and autumn olive but leaving the bluegrass, which Jim said should be mowed every few years. He also widened the access trail along the cornfield on the side bordering the woods and the adjacent property. He hopes that the area planted will not encroach further on the access trail because of this widening on the opposite side. Jim said he has spoken with John Chalmers about this but that we should monitor the situation.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 21, at 4:00 P.M.

Documents that serve as background for these discussions can be found at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-5049>. They are titled:

- 0 – LSC Agenda 2012 October 17
- 5.1 – “I Hike Acton’s Conservation Lands” program
- 5.2 – I Hike Acton’s Conservation Lands – draft brochure
- 9 – Parcel Updates