

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 19, 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)

1. Opening

Bruce opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. with a quorum of 7 voting members present — Dale, Zanna, Bob G, Joe H, Bruce, John, and Joe W.

(Warm brownies arrived midway through the meeting, courtesy of Bruce.)

2. Regular Business

Review and approval of October minutes

Per Joe H: The sentence regarding Tom Tidman's opposition to paving Conservation Land (CL) parking lots should read, "Tom is opposed to paving Conservation Land parking lots because he does not think conservation land should be paved."

Per Bob, under "Parcel Issues," the Wills Hole/Town Forest item would read better as: "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.

Bob also pointed out (not part of October minutes) that Aaron, after being trained to use the brush cutter and clearing the whole parking lot, also cleared the trail down to Harris Street. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that the trail down to Harris Street is not an official trail, although it shows as a red trail on the Acton Trails map.

Approval of the October minutes with the adjustments noted above was moved and voted unanimously.

Citizens' concerns

None

Parcel Issues:

• Heath Hen Meadow

Discussion centered around Bruce's proposal from last month for raising the bridge over Heath Hen Meadow Brook. There was concern that some parts of the bridge could be under water when the water is high. Per Bruce, the whole part of the bridge where there is water will be level. The plan keeps the stringers out of the water. Where there is not water, such as the approaches to the main part, the bridge can ramp up and/or down. In the Spring, 2020, there will be a site meeting (w/Bruce and whoever wants to join him) to determine the brook's high water mark so that the plan for a bridge that clears the

high-water mark by 1 ft, and its approaches (not over water) can be drawn on paper.

- Nagog Hill

- The LSC needs to decide what to have — a sign, a kiosk, or nothing — at the entrance across Nagog Hill Road from the Grassy Pond parking lot. What’s there at present is rotten and “looks like hell”. Per Bettina: There has to be at least a sign there.

It was moved and voted unanimously that the LSC put a new sign, but not a kiosk, with map and tick boxes at this entrance.

Bettina will take care of this. She knows that some CL signs already exist. She will first look in the shed at Morrison Farm to see if it holds such a sign for Nagog Hill.

- Per Dale: Tom Tidman has suggested that the main parking lot be made lighter (eliminate some surrounding Norway maples?) and bigger, and have some gravel added to help prevent erosion. Dale and Tom plan to schedule a site visit. Dale would like to come back with a description of what needs to be done.

- Per Dale re orienteering course(s): Jon (Jonathan) Campbell has been in Nagog Hill CL looking for sites, but none yet.

- Robbins Mill

The hammock that Bob Farra cited in his Robbins Mill report had been put there by an abutter, who has since removed it.

- All parcels

- Several years ago, Bob cleared the sides of the big Grassy Pond meadow except for its side along Nagog Hill Road. Along the road, there is a stone wall and the field that you don’t see now. The trees along the road are dead. Now is the time to tend to this.

- Egg Rock at Nagog Hill needs some serious work.

- The stone wall at Morrison Farm needs more clearing.

Re the above: How does the LSC think about what its priorities are?

A priority list would be a good idea. Discussion points that followed:

- Each parcel already has a list.

- For such a list, each steward should put in a minimum of one item. Let’s make people aware and have something for the next meeting.

- Do a Google sheet.

- Jim Snyder-Grant had a list with all kinds of projects on it from around 2006.

- If people ask us if we take care of something, having it on a list would provide credibility.

- Some priority examples: If a place has been mowed and someone stops mowing it, continued mowing would be a priority. Also, clearing where a tree has fallen along the edge of a meadow so the whole meadow can be mowed.

- Lists are great but they need leaders to get things done in a time frame.

- Next year’s major bridge repairs will use a lot of peoples’ energy.

Conclusion: Let’s do a priority list for next month. Bettina will be keeper of the list. She will be sending out a request for items for the list. Stewards should send their projects to her. Bettina will bring

the list to LSC meetings.

Further discussion:

- Bettina suggests that stewards have work days. It is not hard to put together an event. She cited some successful events.
- A project should show tools and the minimum number of people needed.
- In the past, Bob has had some good groups for projects; mainly people on the LSC. He never has had success in getting a lot of volunteers together.
- In the vein of such a list, the LSC should keep a separate, but related, list of sawyer requests.

- Morrison Farm

Joe H ran a work party at Morrison Farm and presented what was done, including clearing three big fallen trees at the northwest corner of the main meadow. He would like to see the trail from the meadow enter the woods at the historic opening in the stone wall at that corner, rather than at its current location a bit further to the east. Bettina described Tom Tidman's clearing of a wet meadow next to Ice House Pond (IHP) to the north of the IHP parking lot, part of the preparation for extending the walkway from the parking lot north along the pond. Joe W reviewed the possibility of someday taking the walkway to the site of the historic causeway even further north, and possibly linking the walkway with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail by restoring the causeway.

- Great Hill

The six cedar posts found on Great Hill are part of the Discovery Museum orienteering activities. The Museum contacted Natural Resources about this activity a couple years ago. Bettina carved the posts and gave them to the Museum. Should this have come through the LSC? A moot topic and the LSC can leave it alone.

An unknown party has been marking almost every intersection with small "You are here" signs.

Joe H blazed the new trail (blue) to the Great Hill summit. He browned out the blazes on the former, much steeper, trail, which will no longer be an official trail. Joe contacted Peggy Liversidge, designated Trail Blazer for the LSC. Peggy has not been training any new blazers.

John used the mower at the Main Street parking lot. This included mowing behind the stone wall, but not along the road edge. Who damaged the mower, and how? The nature of the damage suggests that it had to have been dropped. That it fell off the trailer is a possibility. Bob and Bettina have a date on Friday to change the oil. John will do it on Saturday if not done Friday.

- Camp Acton

A Boy Scout leader from a troop in Lexington mowed the whole parking lot. He didn't use the LSC mower.

Website Issues:

The site will be off its current host server in another month. Bettina will email Mark Hald, Acton's Chief Information Officer, to remind him of this (in order to get it on the Town server).

Some have complained that emails are not getting through to the LSC members and its sawyers. There was discussion, and a real-time trial that was successful.

Online maps new feature(s)

Per Joe H, the Wright Hill yellow trail is complete. The new easement (red) trail joining Wright Hill and Guggins Brook is complete except next to the house at the top of the hill. Joe has also started blazing the Morrison Farm yellow trail. When will the Morrison Farm woods become CL? Bettina talked to Fran Portante who said that the Conservation Commission and Tom Tidman have been too busy. Wait until winter. Joe H has identified about 10 small parcels that he feels should change to CL. He will give Bettina a list.

Bob expressed concern that the online map of Wills Hole/Town Forest that surrounds the private property of Yin Peet shows the yellow trail crossing the Peet property.

3. New/Special Business

Winter care/storage of items at Morrison Farm

Bob and Bettina will change the oil in the machines. Bettina will take the four batteries for the cordless equipment for the winter, and leave a note in the shed.

Sweatshirts, T-shirts, and Hats — Bettina

Bettina described what could be available, and will send out a poll asking stewards what kind of clothing is of interest to each.

Invasives information — John

Now is a great time to see invasives. John had sent out a spreadsheet that includes when it's best to attack invasives. He has heard of wall lettuce, but has not had to deal with it yet. John's newest invasive of interest is mugwort. The Great Hill parking lot behind the fire station has a lot of it. Learn more about mugwort via Google.

4. Additional Regula Business

Next month's (January 21) agenda

The priority list (see above).

A holiday meeting. Public is invited.

Evaluate meeting

Got off too much on tangents. Bruce's brownies "made" it.

5. Adjournment

At 8:34 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

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

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of November 19, 2019