

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 17, 2018, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bob Guba, Joe Holmes (Chair), Bruce Rachman (Vice Chair), John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Dale Chayes, Zanna Gruber, Jim Snyder-Grant

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison)

Joe H called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M. A welcome was extended to new member Dale.

Review and approval of June minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously. (Clerk's note: Earlier in the day, Linda McElroy provided e-comments (not corrections) on the June minutes. The Clerk considers them significant enough to include them at the bottom of these minutes.)

Acton Trails Map

Morrison Farm is now on the map, but there is no web page for it yet. The Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) is now on the map. Rail trails are shown with brown lines. The portion constructed in Concord is also shown. (Clerk's note: ARRT ribbon cutting was 08/10.)

The Arboretum map shows a prototype red "X" at the end of a black-dashed trail. The X would be shown wherever public trails go off onto private land. The X could be interpreted to mean, "Don't go this way", or "Danger. Stay away." Although this trail goes farther, the X is shown after a short distance and the dashes terminate. Discussion points:

- An X is commonly used to mean "good" things, as in "X marks the spot."
- An X is commonly used on conservation maps.
- There is a universal "Do Not Enter" sign.
- For relative sizes, the X shown is "just right."
- There could be a (cursor) flyover popup that shows something like "Do not enter," or "Private Land."



Nothing has been done yet on turning the maps into "printables". Discussion ensued. One possibility: Make a PDF and then layer on things. Dale suggests looking at <https://sartopo.com/> for map assists.

Joe H would like to deliver the LSC maps (with rail trails) to the Acton Police Department (PD). Per Bettina: Acton Planning has had an intern do some mapping and the results have gone to the PD. Bettina will check whether the LSC can see the results.

Morrison Farm trails

Joe H shared visuals (printed and projected) of a map showing the proposed yellow-, red-, and blue-blazed trails. It was a revision based on input re a version presented at the May meeting. The dotted red trails are two possible future trails, including one that could cross Nashoba Brook on a causeway behind Powers Gallery on Route 2A. Also, there is funding for a trail along Ice House Pond that could

also be dotted red. Bettina shared samples of materials that will be used for that trail.

Points made in the ensuing discussion: At the north end, possibly something could be done with private trails in cooperation with the landowner, who is using a short (unmarked) access trail. The red-blazed trail that is partially on cemetery land is an access trail for people who use the parking at the soccer field. Has the Cemetery Commission approved of this trail? Joes H & W will bring this to the Commission once the LSC has approved of the proposed blazing. Why not remove the black-dashed trails (one of which is a service road) on cemetery land? Why publicize trails by putting them on the map? Trails that exist should be on map. They are public trails. It makes sense to keep the dotted trails in case people get lost. If they get lost here, they shouldn't be in the woods in the first place. There could be red Xs in appropriate places. Let the Cemetery Commission shut down the cemetery trails if it so wishes.



Approval of the proposed blazing was moved and voted unanimously.

This will now go to both the Conservation Commission and the Cemetery Commission.

Any news on trail access at Scoutland?

Unapproved access to Scoutland leaves a 200-ft gap in miles and miles of trails. Bob talked with Bill Klauer, Scoutland Trustee, about Scoutland. Bill was ready to agree with an original proposal, but then the Town kept changing things and it seemed to become unreasonable. Bettina related what the Town has done. There was (2013) a proposed license agreement; it was a year-by-year license. Bill liked it. Then there were delays. After that died off, Bettina had a more standard easement prepared. It proposed that the trail be “up high,” but Bill wanted it down by the water. Henry Erikson was the owner of the land who transferred the land to the Town. There may be something in his will about use of the land. Joe W suggested that the deed to the land should also be checked. There is also the question about the tax status of the property. Janet and Bettina will work on this, including possibly talking with Bill.

Parcel Business: Wright Hill-Guggins Brook trail easement

The language for the easement is being delivered to Town Counsel along with a draft map and comments from interested parties. Hopefully, Town Counsel will help make it official. Sherman Smith continues to be the LSC representative and Jim the landowners' representative on this.

Parcel Business: Heath Hen Meadow updated trail description

Bettina shared an updated draft of a trail description for HHM/Mt. Hope trails north of Heath Hen Brook. Jim suggests that instead of this description, the LSC should extend the current description for HHM (which needs work) to include the parcels on each side of the brook along with the Mt. Hope trails. There was discussion as to whether the description of how the 176 Central Street parcel on the north side was acquired should be retained. (Pro: It's newly acquired so this info is important because the community really came together to fund raise. Con: The description will be very long, even without it.) Jim and Bettina will write a combined description. Comments can be sent to Jim and/or Bettina, sooner rather than later.

There was also discussion re the historical accuracy of the “Heath Hen Meadow” name.

Parcel Business: Heath Hen Meadow/Mt. Hope unauthorized cutoff trail

Despite LSC efforts to eliminate this trail, someone has reopened it again (leaving big logs at both ends, but removing the debris between the two ends). Also, LSC signs were removed from each end of the trail. This was reported to Acton Police. There was brief discussion on a possible next step.

Parcel Business: Nashoba Brook: Bridge Construction at Wheeler Lane

Can the LSC get this bridge “to happen”? Not in the heat of summer. The LSC should aim for the Fall. Where should the staging be? Bob’s place. Folks offering to help (as of this meeting) include John, Joe H, Zanna, Dale, and Bruce. When wood for the bridge is delivered, Bob would like Bruce to come over to do some gluing as part of carefully-done initial assembly. Currently Bob has a John Deere tractor w/trailer that could be used to transport the parts of what will be an 18 ft bridge. In the meantime, Bettina will look into wetland laws that could apply. A date for working on the project at Bob’s is still needed.

Other parcel information

Guggins Brook:

On the easement access to the parcel from Central Street, Bob wonders whether the post marking the trail entrance can be exposed better. Can it be placed out where the mowing occurs? Per Jim, the neighbors don’t want it there as it makes it harder to mow. Can the tall vegetation around the post be cut back so people coming down Central Street can see the post; the public has to see that this is an entrance? Discussion points: Currently there is no maintenance around the sign. Let a steward trim around it. Current schedule for the access trail is once a year brush-hogging. Putting mulch around the post will make mowing easier. Jim will talk again with the neighbors about the two ideas: Moving the post or clearing the plants.

Camp Acton:

Bruce rebuilt another table. There is one more to go but it’s necessary to wait until some trees are cut down. The Axe Brothers Tree Service (which will cut down the trees) has not yet been involved with this.

Nagog Hill:

Dale reported that the shingles on the kiosk roof are starting to rot. There was a brief discussion on kiosks and their roofs. After poison ivy is dead, Dale will look for a possible location across from the Grassy Pond parking. The Committee acknowledged Dale’s “good” first parcel report.

Near Nagog Hill:

Bob has a map from the Concord Water Dept. showing where its new fences will go, and where there will be a trail from Breezy Point to Nagog Hill Conservation Land. Bob used a projected map to show where the trail will be from Breezy Point to where it will cross a new bridge over Nagog Brook.

Old Business:

Joe H reported that the Conservation Commission has signed off on the LSC parcel-naming guidelines.

New Business:

The field mower used by the LSC is not working. Shawn O’Malley thinks the LSC would be better served by replacing rather than fixing it. Bettina suggested a particular mower. Discussion: A 26” cut is “plenty.” A Honda engine would be preferred over a Briggs and Stratton engine. The Honda engine would be more expensive. Tires should be solid. Bettina will call the company to discuss. Who is going to use it? Jim, John, and Joe H for sure. The LSC has a trailer with a 2” ball. It has a shed for storage.

Will the shed house the trailer too? Yes.

The following was moved and voted unanimously: The LSC recommends that Natural Resources buy a new mower with solid tires, a Honda engine, and a 26" cut width.

August 21 agenda

Need to discuss membership, there are two regular (voting) member vacancies. Should try to find steward for Wills Hole/Town Forest as Joe W would prefer being steward for Morrison Farm. The LSC could put up some signs at the Wills Hole/Town Forest kiosks.

Evaluate meeting

This was an excellent launch with the new Chair; it was fun, and some things got done. Near the end of the meeting, "it felt like the old days".

The meeting adjourned at 8:31 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 21, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.

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Following is 07/17/18 commentary from Linda McElroy pertaining to June meeting discussions summarized in the June minutes. - Joe W

I have a few comments, not to amend minutes, but just clarifications, possibly of interest.

Re the field mower: Those of us who own ATVs, like myself, routinely remove batteries during the winter, even if housed in a garage. Further, we find that mice regularly nest under the engine hood and chew wires. Moth balls, peppermint, and Bounce laundry papers are all considered good preventatives. Perhaps these possibilities should be checked before deciding to buy a new mower.

Re red access trails: When LSC originally decided how to blaze its trails, red was assigned only to access trails, which were defined as any trail used to connect any formalized entrance to a CL's yellow loop trail. Following this definition, we blazed the two little crossover trails between Nashoba Brook and Spring Hill yellow loop trails, red.

Re the steep slope into Pratts at the end of Broadview: Bob Guba is correct that the property directly below that rocky pitch belongs to the Audubon entity. I negotiated permission from them to allow LSC to use the pre-existing short path that hooks into their property as part of the Pratts Brook yellow loop trail. The bridge and boardwalk on that path were pre-existing, and crossing the brook and wetlands further downstream at the CL boundary with Audubon is not possible. We agreed not to add any additional infrastructure. Audubon noted that the trail would be of use to their community as well.

Additionally, the slope is very unstable, and, even with a staircase, would be prone to washout from storm water that floods through that chute during heavy rain, and the snow that is dumped over that drop off in winter, while plowing the cul de sac. There is no need to have a second formalized entrance so close to the one at the intersection of Valley and Broadview.

Re the Nashoba Brook Trail and the Chamber: It is correct that I did decide not to promote a connection between the NB yellow trail (TTT) and the BFRT via the little path at the chamber. The danger of vandalism is too high.

I would not like to see that site placed on the Acton Trails map, either. The major kiosk at the Wheeler site that will be erected, hopefully next year, will have one panel with a complete map of all TTT related trails, paths, and sites. Folks with interest in the chamber will be able to obtain directions from that panel.

Random visitors without specific interest in the TTT or the chamber should not be enabled to enter via that little path.

I support Laurie's suggestion for an entrance at the Pencil Factory, where artifacts are sturdier. I have several times mentioned to interested parties the use of a stile at such an entrance. Such a structure could be built to prevent bicycles from riding through. If such an entrance has to be Accessible, that presents a further problem. Frank Ramsbottom allowed a waiver of that law in relation to the stairway we built into the Wheeler cellar hole. The Historical Commission also weighed in with a grandfathering exception.

If any of this is unclear, or you would like further explanation, I am happy to attend any meeting.

Linda