

Acton Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes Wednesday, October 16, 2013, Town Hall, Room 126, 4 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Tom Arnold, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Philip Keyes, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant (Chair)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Joe Will (Minutes)

Nonmembers: Janet Adachi (LSC's Board of Selectmen liaison), Roxie Rachman

Jim called the meeting to order at 4:06 P.M.

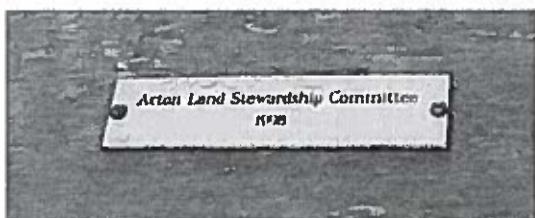
Review and approval of September 18 minutes

The minutes were accepted unanimously as presented.

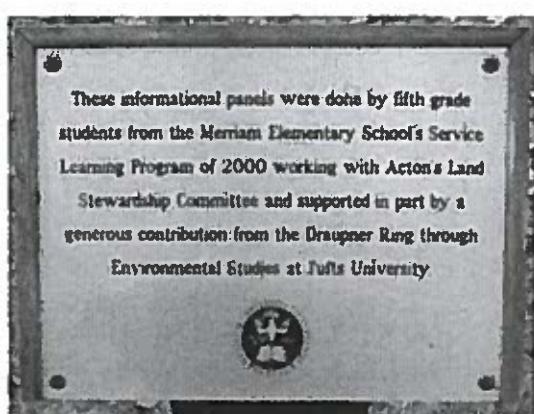
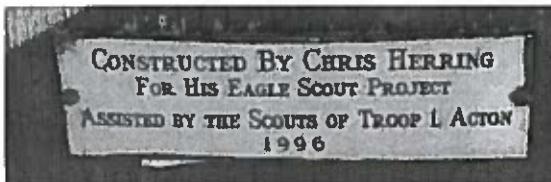
Plaque policy

We want to have a plaque on the new Guggins Brook bridge but we realized there is no policy on plaques. Jim wanted to have a policy draft for this meeting, but instead gave a verbal description of what could be in the policy draft:

The wording of any proposed plaque will be approved at an LSC meeting. The material will be chosen and approved by the Natural Resources Department. The committee may make a recommendation. It is strongly preferred that the plaques match in appearance the plaques that are already out there. The placing will be determined in the field, by the LSC member or staff person installing the plaque. The wording should be short and simple, following the pattern on the plaques that are already out there, specifically: A 4-digit year, followed by a short note acknowledging either a special source of funding or a special source of labor, or both.



Plaques at Heath Hen Meadow (above),
Great Hill (below left), Wills Hole/Town Forest (below right)



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Comments:

- Bruce: We may also want to be able to use “in memory of . . .”.
- This is not a bench policy, but a policy for things we build that are “functional.”
- Bob: Basically a plaque should show who built it and the year built.
- Phil: It might be good PR to include “LSCOM.”
- We have some like these now, for example Heath Hen Meadows and Grassy Pond. Bob thinks there are three with “LSCOM.”
- Phil: How about commercial sponsorship? (Affirmative reactions to this suggestion).
- Bob: At Sarah Doublet land in Littleton there is an approximately 6-ft tall structure commemorating a person on the Littleton Conservation Trust. The honoree’s ashes are underneath.
- Bettina: The Acton Board of Health may have a policy regarding ashes (even though that probably happens on Acton Conservation land – Bruce)

Action: Jim will come back with a plaque policy draft at a future meeting.

Updating maps and descriptions — policy and process

Two particulars:

- 1) Jim has the work that Peggy Liversidge has done for the Guide Book write-ups for all our parcels. Anybody who wants to help can have a look at these. Jim has considered sending out Peggy’s work to each steward, but Jim is not sure of this now. Phil and Bettina, but not everyone, have seen her work already. Jim is not sure what he will do yet.
- 2) Jim also has the updated map and description for Wills Hole/Town Forest (WH/TF). Jim couldn’t remember a process for how a description or map goes onto the Website.

Regarding changes to Website maps/descriptions:

- Bob: Let Tom Tidman decide.
- Jim: Would prefer to not burden Tom with something like this.
- Phil: We need to make sure that QR codes link to updated maps/descriptions no matter what the update is. We need to keep each url name the same.
- General nodding-in-agreement consensus: Let’s have steward of a parcel and the trails coordinator (Bob, who does corrections “on the fly” now) sign off on Website map/description changes.

RE the WH/TF map:

- Jim pointed out font differences on the WH/TF map, but no one knows what the fonts are. Rich Rhode made the original map on a PC. A volunteer, Karen Mackin, did the updating. The software was Paintshop Pro.
- Phil: We can survive with this version (fonts) for a while.
- Bob: There are some missing features—Miracle Field and the new parking.
- Someone: Can we post this for now? We can have Bob draw on this.
- Bob: I would not touch the graphics. Also, there is not enough room to do stuff on these maps.
- Should we show the Alexandra Way red trail? It’s similar to the Sachem Way red trail.
- Bob: There is no need.
- Janet: Can you park in a cul-de-sac? Janet doesn’t know. There is one at Spring Hill on which people park.
- Someone: Parking for the really long red trail from Jay Lane is on Strawberry Hill Road.

Garlic mustard at Nagog Hill

There is a gigantic garlic mustard infestation at Nagog Hill. Go in from the Grassy Pond parking, turn right at the yellow trail, and it’s right before the long boardwalk on both sides. It’s a real infestation, going 60–70 ft off the trail.

Thoughts:

- Jim: We don't want to do broad-spectrum spraying, per the guy who does it, but Jim wants feedback on the possibility of spraying to eradicate garlic mustard and poison ivy.
- Dave: Have we tried spraying with vinegar?
- Bettina: For that area, spraying is a tough call. We should be concerned about the collateral damage of spraying. We could try herbicides using a targeted method. This is part of an invasive-species dilemma. The CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area), of which we are members, recommends the "cut and dab" method; or spraying large garlic mustard infested areas when it is below 34 degrees and other living things are dormant.
- Jim: Maybe that area should be cleared down to the ground and be a meadow. It was once an apple orchard and is now a bittersweet jungle. There used to be an arbor of bittersweet. In spring a grass whip would knock that stuff down quickly. Right now, it is hard for humans to get into because of the multiflora rose.
- How about goats? They would be good.
- Jim also is thinking of a controlled burn, but is concerned both for safety and because of the paperwork involved.
- Bruce likes the controlled-burn idea. There would be little other consequences and it would renourish the soil. But when to do this? We could coordinate with the Fire Department training program. We could turn this back into a meadow with apple trees.
- Jim: We would be cutting down trees.
- Bob: There are too many difficulties with burning. We should live with the garlic mustard or handpick it. A meadow is unrealistic. The area has gone back to woods.
- Jim: An option is to do nothing.
- So, we have a policy issue: Do we want to control invasives such as garlic mustard, buckthorn, and water chestnuts, on our properties? In 2004, Jim wrote up a report on invasives on Conservation land and recommended priority actions. The Conservation Commission favorably received the report.

Action: Jim will send around this report again. It will eventually need to be updated because we know more about where invasives are.

Painted footsteps at Quail Ridge

Walk into the Nagog Hill red trail extension from Hazelnut Street and you should see some white footprints sprayed onto the asphalt. This is to signal that it's okay to pass an imposing gate on which there is a "No Trespassing" sign and to help the walker stay on the 20-ft wide trail easement that goes over the private-land asphalt.

- What about winter? Hopefully people will know by then and the trail will be obvious.
- How about a sign, something like:

Pedestrian Access
Nagog Hill Conservation Land
Please stay on trail.

LSC members approve the wording. Jim has permission from the Homeowners Association to put up such a sign. Bettina would have it made. Jim is thinking of putting little white footprints on the sign.

- Bob: Does LSC have policy on sign colors. We should use yellow letters on brown.
- Bettina: We can do yellow and brown on a metal sign.

Action: Jim will work this out about colors.

Future Scout Work Day — ideas for projects

The request is from Joe Robb (age 9) of Acton Pack 70, Den 12.

- Bettina: We could use raking help on the Arboretum paved trail.

- Don't rake woodland trails.
- No other ideas forthcoming so these scouts are Bettina's for 10/21.

Scheduling clearing of Robbins Mill trails

Now is a good time to schedule this trail clearing. The work is straightforward. Phil has cleared big trees that are in the way. Now we have to pull small things and clean up. Saturday, November 2, at 9 in the morning sounds good.

- Can we try volunteer list? Yes.
- We could offer doughnuts or pizza.
- Jim will reach out to the volunteer list, to the nearby Carlisle folk, to Bob Farra, President of the Canterbury Hill Homeowners Association, all the stewards, and Janet Adachi.
- Bob: Are the trails blazed?
- Jim: They are flagged. This time of year, even with blazes, following a trail can be confusing.
- Phil: Showing the trail can be done with either a leaf blower or rake. He would be more than happy to pin flags to help show the tread. If anyone has a brush cutter, bring it to the trail clearing.

Actions: Phil will pin flags in advance. Jim will organize the trail clearing:

Saturday, 11/2. Meet at 9 a.m. in the Canterbury Hill recreation area parking lot.

Work Day at Great Hill

This happened thanks to Bob, Bruce, and Bruce's son Greg. Most of the work involved taking nails out of old planks. They replaced the sills and stringers and spaced the planks by eye. They used a mark on a level to get overhang the same. Bruce used his pneumatic nail gun.

Bruce thought the fix was to be the boardwalk to Little Great Hill. For that boardwalk, the old part at the far end is rotting out. Bob did some repair on it, but this is in the Recreation part of Great Hill so that boardwalk should be Recreation's responsibility.

Debrief on 8th Grade Work Day projects

This included

- Wood chipping at Grassy Pond: Joyce Kelly from the Acton Schools met with Jim and he told her how wood chipping worked. The students did great.
- Blueberry barrens work at Pratt's Brook: John Duclos of RJ Grey got in touch with Charlie Carlson and made some progress in the barrens. Jim has an email about it.
- Other students were split between Wheeler Farm and the Faulkner Homestead.
- It was a good day from school's point of view as well.

Bay Circuit Trail walking tour and concert

"Massachusetts Walking Tour" requested use of the Acton Arboretum to present a free acoustic concert on 06/25/14. The request was far in advance of the proposed date because of a grant proposal deadline of 10/11/13. Jim suggested NARA. The Walking Tour is now working out a NARA arrangement (in the beach area near the concession stand) with Acton Recreation. The performing group is a quartet that hikes from concert to concert. In 2014 it will be using the Bay Circuit Trail. Attendees can drive to the concert.

Agreement with Cemetery Commissioners up for renewal

Jim shared a two-year agreement from 2004 by which the Cemetery Commission allows the LSC use of the wooded part of Mount Hope Cemetery as an extension of the Heath Hen Meadow trails; one entrance to the wooded part being by way of the Heath Hen Meadows bridge. Given that the agreement expired in 2006, it may be time for working out a new agreement.

- Bob: Many trail users park where there will be new burials, and dogs are not allowed there.

- The Mount Hope trails are not marked.
- Bob: They don't need blazing because the trails are well known. Also, marking would designate the land as Conservation land. The main trail behind the cemetery is a fire road and was an historic road from Robbins Street.
- Jim could mention the agreement to Brewster Conant, Chair of the Cemetery Commission, without proposing any specific changes at this time, except perhaps for an agreement that renews automatically. We do have trails marked on the maps.
- Because trails are unmarked, Bruce can see people getting lost. It happened to him.
- We could post a sign "Leaving Conservation Land" at the Heath Hen Meadows end of the bridge. Bettina could make the sign. However, such a sign could be confusing.
- Bruce was allowed to cut trees on cemetery land. Jim affirms, saying that the agreement allows this.

Action: David and Brewster are both members of the Acton Conservation Trust. David will talk with Brewster about this and we will revisit at a future time.

Parcel updates

Jenks: Where is the Jenks Land kiosk? No one knows for sure.

- Bob: Why is the Building Inspector getting involved with this? The Building Inspector says the sign should be next to the parking lot and down low.
- This may have to do with access.
- Bob: The sign should be moved up front, because one car would block a sign placed at the back end. The kiosk could go back to where it was previously — at the side of the trail and parallel to the trail. We could dig two holes and put it up.
- Tom Tidman is meeting with Shawn O'Malley at the parking lot sometime this week.
- Someone needs to mark where Bob recommends the kiosk should go.
- Bob: Make sure they dig the kiosk holes 28 inches deep.

Spring Hill/Camp Acton: Everything is good; QR codes are on all the mini-kiosks. There are three blowdowns, none at Camp Acton.

- Phil: On a blowdown report, it would be helpful to provide a map that's marked to show where the blowdown is. An iphone can show gps coordinates on its photos. That would work too.
- Bruce: Planks for a deck in Spring Hill are still in my driveway.
- Tom: Tom (Tidman) and Shawn will be rebuilding the Spring Hill boardwalk this winter. If Tom would allow LSC access to a town vehicle, we could move the 8-ft sections.
- Phil: Town has to take care of this. Bruce can't hand-carry the 8-ft sections.
- The town moved the 8-ft sections to the site somehow, so why can't they get the others in the same way?
- Phil: I've removed rickety sections from the boardwalk, but when the snow flies, it will be impassible. I don't see how to get the boardwalk fixed in winter; right now it would be primo time.

8-ft sections at Spring Hill =>



Wetherbee: What's next step for covering the two old, open wells?

- There's a well in Camp Acton that is 15–20 ft deep and covered with plywood.
- At Wetherbee, there is a circular dry stonewall well and there's a well with a square opening. Someone says there is a third well.
- Tom: Go ahead and cover them.

- Bruce: Use plywood and rocks.
- Bob: Who's going to follow up on these ideas? No answer.

Evaluating this meeting

Jim did a great job. Stuff on garlic mustard leaves a bitter taste in Bruce's mouth.

The meeting adjourned at 5:21 P.M.

The next meeting will be at 4 P.M. on Wednesday, November 20.

Items that serve as background for today's meeting are here: <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-5764>. They are titled as follows:

- 00 - LSC Agenda for 2013-10-16
- 01 - LSC draft 2013 09 18 minutes
- 02 - plaque policy
- 03.1 - Folder of proposed updated parcel write-ups
- 03.2 Wills Hole updated map (Sachem Way entrance)
- 03.3 - Wills Hole updated web write-up (Sachem Way and other edits)
- 04 - emails re: Garlic Mustard at Nagog Hill
- 05.1 - email re: footsteps on Nagog access
- 05.2 - email re: sign text at Nagog access
- 06 - future scout workday
- 08 - Work Day announcement for Great Hill
- 09 - 8th grade workday project follow-up emails
- 10 - Emails re; Bay Circuit Trail walking tour and concert
- 11 - copy of agreement between LSC / ConsCom and Cemetery Commissioners
- 12 - Parcel Updates