

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 15, 2015, Town Hall, Room 126, 7 P.M.

Attendance

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

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

Nonmembers:

Janet Adachi (LSC's Board of Selectmen liaison), Sue Kennedy (Vice-President, Acton Conservation Trust)

Bettina called the meeting to order at 7:06 P.M.

Review and approval of November minutes

List under "Attendance," Jim Salem as an Associate and Susan Mitchell-Hardt as a Nonmember.

Delete two extraneous words near the end.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to accept the minutes as corrected.

The Assabet River Blue and Green Trails Grant project

Need to know land stewards' interest in participating in Acton Natural Resources building of two boardwalks and two parking areas, and the cutting of the trails.

Bettina sent around the grant so that everyone has had a chance to read it. She encourages that you read the whole grant. Bettina also distributed maps of the Assabet River trails. Acton volunteers are needed to cut the red entrance trail that would be in Acton. There also would be two four-car parking lots, each with permeable — not asphalt — pavement, a 125-ft boardwalk, and a 30-ft bridge. There would be a kiosk at each trailhead and an information panel at the Pine Hawk archeological site.

There will be a meeting in early January with OARS — an organization concerned about the well being of the Assabet, Concord, and Sudbury Rivers — to kick off the project. A timeline, and who is doing what, have not yet been determined. So far, there has been discussion with one aspiring Eagle Scout.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is funding the grant. Pointing out that part of the funds will go to Maynard, Bob G indicated that there would not be enough grant money to farm out construction. Bettina said that we could hire a carpenter if we can't find volunteer help. The Acton Water District may be able to help with construction. Bob G is willing to act as an advisor for any building to be done. Also, OARS has a large body of real volunteers.

The land by the Acton sewage treatment plant is Acton Municipal Land, not Conservation Land (CL). While this land is not slated for stewarding by the LSC, Jim points out that the LSC charter allows the LSC to maintain trails not on CL. Jim noted that the trail colorings used in the plans are not those of the LSC trail blazing system.

At present, you can walk part of the land but not all of it. To help determine LSC interest in this project, Bettina will arrange a Land Steward walk of the area. In general, if anyone has any questions about this area or the project, ask Bettina.

New Website

Jim and Bruce have been working on a WordPress version of the Website. It will include current website content for the most part. Right now, they are adding text content (and images) to a database. After they get the content in, the LSC should make some decisions about what it wants. For now, check out: <http://www.actontrails.org/wordpress/>

Bruce has installed it on “our” server, and he and Jim described for the LSC some “really cool” things it can do. Right now, Bruce and Jim are the only two people who can do things with the website. Bruce and Jim will work on the templates. If they have any problems, they can bring things to us, otherwise they can handle it. Any LSC-suggested content changes should go to them and they will say “yea” or “nay.”

WordPress will work on most devices, “something that will bring us to the future.” Content and style will be separate now. Everyone will be able to edit their own pages.

Linda McElroy is doing an update of the TTT website. Eventually there will be a link to the TTT site although there is none at present.

New mower

Paula and Bettina (P & B) tried out the new mower. (It’s the existing mower, the Giant Vac (GV), but it’s new to P & B.) It was cool. P & B tried it on fairly unchallenging land, i.e., level ground. The GV was very effective. P & B didn’t break it. P & B suggest using earplugs.

– Anyone can try out the mower whenever they want. (Wright Hill could use a mowing right now.) To mow something, contact Bettina, or get to know Shawn O’Malley. The GV is in the Woodlawn Chapel basement and the trailer is at Morrison Farm.

– The trailer has a 2-inch trailer ball.

– Bob G: What’s going to happen at Harris Street (where the Town is buying essentially a large equipment-storage building from the state)? Bettina: We don’t own it yet. There still is a bill in the state legislature on the sale of this property. Also, there has been no decision yet on where the GV and trailer will live. Bob has additional stuff in his garage (including cordless drills and cordless saws that would disappear in a heartbeat) that he’d like to get rid of. Bettina: Give me a list of what you have and she will talk to Tom Tidman about space for LSC equipment. According to Bettina the town does not inventory equipment like this that it buys.

Invasive species update

– Bettina listened to a relevant Webinar recently. She will type up notes and send them out.

– John keeps finding more and more Norway Maples near the Great Hill playing field. Having done the chainsaw training, John is not girdling the trees any more. John will prepare a list (count and diameters) of what’s there. The fall is a perfect time for doing this. To eliminate them would take four people perhaps, plus some others for keeping the public away.

– Jim: With the ground being unfrozen, it’s easy to find and pull out first-year garlic mustard plants, which would make for less work in the spring. Jim did some pulling at Guggins. Both the Canoe Launch and Pacy have lots of garlic mustard. If any Steward needs help finding garlic mustard, Jim will provide it.

Projects for “Communities for Restorative Justice”

“Communities for Restorative Justice” is a program through local police departments for minors in trouble with the law. They are required to do community service or drug awareness activities. Bettina shared some of the philosophy behind the “Communities” program. In response to a recent

“Communities” request, Bettina provided a project. Does anyone else have any? Silence. If you would have something, e.g., a 15-h project that a kid can do regardless of physical fitness and using reasonably safe tools, and one that can be evaluated when the kid has finished, let Bettina know. She will work with you on how to proceed.

– Bruce: Three kiosks (at Spring Hill, Wills Hole/Town Forest, Grassy Pond) need painting; two still need roofs. The materials for roofs should be here any day now so Bruce may be able to fashion them this weekend.

– Bruce: Does the Arboretum need another kiosk? Natural Resources has asked Holly Ben-Joseph to design one to be placed on the lawn in front of the parking. It will be big and built by a carpenter. It wouldn’t be appropriate project for a minor. Priorities for the Arboretum: parking, rain garden, then the new kiosk.

– John: Need a reminder on how to get CORI’d. Bettina will find out and get back to John.

Schedule of future workdays

If you have a workday, it can be posted on the website. Jim knows how to do this. There are no workdays posted at present.

Wright Hill walk (12/12) report

Jim S-G and Jim Salem flagged a possible trail. A good number of people did this walk. The trail is not yet cast in stone. Bob G gave some tips on what to watch for on the trail. People seemed comfortable with it. Jim will send out a KML (mapping) file in a couple days. It’s basically a yellow loop trail. Leo and Cathy Fochtman (owners of the house at the top of Wright Hill) have been great about the trail. Leo has been volunteering to mow some of the land.

Other parcel information

• Wright Hill

When do we officially make trails? First, we must flag trails and be comfortable with them. We need Bob G and Phil Keyes out there because they know trail design. Also, Jim is concerned that this is the first CL we’ve taken on that has existing structures. What do we do with those? Also, Wright Hill might need posts to help let people know where the trail easements are. Wright Hill is dedicated to conservation purposes by deed that’s under the management of the Conservation Commission. A Conservation Restriction needs to be written yet. Sudbury Valley Trustees is helping with it.

• Nashoba Brook

– Per Linda McElroy, the Pipsissewa Trail will be lollipop trail. It comes off a red connector trail, goes to a quarrystone, and then back out. Laurie has visited with Linda on this and has no issue with it, so the LSC doesn’t either.

– Re the trail north from Wheeler Lane to the Robbins Mill Pond dam: The Town should post a “Dangerous Trail” sign at its start at Wheeler Lane as the whole trail is dangerous, particularly the crossing at the sluiceway where the bridge was removed. Bettina will talk to Tom Tidman about this.

– Bob G had a structural engineer from his Wednesday Wanderers group do an analysis of Bob’s plan for a bridge at the Robbins Mill sluiceway. Both this engineer and structural engineer Bob F agree with Bob G’s plan for the bridge.

• Canoe Launch

Joe H can report next month on a trail from the Canoe Launch after a meeting next Thursday. Bob G wants to dig up a heavy protruding piece of iron from the anglers’ path.

• Pratt’s Brook

A boardwalk has stringers too close together. Can fixing this be an Eagle Scout project? Bettina: We

should think about rebuilding this boardwalk. Bob G: Pull up the planks and spread the stringers, but be sure the project is supervised.

- Anderson Land (off of Newtown Road and Arlington Street)

There has been no action yet on this parcel, probably because there is still a piece of land that is yet to become part of it.

- All parcels

The Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) has a full report on what lands Acton has and what has yet to be done with them. The OSRP also prioritizes private lands that Acton could be interested in acquiring.

2016 calendar

Meetings on 01/19, 02/16, 03/15, 04/19, 05/17, 06/21, 07/19, 08/16, 09/20, 10/18, 11/15, 12/20; all in Room 9 in the north wing, bottom floor.

January agenda

- Snack — John
- The Guggins Brook meadow — Jim
- Canoe Launch trail update — Joe H

Evaluate meeting

We were doing good until the last 10 minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 19, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.