

**ACTON LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE (LSC)**  
Meeting Minutes  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2019, 7 P.M., ROOM 9, TOWN HALL

Present (in **bold**), Absent (not bold)

Regular (voting) members: **Dale Chayes, Bob Farra, Zanna Gruber, Bob Guba, Joe Holmes** (Chair), Bruce Rachman (Vice Chair), **Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington, Joe Will** (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Andy Gatesman, Josh Haines, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, Nan Towle Millett, Jim Salem, **Sherman Smith, Jim Snyder-Grant**, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

**Bettina Abe** (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President), **Evelynn Sablone** (Acton Resident), **Keith Hannon** (Concord Resident)

**1. Opening**

Joe H opened the meeting at 7:01 p.m. with a quorum of 6 voting members present — Dale, Bob G, Joe H, Laurie, John, Joe W

**2. Regular Business**

Citizens' concerns

Susan reminded the LSC of, and shared a flyer about, the Annual Meeting of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) from 3-5 pm at the Town Hall on 03/17. Beaver-deceiver expert Mike Callahan will give a guest presentation on "All about Beavers and How to Manage Them." Bob G will present LSC Chair Joe H with ACT's Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer Award.

Susan also introduced another guest for this evening's LSC meeting, Keith Hannon, who has a "great background" for LSC-type activities.

Later in this meeting, Bob G observed that the Conservation Commission should attend Mike's beaver talk as the Cons Comm had previously turned down Mike's services for addressing a beaver problem in town.

Review and approval of January minutes

Approval of the minutes "body" was moved and voted unanimously, but discussion ensued on what to include at the bottom of the document. After the noting of meeting adjournment, there should be a list of all documents referred to in the meeting. Topics of discussion included whether or not, and how, the stewards' monthly reports should be noted, or even mentioned at meetings, unless there are problems; also, the use of DocuShare or the LSC website for the storage of LSC information. The Town DocuShare is controlled by Town IT, while many committee members can add to the LSC website. Bettina noted that all public emails are saved in a permanent record. She also suggested simply including a standard line at the bottom of the minutes indicating that, should someone want the latest parcel reports, s/he should email the LSC and the committee will get them to the interested party. Jim explained that the LSC did public-archive LSC information for a while, and the related issues. John indicated that if past parcel reports were available, he would be interested in looking back to see what has happened at Great Hill. Joe H said that what the LSC wants to do with this is fine with him. Bob F and Sherman suggested that the committee could create a folder for each parcel for its monthly reports, with each folder to be submitted at the end of the year. Joe H is willing to experiment with DocuShare

to make a link for monthly reports. Bettina will help. Bob G noted that half of the committee is not filing parcel reports, so why spend all this time discussing the idea.

### **3. New/Special Business (or other applicable agenda items)**

#### Submitting Steward reports

Joe H: Do we want reminders, say a week in advance of a meeting? John proposes that such a request be sent out a week before the meeting as a reminder. There were no dissenters. Such a request can be automated and should be in synch with monthly committee meetings. Bettina will do an automatic reminder one week before each monthly meeting. Jim suggests that it be sent about two weeks before a meeting so as to have the monthly report in one week before the meeting. Bettina will also email a couple stewards who have been particularly lax with their reports.

#### LSC portion of Town Annual Report

Joe H did indeed submit the LSC's annual report to the Town.

#### Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) Trails Committee meeting

Laurie and Joe H attended the BCT Trails Committee meeting (which occurs quarterly in the middle of the day). Laurie reviewed the BCT gap in Acton (and Carlisle) from the Westford line to Wheeler Lane, although the part from Carlisle Road to Wheeler Lane has been taken care of. Laurie showed the two possible easements over the Valentine land. The third option is to follow the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail from the Westford line to the Nashoba Sportsmen's Club, then down Route 27 to Carlisle Road (what, in fact, currently shows as the BCT on the Acton Trails map). Folks at the meeting agreed that it would be fine to use this as part of the BCT for the next few years.

Joe H pointed out that the Bay Circuit Alliance and the Appalachian Mountain Club have professional trail crews (8-10 people each) that do things along the BCT. They have more crews than projects. If the LSC has any BCT things to be done, the Bay Circuit folks should be told of them. As the Bay Circuit/AMC folks are not particular about being exactly on the BCT, Joe had one idea: Clearing the meadow at Stoneymeade.

#### New field mower

Joe H emptied the fuel from the mower and ran it dry. A bit of fluff came out. There was a mouse nest in the machine. He cleaned it out (no mouse present) and will try to "mouseproof" the shed that is housing the mower. Committee members agreed that mouseproofing should be possible if the Town puts its mind to it.

John pointed out that the LSC is not keeping the Town winch in the shed because of mice. (They should not be gnawing on the rope.) The winch is back with Bob G.

#### Proscribed burn plan

Tom Tidman says "No" at present to any plan for burning invasives.

#### Parcel Business — Nagog Hill meadow mowing/clearing

Dale had a picture presentation of his recent Nagog Hill meadow maintenance and crushed-shed removal, and gave a timeline of work to be done. He would like to make some benches out of downed trees to be in the vicinity of where the shed was, also in a couple other places (e.g., egg rock and a meadow). He also showed some meadow cleanup work and a map of where work was done . . . and where there is work yet to be done.

The access trail across from the Grassy Pond parking needs serious bush whacking, something Dale will tackle as time permits.

#### Parcel Business — Nagog Hill horse/trail concern

Addressing a concern that horse droppings are too excessive on some Nagog Hill trails, Dale checked out the trails and found an “occasional half-decayed pile of road apples” that are trivial to walk through. Zanna also walked there and found droppings (none of which were fresh) that were easy to walk around. Bob G observed that once the manure dries, there is no problem. Bettina will draft a response to the concern and share it with Joe H before sharing with others.

Bob G shared another concern about the horses on the Nagog Hill trails: Their hooves can really chew up some of the trails (e.g., the second blue trail) in the spring. They should wait until the ground hardens. Dale cited the badly chewed-up trail near where the crushed shed was. He will propose using gravel there, and other Nagog Hill trail improvements at a future meeting.

#### Parcel Business — Other

##### – Great Hill

Re a request for a boardwalk (~ 40 ft) at the Discovery Museum trail entrance: The situation has gotten worse since the museum changed its parking as part of the museum renovation. John suggests that this could be a possible Eagle Scout project. For now, the ADA trail proposed by the museum for this entrance to Great Hill is suspended. Also, Joe H has found the easement for public use of the trail. Someone can always use the trail, parking in a museum lot. Joe will get back to the committee on this eventually.

##### – Heath Hen Meadow (HHM)

Zanna has received an email from Lucy Inge about Lucy’s and the New England Aquarium’s *live blue* Ambassadors, teen volunteers who have been doing “awesome” service work in Acton, most notably at HHM. They are having a meeting for *live blue* partners and are wondering if someone from the LSC could attend and talk about how to further the *live blue* involvement. Zanna is unable to go. Joe or Bettina may go.

Bob G observed that when the ambassadors work to eradicate invasives, they be instructed to put the debris into the woods instead of the edges of fields where he does field-edge mowing. Jim shared a somewhat opposite concern about what to do with piles of berries from bittersweet. He would like to perhaps let them rot in the field where anything sprouting from them can be mowed. Such mowing would not be possible in the woods.

A discussion ensued about what to do with cut invasives to prevent resprouting.

If a *live blue* group is coming back to HHM, Zanna will walk HHM with Joe H to talk about where to pile the cuttings.

##### – Any parcel

The deadline for submitting a project proposal for the High School Community Service Day is Friday, March 3, not March 4. If you have a project, get the information to Bettina. If you have an idea for a project, send it to Bettina for her opinion on whether the idea is feasible.

#### Acton Trails website

There have been no changes to the website since the last meeting. Jim reports that Del Friedman, who had volunteered to be LSC Webmaster, informed Jim that he is not able to be involved any longer, so

now the committee needs someone else. Also, the LSC is losing server access that had been provided through Bruce Rachman. Jim has been talking with Mark Hald, Acton's Chief Information Officer, to get the Town to provide space for the LSC website. All we need is a service provider. Find one and Bettina will pay for it with a credit card, and get reimbursed by the Town. Jim will work with Mark and come back with a recommended solution.

#### Online maps — New features

##### – Grassy Pond

The map shows the black-dotted new trail on “Grassy Pond West.” The trail will be blazed red, so the trail on the map will then be red also. Bob G suggests that the map show two parallel lines where the easement is across private property and fill the space between the lines with green to show the public has a right of way.

##### – Nagog Hill

At the new parking space off Skyline Drive there is now a kiosk that's been “populated” by Bettina. A discussion ensued about trail locations and easement boundaries on privately-owned land near this side of Nagog Hill.

#### Online maps — Red-trail-blazing questions

##### – Arboretum

The Arboretum sidewalk, beginning at Main Street, used to be a red trail, but is no longer. It is an access trail. Should it still be red? No! When it wasn't a sidewalk, it was red (as still shown on the pdf map — the map in the Acton Trails booklet). Per Jim: Until physical blazes mark a trail, let's not “blaze” the maps. The committee agreed to not show the trail in red.

##### – Wills Hole/Town Forest

The boardwalk to the pond has been on the map as red. It is not an access trail. Ditch the red and treat the boardwalk the same way as the Grassy Pond boardwalk. Note that the map specifically shows a boardwalk.

Also at Wills Hole/Town Forest, the map should show the beginning of the trail that heads north from the Nagog Park kiosk to the dog kennel, and terminate it with a “stop” sign.

#### New Business

Keith, our guest (see Citizens' concerns), has passed the first test. He didn't run from the meeting! However, Keith is a Concord resident and, per Jim, we are not able to have a non-Acton resident as a Land Steward.

Per Laurie on the Bay Circuit Trail presentation (now scheduled for 04/18) by Dan Brielman at the Acton Memorial Library (AML): Dan will provide a DVD but not a laptop to control a projector. Also, the AML is not staffed to provide technical support for this. Per Dale, you can check out cables and an adapter from the AML for the projector. Laurie has a 03/22 appointment to meet with the AML on this. Bettina will help Laurie on 03/22. The LSC is officially a co-sponsor of this event. The program will also feature Linda McElroy and Doug Halley because of their work on the Trail Through Time. Laurie has to take care of publicity. Laurie will go through Bettina to solve the projector problem.

#### **4. Additional Regular Business**

##### March agenda

Include Dale's suggestion of showing street addresses of Conservation Land entrances on Acton Trails

maps. Joe has submitted the idea for Del Friedman to do this on the website.

#### Evaluate meeting

- We got into the weeds too many times.
- Didn't we decide that we would have refreshments? Nothing was assigned.
- We never hit the gavel and didn't time discussions. No timekeeper hurt.
- We get looser and slower and less coordinated as agenda goes by, and things relax.

#### **5. Adjournment**

At 8:50 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting.  
The motion was approved [unanimously].

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

#### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting**

- Draft meeting minutes of January 15, 2019
- ACT flyer on its Annual Meeting, March 17, 2009