

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 16, 2015, Town Hall, Room 126, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Bob Farra, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant (Chair), Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Joe Holmes, Sherman Smith, John Watlington

Nonmembers present:

Janet Adachi (LSC's Board of Selectmen liaison), Linda McElroy

Jim called the meeting to order at 7:08 P.M.

Review and approval of May 19 minutes

- Linda had emailed details about the origin of the LSC that are more accurate than what appear in the minutes. The text of the email was inserted into the minutes and so noted. Approval of minutes with the insertion was moved and voted unanimously.

Trail Through Time update

Linda shared a map of a portion of the Nashoba Brook Conservation Land (CL) showing the Trail Through Time (TTT) section of the yellow trail. On the map she had marked the location she proposes for a new (green) TTT trail leading to another stone-pile site and what might have been a small quarry. She was asking for LSC permission to flag and cut the new trail. The new trail would begin on the red crossover trail that is close to the Princess Pine Cluster. The trail entrance would be marked with an information panel. The trail would proceed in a straight path to the stone piles, crossing a stone wall at an existing opening in the wall. The trail would circle around the stone piles and re-connect with the straight path for walkers to exit the site.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to allow Linda to flag a trail as indicated on her map. It was noted that after flagging, at least three stewards would look at the trail and the LSC would still have to approve the trail.

A question for Linda: Will the TTT website be maintained? It's on Linda's agenda to finish it, but she'll need help. Bruce thinks we can probably provide the help. Laurie pointed out that the TTT is a "jewel" of the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT). The BCT has its own website and the LST should ask the BCT to carry a link to the TTT site when the latter is fixed.

Discuss Grassy Pond bench donation

Bettina shared an application from Dawn Dayton King to place a granite memorial bench for her sister, Shelley Dayton-Jones (who passed in 2010), on Acton CL. Dawn requested that it be in the Arboretum but Bettina shared reasons why that would not be possible (unless the bench was free of wording).

Points made in the ensuing discussion:

- By policy, the LSC decides on the number and location of benches, so there is no threat that a Conservation parcel would resemble, say, a cemetery. The LSC also approves the material to be used for a bench.

- The LSC considers bench requests on a case-by-case basis.
- CL is not a park. On the other hand, CL visitors might like to sit now and then.
- Benches are not appropriate in CLs. Wouldn't mind revisiting the whole policy.
- In Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), we have a list of CLs to which we want to add accessible features—features that would make the CLs more accessible to people with mobility issues.
- In general, it would be nice to make it possible for someone to follow a paved trail to a bench with a nice vista.
- In general, it might be difficult to meet both accessible and scenic considerations.
- Another consideration: Who will maintain a bench? Who will mow around it?
- A bench along a stone dust trail wouldn't create maintenance problems.
- A stone dust trail itself needs maintenance.
- It can be difficult to schlep in materials (concrete, water, granite) needed for a bench.
- The Grassy Pond parking lot could be where a stone dust trail begins and leads to a bench that looks out onto the meadow. (Bettina sketched a map suggesting a location.) Having such a bench "into the woods" and/or under one of the apple trees wouldn't look too out of place and is a good location with respect to maintenance, but it shouldn't be near the parking lot. Such a bench would seem like a good fit with the OSRP.
- There is a bench at Wheeler Lane like the one we are discussing. There's a trail that goes to this bench.

It was moved, seconded, and voted with two abstentions, but otherwise unanimously, to allow a maximum of one granite bench along the trail at Grassy Pond.

It was suggested that as a follow-up, we revisit bench issues at a future meeting. It was also noted that each bench application is a unique thing and we have not set precedent here.

Appalachian Mountain Club work on Nashoba Brook, July 25

Beth Gula, the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) volunteer programs supervisor has asked if a work crew could come back to Spring Hill to help make its portion of the BCT more reasonable.

Jim: If this were to happen, we would want a member of the LSC there.

Is anyone able and willing to be there on Saturday, July 25? Bruce: a definite maybe; Bettina and John yes—enough of a response for us to tell Beth "Maybe." Bettina will get back to Beth.

Future of Pencil Factory bridge

The existing bridge at the Pencil Factory is "kinda crappy" now.

Jim: It seems we want to go ahead with a temporary fix and start planning for a grander fix.

The bridge's problems and possible fixes were discussed—with agreement that there should be a temporary fix—until Jim directed that the conversation be continued outside this meeting.

Grassy Pond coverage

Gary Kilpatrick will start walking and reporting on Grassy Pond.

Field mowers

1. On the idea of a quartermaster: Jim described what a quartermaster would do. Bob has been doing it. Now it's time for a backup. Would anyone like to do this? Silence. We'll talk about this more at another time, when Bettina is Chair.
2. On the mower:
 - Does anyone who could move a trailer and mower around have a trailer hitch? Bruce and Joe H have

hitches. Joe also has a trailer big enough for the mower about which we've been talking. Bettina: Seems like the mower and a trailer should stay together.

- John is willing to do some of the mowing, but can't tow at present.
- Could we drop off the mower and chain it at a site? We've done this in the past.
- Could the mower live at the cemetery and eventually at Harris Street? (If it lived there on the trailer, it could be an easy pickup.) Bettina should talk to Tom Tidman or Shawn O'Malley about this.
- What about the mowing list (where is it and who's on it)? Bettina: We need a comprehensive list, with people on it who are willing to do heavy maintenance work. Any uncovered items need to be covered by Natural Resources, possibly hiring additional workers to do the jobs.
- Is Shawn doing any mowing? Bettina: I doubt it.
- John, Bob G, and Todd Tsakiris will mow the crabapple meadow at Wetherbee.
- Jim: We'll get back to this topic. If there are any additional ideas, give them to Bettina.

Mapping update

Bruce shared different versions of maps he has done. Because he feels a need to be able to print maps in black and white (a color map costs him 50¢ to print), Bruce proposes coming up with a standard for color maps so that color-map features will still stand out when printed in b&w. Bruce shared some other ideas on how to make maps better. Bruce will try again to call a mapping meeting. Save questions and comments for it.

Parcel reports

- Canoe Launch

Joe H described some things that he, Bob G, and Laurie did to clear the parking lot. Joe acknowledges that it's not super obvious where the parking is and he would like to talk with Tom Tidman for his ideas for a distinctive fix of the parking.

- Grassy Pond/WH

Joe W should check out the trail down to Harris Street. There was a dead tree across that trail recently. Joe should also report on the status of the Capt. Handley parking lot there. It should be completely open for easy viewing by the police. Bob cleared it out today. Will the Town pick up the cut brush? Bettina: Yes.

- Great Hill

There is a disintegrating table near the pond. This was mentioned a year ago and Bettina agrees that Natural Resources needs to repair it.

- Guggins Brook

Jim described some of what he's done.

- Nashoba Brook

– Five more TTT information panels will be installed this summer.

– On the meadow at Wheeler Lane:

If some of branches on the tree that grows there would be pruned, it might be easier to mow under it. Two rocks in the grassy meadow are now covered over with spearmint to a diameter 25 ft. Bettina: We have to move the rock; then we'll mow it.

The picnic table there is unusable by the end of summer (due to plant growth).

- Robbins Mill

Bob F: It's not urgent, but we should get the pond loop trail blazed. John has also had a request in for a

while now (for Great Hill). Peggy Liversidge should be back on blazing now, when the weather is good. It was suggested that someone advise Peggy on some blazing protocols.

- Spring Hill

There was brief discussion of the possibility of the existence of a Native American burial ground just off the Jay Lane access—possibly the site of remains of “quite a few” Native Americans who died of smallpox.

July agenda

First item: We elect a new Chair (Bettina).

Second item (Bruce): Change the Heath Hen Meadow map (trail identifications)

Otherwise, agenda will be Moderator’s (Bettina’s) choice.

Evaluate meeting

- Chaos

- Bettina toasted Jim (who has chaired over 100 LSC meetings) with “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.”

- Bettina’s brownies were outstanding, as will be John’s lemon squares next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, July 21, at 7 P.M., in Room 121 or 126.