

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 16, 2019, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendees (in **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), **Danny Factor** (Acton Resident), **Terra Friedrichs** (Acton Resident), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President), **Aaron Moore** (Acton Resident)

1. Opening

Joe H opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with a quorum of 5 voting members present — Dale, Bob F, Joe H, Laurie, Joe W. Attendees introduced themselves, including Aaron, who is interested in becoming the Wills Hole/Town Forest steward. Aaron has met with the Volunteer Coordinating Committee. It was also noted that Dean Charter is the new Board of Selectmen (BoS) liaison with the LSC.

2. Regular Business

Citizens' concerns

Susan informed the committee of an ACT evaluation walk with the Stow Conservation Commission over the Acton-Stow intertown trail connections in the Dunn and Whitcomb lands south of Heath Hen Meadow (HHM). They evaluated two separate flooded areas and concluded that one of the two would be amenable to a device that would control flooding due to beaver activities. Susan had a map showing where beaver dams are and where the control device could be located.

Also, the ACT is hosting, with Al Sgroi leading, a Spring Birding and Nature Walk of Stoneymeade Conservation Lands on May 5 at 8:30 a.m. On May 9, the ACT is co-hosting with Friends of Pine Hawk a workshop, led by Doug Harris, on “Your Town’s Indigenous Ceremonial Stone Landscape” at 7:30 pm at the Discovery Museum.

Review and approval of March minutes

Sherman pointed out that he was not at the March meeting. It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to accept the March minutes with the correction to indicate that Sherman was not present.

Laurie pointed out a misspelling in the April agenda. The name “Brielmann” has the letter “n” twice, not once as shown in an upcoming event, “Hiking the Bay Circuit Trail”, hosted by Dan Brielmann.

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

Conveying Committee decisions

When random emails come to the LSC, Bettina is to respond. This has been working great. If someone has an idea for how Bettina could respond, send it to Bettina, not to the entire LSC. If Bettina makes an error, then get back to Bettina, but not to the entire LSC.

It was noted that Linda McElroy is not on the LSC distribution list. However, as a courtesy, Jim S-G

sends LSC messages to Linda. (Jim will let Linda know that he'll be leaving the LSC.) In a recent instance, Linda sent a commentary on a Pratts Brook issue as reported to the LSC by Sherman. Bob G disagreed with some of the information provided by Linda and sent the "correct" information to the LSC.

The Committee agreed that it would be okay for Joe H to send out a note reminding LSC members of this process for responding (via Bettina) to LSC messages.

Assabet River boardwalk

Bettina sent out an "APB" for volunteers to help build the boardwalk. There were two. They will follow a regular weekly schedule until the boardwalk is finished. Bettina will be the lead on this "highly technical" project. The project will include a pier and a viewing deck. Bettina has vetted the project with several Town administrators, and is willing to run the plans by Joe H.

Parcel Business — Nagog Hill trail improvements

Dale was supported by a PowerPoint presentation showing seven "Work Items".

1. Muddy Trails

- Add ~112 feet of corduroy w/wood chip top cover along yellow trail from parking lot to old "run in" shed (considered gravel). Mark to avoid horses walking on corduroy.
- 190' of new bog bridge between parking lot and meadow & beyond Tom L's boardwalk (May 18 work party). Provide for tractor access.
- New bog bridge to fill "gap" in Tom L's boardwalk (May 18 work party). The blue marked trail shown on Dale's map is very wet. There's a fair amount we can do in there. Dale will flag an alternative wet weather bypass.

2. Wet Trails

- Flag "wet weather" bypass on yellow trail up-hill from existing (yellow) trail. Have sign "wet weather bypass". Twenty feet from junction, there's a rocky area. A discussion ensued on what to do there.
- Verify flagging.
- Cut/clear trail.

3. Trail Clearing

- "brush cutter" along the red access trail.
- "brush cutter" along the boardwalk.
- Continue small-scale trimming.

4. Brush Pile Relocation

- There are two (one each) in the small meadows that should be moved into the woods.
- Consider having May 18 work party move them on "return trips" from carrying bog bridge material. Bettina has arranged to have Groton School students come and help carry stuff in from the parking and then carry stuff out. Dale would love to have adult volunteers to help out.
- Alternate: with tractor on frozen ground.

5. Meadow Maintenance (when ground is frozen)

- More work along the big meadow edges and "rock islands" (next winter).
- Push the brush-line back on the downhill side of the lower, small meadow (next winter).
- Complete (finish) removal of brush piles.
- Broken/damaged trees (clean up).

- Brush-islands (cut ones too big for flail mower to do in the winter).
- Complete (finish) removal of brush piles.

6. Bridge Improvements

- A couple of the small bridges need extended landings. Currently: a long step up and a long step down (can get in the way of skiing).
- Small hand-work projects w/ local materials (rocks and logs).

7. Egg Rock Recovery after most if not all of the other things.

- Remove the blocking trees.
- Consider converting some into rustic benches.

Bob G had one more suggestion: For the yellow cross-trail down by Nagog Pond, he recommends relocating the trail parallel to the current trail to get it off land owned by the Town of Concord and onto Acton Conservation Land, and to get away from wet area on the east side. There is a place for an easy span.

Parcel Business — New stewards

Jim is in email contact with Larry Boisvert re Guggins Brook. Jim will direct him to the Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC). Aaron will be contacted by Dean Charter about a BoS interview in order to get onto the BoS consent agenda.

Aaron is interested in chain sawing. Does he need training? Yes. Also, a sawyer needs his/her own equipment. There is an upcoming two-day training session, but it is full. Dale is confirmed for both days. Bettina provided additional information on training.

Parcel Business — Work parties

Joe H encourages stewards to post work parties on their parcels. Jim will send out a request to the volunteer list for folks to work on garlic mustard removal. Dale should email the volunteer list too for tasks at Nagog Hill. In particular, for the morning of May 18, a couple of adult supervisors (for high school volunteers) would be enormously helpful. At HHM, most of the needs that Zanna can think of involve bog bridges. What's the procedure for bog bridges? Bettina can teach it, but the Town has to buy the materials and that budget is about to "go broke." But there will be new \$ in June. What do the *live blue* Ambassadors (who have done volunteer work at HHM) from the New England Aquarium think of bog bridges? Not sure. Zanna will ask for feedback from *live blue* on bog bridge work. At the Canoe Launch, Joe H would like the knotweed sprayed. The Town's Natural Resources group can do it. Joe can ask Tom Tidman about it. Jim S-G pointed out that at one time, Natural Resources did try to remove knotweed with herbicide at the Wetherbee parcel, but there was no follow-up.

Parcel Business — Other

Great Hill:

Bob G observes that when the new trail (which is "really laid out nicely") up Great Hill is blazed, the blazes on the steep trail that the new trail replaces should be removed. There should also be arrow signs for the new trail. A sign that the old trail is closed might be helpful. Bob also wants to talk with John Watlington about pursuing the one-switchback trail that had been flagged by the large boulder on the west side of the parcel.

Grassy Pond:

Per Laurie, there is no room for turning a car around in the Newtown Road parking. This needs to be a

two-car facility. Town Engineering has designed one, but Tom Tidman does not want to put one in. Also, there is no parking lot at the new parcel ("Grassy Pond West"). The Church of the Good Shepherd parking lot is a likely alternative when there is no church activity. Joe H will ask Tom again if the Town can finish the planned improvement to the Newtown Road parking lot.

Also, there is a Cub Scout pack at the Church that has agreed to take care of the new trail in Grassy Pond West. It would be nice to make this agreement more formal.

Per Bob G re identifying/locating parcel parking lots in general: Give their latitudes and longitudes. Jim S-G showed that the website page for the Arboretum has a link to the parking lot that uses latitude and longitude in the link. It's a prototype we can use elsewhere."

HHM:

Joe H and Bettina will talk with Tom Tidman about getting a new proposal from Beaver Solutions to address the dam problem near the bridge. Bettina described her kayaking both downstream and upstream from the bridge to check out the beaver situation. Bob G supports what the Beaver Solutions representative proposed; also suggesting that raising the bridge as a solution would be difficult. A general discussion followed on what could be done.

Spring Hill:

The trail head at the end of Briar Hill Road is not on our maps. (It is on the pdf maps.) At the trail head, there is a parking lot between two "No parking" signs. Should we mark that parking lot on the map? Yes, and we should mention on the website that there is parking there.

Camp Acton:

There is contractor dumping there. Dale has hauled trash from there a couple times. Is this a candidate for a wildlife camera placement? It was noted that the porta potty at Camp Acton is the closest one for folks walking in, say, Nashoba Brook. It might be nice to have other porta pottys for folks who want to walk more extensively. Bob G pointed out that the biggest restrooms are the woods.

Nashoba Brook:

Bob G is having a workday Saturday. The bridge for the Wheeler Mill sluiceway is set to go to Wheeler Lane where it will be assembled. It will take 6 strong folks. Bob now has 4 people, including Bob's son and grandson, signed up, so at least 2 more are needed. Bob explained how work would proceed. Tom Tidman will have to hire a derrick to place the 18-ft-long bridge on the abutments. Bob will let folks know if they will be working Saturday morning or afternoon, and if this Saturday doesn't work, they will try each Saturday from now into the future as Saturday is his son's day off from his regular work.

Other:

Bob G observes that one of the parcel reports refers to the Fort Pond Brook Greenbelt. Bob thought we dropped that long ago. Jim says we handed it over to Natural Resources a long time ago. Tom Tidman is ambivalent about the signs. Bettina says there was talk about reviving them for WildAware. Bob points out that if you put up signs. you have to maintain them, and that, long ago, we said to minimize signs.

So, do we want to put up Greenbelt signs or not? Jim will hand over the question to the next Guggins Brook steward. Per Jim, if we put one up at Guggins, then we should put them up in general.

Acton Trails website — Progress with moving website to new server

Peg Sestrich will be housing the website in a new location. Jim S-G and Peg are figuring out when to meet to make this happen.

Acton Trails website — Progress with finding new website guru

Peg and an additional person are willing to work on the website. Jim is there until the transition to the two new people can occur. Jim will then pull away, but expects to be a frequent volunteer. Jim will also talk with Peg about using the established form for new requests (e.g., changes a steward wants).

On a related note, Jim S will put in text for the Wright Hill Conservation Land. Right now, there is no Wright Hill website text. There is an actual page, but it's rather blank.

Acton Trails website — Other

Joe H: Do we want Facebook page? We currently have one. Discussion points:

- It requires twice as much work.
- We shouldn't have one unless we have a vibrant, timely way to maintain it.
- There are some 250 people who like that page.
- I love it — Danny. The stuff on it is great. You should go in the direction of getting more stuff on it rather than getting rid of it.
- An ad pops up on the right-hand side with every parcel. It's sort of distracting.
- You can put in a request to remove that.
- You don't have to go far down to get to the middle of 2018.
- Maybe ask the volunteer list for someone to maintain the Facebook page.
- The Town now has a social media policy, so it might be worthwhile to read and understand it.

Online maps — New features

The maps now show the Bay Circuit Trail (turn on "Bay Circuit Trail") and Acton's two rail trails as intertown trails.

4. Additional Regular Business

May agenda

Invasives work — Jim S-G.

Sawyers reporting that work has been completed.

Other

Bettina participated in a cooperative amphibian crossing brigade for two nights on Fort Pond Road. The brigade rescued almost 400 amphibians traveling from uplands to vernal pools.

Bob G now has a beaver dam on his property on Central Street.

Evaluate meeting

Pretty good meeting. Good timekeeping; not intrusive.

5. Adjournment

At 8:52 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

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

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of March 19, 2019
- Acton Trails website: <http://actontrails.org>

- Acton Trails website map: <http://actontrails.org/map>
- “Truss Bridge Moving Day 4/20” email sent 4/13/16

Parcel reports emailed from Stewards since the last meeting:

Parcel Name	Email Title	Date Sent
Acton Arboretum	“Arboretum report”	4/10/19
Acton Canoe Launch	“Acton Canoe Launch Report, April 2019”	4/14/19
Bulette - Town Forest	“Bulette Update April 2019”	4/14/19
Camp Acton	“Camp Acton Report”	4/10/19
Grassy Pond	“Grassy Pond Notes, April 2019	4/12/19
Great Hill	“Great Hill Trail Update (April and Dog Park)”	4/10/19
Guggins Brook	“Guggins report”	4/13/19
Heath Hen Meadow	“Heath Hen Meadow report”	4/13/19
Jenks	“Jenks Report”	4/13/19
Nagog Hill	“Nagog Hill report April 2019”	4/12/19
Nashoba Brook	“Nashoba parcel report”	4/14/19
Pacy	No report from steward	
Pratts Brook	“Pratts Brook report”	4/13/19
Robbins Mill	“Robbins Mill April Report”	4/13/19
Spring Hill	No report from steward	
Stoneymeade	No report from steward	
Wetherbee	“Wetherbee Report”	3/19/19
	“Wetherbee Land Report	4/10/19
Wills Hole - Town Forest	“Whole/TF”	4/16/19
Wright Hill	“Wright Hill April report”	4/14/19