

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 20, 2015, Town Hall, Room 126, 7 P.M.

Attendance

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

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Paula Goodwin, Joe Holmes, Elan Riesman, Sherman Smith, Jason Temple, Todd Tsarkiris, John Watlington

Nonmembers:

Susan Mitchell-Hardt (President, Acton Conservation Trust), Allen Warner (Coordinator, RJ Grey 8 Gold Community Service Day)

Bettina called the meeting to order at 7:11 P.M.

Review and approval of September minutes

Postponed until November meeting due to lateness of availability.

8 Gold Community Service Day, Tuesday, 10/27 (rain date 11/02)

There are a bunch of projects, including the following for the LSC.

- At Grassy Pond, students will spread wood chips. Jim will supervise. An order for a load of chips has been sent to Shawn O'Malley. Allen will bring backpacks.
- At the Arboretum, 10 students will help dismantle the old bog boardwalk, working in both directions from the center. Bettina will supervise.
- At Camp Acton, students will paint picnic tables and do site cleanup. No steward has volunteered yet to supervise, but Allen is willing to do so. The current plan is to bus the students to Camp Acton, then, when done, have them walk the woods to Wheeler Lane where they will catch a bus to return to the junior high. Bettina will provide brushes and stain. Bettina will find out which picnic tables to paint and will be in touch with Allen sometime over the weekend.

Girl Scout Gold Award projects

Jim has potential projects involving boardwalks that must be built exactly to specs. However, the Girl Scout contact has to check whether a construction-type project qualifies as a Gold Award project.

Bench policy review (how & why we reached our current bench process; how it's working, and what, if any, revisions or additions should be considered) – Jim

Jim provided some history: In 2010 or early 2011, Natural Resources (NR) received a request for a bench at Jenks. At the time, the LSC realized that we had no policy on this. One concern was where benches could be placed on Conservation Land (CL). Also, there were concerns over bench logistics, cost, maintenance, etc. Some members wanted no benches, some a few, and some were amenable to more. The LSC agreed on a “middle ground” where the whole committee had to vote on a location. A consensus proposal went to NR and the Conservation Commission. Some adjustments were made and the Conservation Commission approved the resultant policy: The LSC decides ahead of time where benches would be appropriate. Location should 1) present a big open view to help folks appreciate Acton’s CL, or an accessible place to rest, and 2) make sense for the kind of material to be used for the

bench. A bench donation has to be approved by the Board of Selectmen. There is a bench-donation account in the Town Finance Department, and there is a bench-donation application on the Town website.

Since the initial Jenks request, the Jenks group dispersed and disappeared while Linda McElroy had a bench approved as part of the Trail Through Time. Now we also have a bench at Great Hill, one at Pratt's Brook, and have approved one that is not yet installed at Grassy Pond. While there are several benches at the Arboretum, none of them are designated memorial benches. There are some benches that were installed prior to the policy (e.g. Wills Hole and the Pencil Factory) and their approval was grandfathered. Benches at NARA are the responsibility of the Recreation Department.

Costs to a bench donor: ~\$1000-\$1200, including \$500 installation. (Later information: The most recent bench for Grassy Pond is costing \$1479, including installation.)

We recommend the type of bench and so far the policy has been working. So far, NR and the LSC have talked about three different kinds of benches: single slab stone, composite (like the one at Great Hill), and Country Casual teak (as at the Arboretum).

Can we replace benches once we reach saturation? We are not committed to perpetual maintenance.

It's also possible for the workers who do the installing to have a say in the location.

Could people donate picnic tables? That would be another policy to deal with. Picnic tables on CL are generally near parking lots for ease of use by the public. Further in and you'll have vandalism. The ones we have now "make sense."

Does anyone at this meeting want to propose additions or revisions to the policy at this time? Silence.

Grassy Pond Bench wording

The applicant had written one thing in the application and now wants a change in the wording. The applicant was told that this has to go back to the LSC. Can we offer her "In memory of"? We can since approval of wording is part of the policy. Another possibility: A name and two dates (years).

Bench location(s), parcel-by-parcel, come with ideas (Bulette, Camp Acton, Guggins, . . . as far as we get in 20 min.; to be continued to subsequent meetings)

The policy says that we should determine bench locations in advance. However, we don't have people "knocking down the doors" to donate benches, and in any case bench requests have to come to this committee. A 20-min discussion ensued and it was decided that, whereas there is no urgency, there is no problem with not discussing this now.

Great Hill invasive plants on Mill Corner land

Bettina sent the LSC the letter that she and John sent to the Mill Corner Association and the letter that they got back (from Matt Ashby of Nylander Way). Mill Corner is giving LSC permission to cut up trees that fall and block a trail path. Mill Corner is also giving us access and permission to help with the invasives, albeit with a few requests including that we should notify Mill Corner when work will happen because, with advance warning, Mill Corner could possibly provide some assistance. John praised the response from Mill Corner.

A discussion ensued on what could be done with invasives on the Mill Corner land.

Jim pointed out that we will not be adding to our map the trail that crosses Mill Corner property.

Repair of Conservation/Recreation Land structures (Topic for this meeting: picnic tables, signs)

The LSC website has guidelines on design and construction, something unknown by some LSC

members and thus something the LSC should perhaps publicize more than it does. These are “guidelines” and not “policy”, as guidelines excuse us from lawsuits. The construction guidelines relate to boardwalks, not picnic tables (the latter a subject of some recent emails among LSC members).

Also, stewards should be aware of what to look for re signs on their parcels. There are some signs that appear to be in terrible shape. Right now there should be a sign at every access point (except for Robbins Mill). With winter coming, stewards should check their signs. Send an email to Bettina if you should need a new sign. NR and Shawn O’Malley are responsible for making the signs. Shawn should have specs from us for CL signs.

On cut wood: Who can take what and from how far in?

This came up recently when a tree was cut down in the Guggins Brook parking lot. Our usual practice is that when stuff is cut down, people who cut it down can take it away, or can tell anyone else about it to take it away. The wood cannot be sold for profit. And, in general, people cannot pass through CL and collect firewood.

On sawing wood in CL, it seems that some emails are not getting through to the LSC sawyers. Bob G says that when there is a notice about a tree down, a responding sawyer should “Reply All” on going out to do the cutting. When done, the sawyer should send an email to the person reporting the downed tree and to the appropriate steward, if different. Bob will wait one week and if nothing seems to have been done, he will send out another email asking “Does anyone want to do this?” or he might go out and do it himself.

Bruce Rachman “owns” the actontrails.org website if there is a problem with email addresses. Also, Bruce maintains the sawyers list.

Graffiti removal

Bob G and Bettina cleaned some “awful stuff” off some rocks.

Disposal of Conservation Land trash (reprise) and construction debris

Going forward, if there is construction debris, leave it at an entrance and notify Bettina. She will see that NR picks it up. For trash, NR will provide stewards with Acton “Pay as You Throw” bags. But remember to recycle instead of using PAYT, if possible.

Paula has thick mounds of leaves at the Heath Hen Meadow entrance at the end of Billings Street and is thinking about cleaning this up, but wonders if NR can pick up the leaves. Bob G suggests that she rake the leaves about 4 ft away from the trail. Paula will give this a try.

Volunteer list

This Agenda item is not urgent, but it’s an interesting and somewhat complicated discussion, so it is moved to next month.

Update: Field mower and trailer

The trailer has a title and NR has to register the trailer to get a license plate for it. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue notified NR today that it needs evidence of sales tax being paid. Bettina has a copy of receipt showing that tax was paid and will follow up.

Update: kiosks

This too is tabled for a future meeting. Bob G and Bruce Rachman are updating the information and still have some things to work out. One issue is a slant roof vs. a double roof. Some see no need for a

double roof on a one-sided kiosk (as we have). Others like the aesthetics of a double roof. Bettina will be happy to sit with Bob and Bruce and anyone else to help find the best design.

Other parcel information

- Heath Hen Meadow

Paula expressed concern about whether the beaver deceiver through the beaver dam by the bridge is working as it should. Bob G checked it recently, found it is, and advised Paula on what to watch for and do.

- Nagog Hill

At Quail Ridge, there now is a sign for the Nagog Hill CL. There was brief discussion on the current state of the Quail Ridge access trail.

- Nashoba Brook

Bob G says that he and Bruce Rachman have a difference of opinion on the proposed bridge over the sluice at Robbins Mill. Bruce wants to use 2 by 12s. Bob wants to use 2 by 6s. Bob F has analyzed Bob G's plan and says it's okay. Bob G shared his plan for the bridge. Tom Tidman has given a "go ahead" for the project, but Bob G does not want to start it now with cold weather coming.

- Canoe Launch

Plastic topping has been effective against knotweed.

- General

– Bob G described what he found on a nine-mile hike of Acton's CL with his "Wednesday Wanderers" hiking group. He suggests that there should be discussion among stewards about different aspects of parcel maintenance.

– Laurie says that you can buy Bay Circuit Trail maps online now. Map 4 is Acton.

– Bettina showed plaques that are to be put on some new structures.

November agenda

Skipped.

Evaluate meeting

Skipped.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, November 17, at 7 P.M., in Room 126.