

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Virtual Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 15, 2020, Virtual Meeting, 7 P.M.

Zoom Participants/Attendees (in bold)

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

Associate (nonvoting) members: **Jon Campbell**, Andy Gatesman, Josh Haines, Philip Keyes, **Gary Kilpatrick, Mel Lima, Aaron Moore**, Jim Salem, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Dean Charter** (Acton Board of Selectmen (BoS) LSC liaison), **Steve Hinton** (Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF)), **Everett Kenerson** (Acton citizen), **Steve Tobin** (CCF)

Opening

Because of a zoom conflict with a meeting of the Recreation Commission, the meeting did not begin until 7:36 p.m. Zanna opened the meeting with five other voting members Bob, Joe H, Bruce, Laurie, and John present. Dale and Joe W joined shortly thereafter.

Zanna read the script provided by the Town for remotely-conducted open meetings. Mel will be timing the discussions.

Regular Business

Review and approval of November 17 minutes

Approval of the minutes was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call.

Citizens' concerns

None

New/Special Business

Neighbors "take" on possible trail link with Carlisle

Bob has not yet reached out to the neighborhood re this proposal by the CCF. Steve T of the CCF has provided Bob with a map, and Bob will take up the CCF offer for a walkthrough. Others are welcome to join the walk and should get in touch with Bob to do so. Bob will discuss the idea with the neighborhood before next month's meeting and will report on what he learns.

Surveillance at conservation lands (what's allowed)

Continued from last meeting: Per Bettina, basically the Town purchase and installation of surveillance cameras can't happen. It's not cost effective.

Green Acton Ecosystems Initiative

Per Zanna, Green Acton is trying to do a bio-blitz, probably in the spring. The date is unclear and there is nothing more to report at this time.

Proposed Community Preservation Act (CPA) projects

There are about \$3M of Town projects proposed. Proposals are due tomorrow. Two are of interest to the LSC. There is the usual Open Space request (\$400K), and in the near future important parcels under consideration by the Open Space Committee could include Stonefield Farm, the Wetherbee woods, and

Triangle Farm land near Camp Acton. The other proposal of interest to the LSC is the Nashoba Brook bridge at the Pencil Factory (proposed by Bill Dickinson of the Historical Commission). Bill has stretched out the project to two years. The first year would be project preparation, dealing with design and permitting, such as required by the Conservation Commission. The second year would be actual construction. The first year is for \$44K, the second year is for about \$250K. Other CPA proposals include several by the Recreation Department, the usual housing proposals, and one housing proposal from the Acton Housing Authority for its project on Main Street. Laurie points out that one possibility for leveraging (which the CPC likes) the bridge project is to request funding from the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) which manages the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) and lists the Pencil Factory as a “gem” on the BCT. A caution, however: This year money is tight for the AMC because of the pandemic. Joe W also mentioned the bridge project at the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT). The Friends also has funds available for projects like this along the BFRT.

– At Grassy Pond there is a railing along the edge of the Nagog Hill Road parking that is in complete disarray and needs to be replaced. How will that be paid for? It could be a CPA project, but that would have to go through the proposal approval process. If there were to be a proposal right now, it would have to be submitted as a 2022 project for funding at the 2022 Town Meeting. Dale had voiced concern about the railing months ago. He noted that Bettina (with microphone problems) is sharing a zoom “chat” with this meeting, saying that Natural Resources will pay for the materials for the railing, now that Natural Resources has a budget for this year.

Additional Regular Business

Covid19-related issues, if any

None.

Parcel issues

- Great Hill: Newly-purchased parcel

The LSC could consider a small parking lot at the corner of the new purchase, using an easement along Piper Lane to tie it to the current red entry trail. However, there is a house there (4 Piper Lane) that has to be demolished, so a parking lot is a long way off. Dean agrees that a parking lot, or at least a good trail entrance, is a great idea but premature at this time. The BoS did vote to have the house removed from the site. That could possibly happen this coming summer. Also, at 90 School Street (south of 4 Piper Lane), the privately-owned house (the Tinker House) that was destroyed by fire is to be replaced. So, there are a bunch of site issues that have to be worked out before the LSC can do anything there.

– Joe H will be making the newly-purchased parcel green (for conservation land) on the Acton Trails map.
– As a future agenda item, we can talk about the existing trail that leaves the playing field on its east side and immediately cuts through private property (64 School Street). Should we relocate this trail? John has looked at rerouting that trail and it seems feasible. His new trail would miss the vernal pool, but there is a lot of nice native flora that could be disturbed, so the LSC would have to be careful. Could we convince the landowner to allow us to keep the current trail? Bettina says the Open Space Committee could talk to the landowner, and she will keep an eye on this.

- Heath Hen Meadow (HHM): Trash disposal

The Cemetery Department was upset at whomever gathered trash at HHM and piled it near the Civil War monument instead of putting it in some more respectful place, such as beside the white building or near an outbuilding (as suggested by Cemetery Superintendent Shawn O’Malley). When the mistake was realized, the trash was moved behind the white building. The LSC acknowledges that the initial placement was inexcusable and regrets the action.



- Morrison Farm: Conservation Restriction

The Agricultural Commission would like to put a conservation restriction on both the meadows and the woods to help preserve the farm as it is. Bettina will be able to provide more information next month.

- Wright Hill: Renovation of existing building

It was determined that the building cannot be renovated due to conservation restrictions.

Website issues

- QR codes on kiosks

In his zoom window, Joe H displayed one of the current QR code postings. The accompanying explanation says “Download a pdf map . . . to your Smart Phone.” An issue is that the QR codes shown are wrong, so these postings have to be removed from kiosks. Stewards should check their kiosks and, if there are any such QR codes posted, take them down. The goal is to make new postings and put them on the kiosks. Joe H says that this is sort of in the “mapping” domain, so he is hoping to work on it. When they are made, the LSC should look at them. Also, new postings should contain the url for the parcel map as some people can’t scan QR codes. Joe H pointed out that an existing QR code had linked to a parcel’s pdf map. A new one should take a person to the online map, and also to where s/he is located in the parcel. A url for this would be complicated, quite long, and not easy to remember. To simplify this, Bruce suggests that the QR code link to a parcel’s online map and the accompanying url link to the main Acton Trails page. Also, the posting should be laminated. Bettina can make the new (laminated) postings.

- Other

The Morrison Farm website is fully operational now (Yay! <applause>). Go to the Acton Trails site, click on Morrison Farm and see its description. Click on the map and go to the live map; click on the live map and go back to the Morrison Farm site. Both directions work.

Maps update

Could Bettina update the LSC on when bigger maps will be available for kiosks? Bruce has posted both the parcel map and the greater North Acton Woods map, and larger maps would be nice as people tend to get lost in the North Acton Woods. Bettina will talk with Bruce offline.

Next month’s (February 16) agenda

Aaron would like to be a regular voting member. There is room on the Committee, but the BoS has to approve. If someone can send Dean an email reminder, he’ll take it to the BoS. Bettina and Zanna will send the info. (Clerk’s note: approved at BoS 01/04/21 meeting.)

Evaluate meeting

Having Bettina not able to talk really stifled our meeting.

This was a well-run, organized meeting! <applause>

Zanna thanks Bettina for helping make things go so smoothly.

Adjournment

Adjourning the meeting was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call at 8:17 p.m.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 16, at 7 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of November 17, 2020