

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 18, 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: Larry Boisvert, Andy Gatesman, Josh Haines, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, Nan Towle Millett, **Aaron Moore**, Jim Salem, **Sherman Smith**, **Jim Snyder-Grant**, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Brian Dranka** (Acton resident), **Linda McElroy** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) Vice-President), **Will Prideaux-Collins** (Acton resident)

1. Opening

Joe H opened the meeting at 7:06 p.m. Joe designated Associate members Aaron and Jim to sit on the Committee as voting members, joining Regular members Joe H, Joe W, and Bob F to form a quorum. Bob was appointed timekeeper.

2. Regular Business

Citizens' concerns

Will expressed concern that the two rail trails in town don't seem to be integrated with the trail systems on public lands. In response, members described two accesses from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) to Nashoba Brook, and a future access from the BFRT to Morrison Farm. It was noted, with respect to accessing the Pencil Factory on Nashoba Brook, that both the parcel's Steward and the Acton Historical Commission want a bridge at the site. With respect to a trail to the stone chamber, the Committee has voted that it not be publicized because of a concern for security at the site.

Review and approval of May minutes

Approval was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously.

Parcel Issues: Heath Hen Meadow Beaver Deceiver

Joe H, Bettina, and Tom Tidman reviewed the situation at the dam and bridge and agreed that this would be a good candidate for a good beaver deceiver. The beavers have started rebuilding the dam, and water continues to flow through the pipes currently in place. Joe and Bettina will meet with beaver expert Mike Callahan July 2 at Robbins Street and Mike will provide a new price quote.

Parcel Issues: Nashoba Brook: Wheeler Mill sluice restoration developments

Two issues: Moving the bridge into place and repairing sluice walls. There is no need to repair or fortify bridge abutments. The bridge can be moved into place without repairing the sluice walls. Work on the sluice walls can be done under the bridge once it is in place.

Why must the sluice walls be repaired? Because they are caving in. If a Community Preservation Act grant is to be pursued for this, that will take a year.

Per Bob G re the bridge: Tom Tidman "promised" that he would do something about it by Memorial

Day. Nothing's been done. Bob would like the committee to make a formal request that something be done about it. Jim moved that we ask our Chair to contact Tom on this. The motion was seconded and approval was voted unanimously.

Bob F felt that the LSC could come up with a safe way to move the bridge and then do so on its own. To that end, a plan would be needed. Does the LSC know Tom's and Shawn O'Malley's (of Acton Natural Resources) plan for moving the bridge? No, but it should try to find this from Tom. Some felt that Tom was going to hire a crane but there was a problem with that plan that Tom has not shared. If it is an overhanging tree branch, that can be overcome. Money (scarcity of) is an issue for Natural Resources at this time of year. There seemed to be agreement that if the LSC can avoid a crane and avoid injury, then the LSC moving the bridge would be a great idea. The LSC should communicate with Tom and Shawn on this. It should aim to have Tom's plan, or a plan using volunteers, by the next meeting.

Parcel Issues: Nashoba Brook: Pest House restoration

Linda attended this meeting to petition for permission to do further enhancements on the pest house site that is just off the Trail Through Time (TTT). She had sent an email outlining her plan to Bettina and Joe H. She elaborated:

There is a young man, Isaiah Osborn, who lives in Acton but attends Bethel Academy in Maine. He will be entering his senior year this fall and, for a senior project requirement, he wants to do exactly what Linda would like to have done at the site.

Linda gave some background about the site, shared some photos, and provided information about trees on the site, some of which should be taken down. Most significant are three small trees within the pest house's foundation. There are five more trees on the surrounding surface with their roots interlaced with the foundation. Also, if Isaiah would find stones that possibly were part of a structure, Linda will ask if Isaiah thinks the stones can physically be put back into place and, if so, have him do so. Linda will be Isaiah's primary mentor re the project.

The trees would be taken down by LSC sawyers, if they would agree to do this. Isaiah would take care of the debris and stack the logs. Bob G recommended that the trees be cut at foundation height so their removal does not impact the foundation too much. Linda will contact Joe H about getting the trees cut.

This won't be an archeological project, but Linda will have Isaiah sift any dirt that is moved and save anything that is found. It is not known if there is any historical group that would have authority over this.

Jim moved, and it was seconded, that the LSC support this activity of cleaning up the site. Approval was voted unanimously.

It was also noted that Linda and Bettina have a plan for a new kiosk at the Wheeler Lane TTT entrance.

Parcel Issues: Several parcels: Parking fixes

• Wheeler Lane

A fire hydrant is in the middle of the parking. The entrance and exit have always been on the same side of the hydrant, but cars have started cutting around the hydrant, putting the hydrant in the middle, and effectively taking away one or two parking spaces. There usually is a vertical red pipe at a hydrant. There are two red pipes at this hydrant. A rock could be strategically placed to protect the hydrant. There is also a puddle problem. Should the LSC ask Tom Tidman to have this fixed? This has been brought up with Tom before and nothing's been done.

- Great Hill

The Main Street parking problem (surface erosion at the entry) is “100 times worse” than that at Wheeler Lane. Joe H gave a history of the problem. He indicated that the Town did fix it once, but then the entry way was dug up again. The parking also needs a drainage solution as water from a spring uphill from the entryway exacerbates the problem.

- Grassy Pond

Joe H has talked with Tom about the Newtown Road parking (changing it from a one-car lot to at least a two-car lot; something the LSC has discussed many times and for which the Town has a plan). Tom doesn't want to pursue it for two reasons: It would be expensive, and he thinks we are about to develop some parking on Arlington Street and also use the church parking at the corner of Newtown Road and Arlington. In addition to the Newtown Road parking, the Grassy Pond parking off Nagog Hill Road needs work. Its surface has a big depression.

- Jenks

The Town did repair Jenks's parking.

General discussion: The “whole package” should be put on the table with the Town, but “what” and “how”? The LSC could ask stewards about their parcels' needs, prioritize them, make a formal case, and then take it to the Town. But, the LSC is not sure of the process. There could be a complete list of work orders to discuss with the Town. The idea (hope) would be that the projects get scheduled like any other Town project. This idea is too “great” and therefore the projects would never get done. Also, the Town Highway Department has a history of kicking back Conservation Land projects to the LSC. The LSC could have Joe H take one specific project (notably, at the Great Hill parking on Main Street) to the Town Manager to discuss. How do the Selectmen fit in? Is there a way to lubricate the process using Selectmen, particularly possibly Dean Charter, who is the LSC liaison?

Joe is willing to contact the Town (meaning Town Manager or Selectmen) about the Great Hill parking lot. But he wondered if the LSC should work on a prioritized list (with stewards conveying needs for their own parcels), possibly with persons getting pictures and other supporting information.

Parcel Issues: Other

- Pratts Brook

Brian Dranka will be taking over the Sherman for the next three months. They've walked the parcel together. Can Brian be added to the LSC email shell? No, Sherman will have to forward LSC emails to Brian.

- Morrison Farm

The Select Board (formerly Board of Selectmen) has discussed what should or could become of the Morrison Farm Committee. No decision yet.

Joe H used the field mower (stored in the Morrison Farm shed) today. He has a new 2-gallon fuel tank to replace the current leaky one. He cleaned a new mouse nest out of the mower. The trailer has been parked to a side of the shed. The town seems to be mowing around the shed. Each time you use the mower, be sure to mow where the trailer is, so it does not get stuck in tall grass.

Bob G suggests that significant fixing of the shed is not something that volunteers will do. Instead, the Town should hire workers to do the fixing.

Website issues: Progress with moving Acton Trails website to new server

Mark Hald, Acton's Chief Information Officer, has agreed that the Town server can host the LSC

website.

Website issues: TTT website improvements

The new website manager, Peg Sestrich, is going to help Linda with the TTT site (that has been under construction for many, many years). Isaiah Osborn's father, Jeremy, was a website designer and is interested in fixing up the TTT website. Peg and Jeremy are in touch with each other. The TTT site will be part of the LSC site. Jeremy will get data from Linda and pass it on to Sue.

Website Issues: Other

No changes or concerns.

Online maps new features — Mapping Group

Jim described a new feature where one can add place-marks, such as “tree down” w/arrows, to a map, then mail the url to anyone. This will be demonstrated at the next meeting.

3. New/Special Business

LSC Officers/membership for 2019-20

Joe W shared a draft of an LSC membership list, asking for corrections.

As for new officers, there will be a vote at the start of the July meeting for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Clerk. Nominations at this meeting:

Chair: Dale and John (possibly Co-Chairs), and Bruce

Vice-Chair: Zanna and Bruce

Clerk: Bob F and Joe W

It was pointed out that at one time the Chair would have a regular monthly meeting with Tom Tidman. Also, the LSC should reach out to Dean Charter, the Select Board's LSC liaison, and invite him to its meetings.

4. Additional Regular Business

Next month's (July 16) agenda

Demo the online maps place-marks feature, but Jim expects to be unable to attend the next meeting.

Evaluate meeting

The items that went longer were the right ones to go longer. Joe H did a great job: Thoughtful, considerate, and laid back.

5. Adjournment

At 8:50 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, July 16, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of May 21, 2019
- Acton Trails website: <http://actontrails.org>
- Acton Trails website map: <http://actontrails.org/map>

Parcel reports emailed from stewards since the last meeting:

Parcel Name	Email Title	Date Sent
Acton Arboretum	No report from steward	
Acton Canoe Launch	“Acton Canoe Launch Report, June 2019”	6/18/2019
Bulette - Town Forest	“June 2019 Bulette/TF status”	6/17/2019
Camp Acton	No report from steward	
Grassy Pond	No report from steward	
Great Hill	“Great Hill Trail Update (June)”	6/14/2019
	“Re: Great Hill Trail Update (June update 2)”	6/15/2019
Guggins Brook	“Guggins report”	6/15/2019
Heath Hen Meadow	“Heath Hen Meadow report”	6/20/2019
Jenks	“Jenks trail mowing report”	6/02/2019
Nagog Hill	No report from steward	
Nashoba Brook	“Nashoba Brook report”	6/20/2019
Pacy	“Pacy June report”	6/18/2019
Pratts Brook	“Pratts Brook report”	6/17/2019
Robbins Mill	“Robbins Mill May Report”	5/27/2019
	“Robbins Mill June Report”	6/16/2019
Spring Hill	“Spring Hill Report”	5/21/2019
	No June report from steward	
Stoneymeade	No report from steward	
Wetherbee	“Wetherbee Land Report”	6/13/2019
Wills Hole - Town Forest	“WHole/TF 05/19”	5/22/2019
	“Wills Hole/TF Report (June)”	6/14/2019
Wright Hill	No report from steward	