

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 15, 2019, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: Dale Chayes, Bob Farra, **Zanna Gruber** (Vice-Chair), **Bob Guba**, **Joe Holmes**, **Bruce Rachman** (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, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President)

1. Opening

Bruce opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. with a quorum of 5 voting members present — Bob, Joe H, Bruce, Laurie, Joe W.

2. Regular Business

Review and approval of September minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously.

Citizens' concerns

Susan invites folks to come to ACT's Community Service Day at Wright Hill this Sunday, 1 pm.

Parcel Issues:

• **Nashoba Brook: Bridge at Pencil Factory**

There is nothing new from Bill Dickinson, Co-President of the Acton Historical Commission, who wants to be involved with any such bridge. (See the LSC September minutes.) This can be taken off the LSC agenda until we hear back from him. From a Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) meeting, Laurie knows of someone from the North Shore who has done a lot of construction and would be interested in this if things get moving. At this time, Laurie should let this person know that we are moving forward, but there is nothing concrete yet.

• **Heath Hen Meadow: Bridge/dam/beavers**

Bruce presented his report, "Heath Hen Meadow Bridge Repair", in which he gives his evaluation of the site, including the present status of the bridge. The main proposal in the report is to rebuild the bridge, raising the center sections of the bridge and boardwalk 12 inches, with a gradual ramping up of the outer sections to the new height. This would be in lieu of a beaver deceiver option (that "might or might not work"). Bruce estimates the cost would be around \$1.6K vs. a proposed cost of around \$4K for the beaver deceiver option. A discussion ensued over details given in the report, activities necessary for carrying out what Bruce suggests (e.g., choice of bridge hardware, what to do with existing beaver pipes), and additional things that could be considered in the process (e.g., additional sections at each end, longer railings).

It was moved, seconded, and voted near-unanimously (one abstention) to move forward with the

project as described in Bruce's document.

When to proceed? Bruce would prefer that it be when there is low water. Also, consider doing this in July or August when the Town budget is new and funding could be more readily available.

- Heath Hen Meadow: Other

Could there be a bridge between the winter island and cemetery land (a passageway done in winter on the ice)? This is not practical as such a bridge would be an estimated 400 ft long and would have to rise 5 ft over the water level, the brook being a navigable waterway. Also, not sure the Conservation Commission would go for it. Also, the island is popular with geese and ducks. Let them have a place to go that is relatively undisturbed.

- Pratts Brook

Tom Tidman wants to know if the LSC would support a sign for Pratts Brook (parking) at the loop at the end of Brewster Lane? There was no objection. Bettina will have Shawn O'Malley put such a sign on his winter sign-making schedule.

- Nashoba Brook

The big rock at the east end of the south bridge has been moved, making a ramp up to the bridge surface possible. Such a ramp could be an Eagle Scout project.

- Grassy Pond

At the Newtown Road parking lot, Bob points out that there is a Japanese knotweed plant that he has regularly cut back, but has been unable get rid of it. Bob didn't cut it this year and now it's 4-5 ft high and gone to seed. Could someone please cut it out, or at least take over pruning it each year? A steward should see to such things. It was suggested that Bob instruct Gary Kilpatrick, the Grassy Pond steward, on this.

- Nagog Hill

It took lot of effort to clear vegetation off the stone wall to the west of Nagog Hill's Newtown Road parking lot. Nothing has been done to the vegetation this summer and the wall is getting overgrown. Bettina will send Dale Chayes an email on this.

- Wills Hole/Town Forest

Per Bob: A steward has to be aware of parking lots. They have to be opened so police can see into them easily. This is particularly true at the Capt. Handley Road entrance to Wills Hole/Town Forest. With Bob's advice and training, Aaron Moore, Wills Hole/Town Forest steward, has done a great job.

- Grassy Pond, Great Hill, Nashoba Brook parking lots

The LSC has been working on Tom Tidman to fix the parking lots at Great Hill (Main Street), Grassy Pond (Nagog Hill Road and Newtown Road), and Nashoba Brook (Wheeler Lane). This is on Tom's To-Do list. He wants to do them "in house." Accessibility, as described for example in the Community Preservation Act Plan for 2020, applies to our parking lots, suggesting that they should be paved. Tom is opposed to paving Conservation Land parking lots because he does not think conservation land should be paved. Also, it doesn't make sense to make accessible parking when the land is not accessible. On the other hand, if a parking lot is to be plowed, it should be paved.

- Wright Hill

Bettina blazed the easement trail red. She showed where the “You are here” sign is. The yellow loop trail is not yet completely blazed.

- Robbins Mill

The trail from Carlisle Road to Wheeler Lane is now blazed with BCT markers.

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

Bruce’s (current host) server will no longer be available in two months. Bruce will let Mark Hald, Acton’s Chief Information Officer, know. Hopefully, that will “move” Mark to move the website to a Town server.

Online maps new features

At Wheeler Lane on the map, the location and size of the image for the 18-ft bridge has been fixed. At Wright Hill, the new approved trail is now shown on the map.

3. New/Special Business

All of Bob’s equipment is now in the shed at Morrison Farm. This includes all the excess hardware that accumulated at his place over the years. (If of no use, it could be taken to the scrap metal recycling site at the transfer station.) The rope come-along is in the bottom of the large plastic toolbox. There are 4 slings, useful for two people having to carry in bridge and boardwalk stringers. These were used for the Spring Hill/Robbins Mill connecting bridge.

Re the items stored at the Morrison Farm shed: Bob recommends that pre-mixed fuel (obtainable at a hardware store) be used in the brush cutters, weed whackers, and chain saws. Whereas the shed has power, the chargers there should be shut off for the winter. Batteries should be brought in for the winter. Perhaps someone could volunteer to take all the batteries home for the winter (but not for another month yet). Winter shed tasks, batteries, and fuel should be on next month’s agenda.

The oil should be changed in the field mower after its initial 8 hours of use. This has not been done. Bruce will change it the next time he uses it — sometime yet this year. John will use it too at Great Hill yet this year.

Joe W described the upcoming Board of Selectmen site walk at the Department of Public Works land north of NARA, and at a municipal-land parcel that is currently part of the Wills Hole/Town Forest parcel. These are two sites being considered by the Acton Dog Park Committee for a new Acton Dog Park. Bruce has been invited to join the site walk, but has not yet said “yea” or “nay”. The subsequent brief discussion raised the question of who, or what committee/commission, in Town is in charge of Town Forests. Some believe that the state legislature has said that a town should have a Town Forest Committee.

4. Additional Regular Business

Next month’s (November 19) agenda

Winter storage of items at Morrison Farm shed

Evaluate meeting

“Good meeting. Solid.”

5. Adjournment

At 8:25 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

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

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of September 17, 2019
- “Heath Hen Meadow Bridge Repair” document from Bruce