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Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 20, 2013, Town Hall, Room 126, 4 p.m.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Tom Arnold, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Philip Keyes, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant (Chair), Laurie Ullmann

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Joe Will (Minutes)

Nonmembers: Tom Tidman (Director of Natural Resources), John Watlington (Acton resident, wad@alum.mit.edu), Luna Abe

Jim called the meeting to order at 4:06 P.M.

Review and approval of October 16 minutes

The minutes were accepted unanimously as corrected (two minor changes from circulated draft).

The conservation-land name(s) of the new Robbins Mill parcels

The parcels are now known as the Robbins Mill Conservation Land. This will include the part that extends to Carlisle Road and the red-trail connector to Spring Hill. We've talked of possible names, including extending contiguous Conservation Land names, but Robbins Mill is what people are now using.

Moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that the name be "Robbins Mill Conservation Land."

Possible new stewards for Pacy and Robbins Mill

• Robbins Mill: Bob Farra lives in the Canterbury Hill development and has worked on the trail building. He is eager to help out as steward for the new parcel. He would also keep the ball field and parking lots (including Carlisle Road lot) free of trash, and would eventually be responsible for the Wheeler Lane-Carlisle Road trail.

Action: Jim will tell Bob Farra to send in his application to the Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC).

• Pacy: Current Steward Beth Hickey is expecting to depart Acton. Jason Prince, recommended by Joshua Haines, walks there every day and is willing to be the Pacy Steward. The LSC approved.

Action: Jim will have Beth send a resignation letter to the Town Clerk and Jason send an application to the VCC. (Jim will also recover Beth's grass whip.)

Robbins Mill trail review

Jim noted that we've already approved the red entrance trail from the Canterbury Hill playground, and the yellow loop trail. A brief discussion followed about those trails.

On other trails and possible trails:

• Connecting Robbins Mill trail with Camp Acton directly: Triangle Hill Farm is in the way.

• Connecting Robbins Mill trail with Spring Hill: The proposed connector is now flagged. It takes about 3 min to walk. The trail would require removing no trees. Phil took the route under a lone hemlock tree. Bruce suggests and others agree that we put "You are Here" signs at one or both ends of

the connector, but we should first make the map more accurate. Bob could “GPS” the new trail. Eventually, this connector may require an approximate 20-ft boardwalk. Bruce has three Eagle Scout prospects, one of whom could make a boardwalk his project. Phil will improve this trail to “final” standard. There is no need to organize a group to clear it. Per LSC standards, this would be a red trail (going from one parcel to another). Where to put double-sided signs identifying the two parcels (i.e., where is the boundary)? Bob says to put the sign where the stone wall is, and make sure that the sign text is consistent with like signage elsewhere.

Moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that the LSC accept the Spring Hill–Robbins Mill connector trail.

The new Steward for Robbins Mill should get people using the trails to get the trails worn in. Bob Farra is planning to do this. Jim is planning to work with Bob on a sign that encourages people to use the new trails, but also explains the state that they are in (cut but not blazed).

- Connecting Robbins Mill trail with Carlisle: Phil, Bob, and Jim have walked the proposed trail from the Robbins Mill loop to Carlisle. At the Carlisle end of the trail, you walk across a tiny triangle of private land and you are in Carlisle's “Ben's Woods” Conservation Land on “Marion's Trail.” The Carlisle Conservation Foundation has signed an agreement with the Carlisle landowner that would allow unbroken connection of Acton land with the “Ben's Woods” land. Right now the trail is sparsely flagged. Jim and Phil, or maybe Jim alone, will add flags.

What about the gas line right-of-way (same right-of-way as in Camp Acton)? The Town owns it. The right-of-way agreement means we cannot impede access to it. In addition to Robbins Mill and Camp Acton, the right-of-way goes behind Stoneymeade and even crosses Route 2. The last time the gas line was cleared was following a big gas-line explosion in California. A crossing of the right-of-way will be needed on the red trail to Carlisle, something other than the old plywood that is there now. We could use one of our standard boardwalk designs, probably with the corrugated plastic pipe as sills, as shown in the boardwalk design doc: <http://actontrails.org/BoardwalkDesign.pdf>. Because of the terms of the right-of-way, we will have to have an obvious way of letting the gas company make a temporary opening: perhaps a few strategically-placed strong hinges to allow some sections to swing out of the way.

Moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that the LSC accept the Carlisle–Robbins Mill connector trail.

What about construction of this connector trail? Jim will coordinate a time, and will include his Carlisle Conservation foundation contacts, and some Carlisle abutters, on the invite list.

- Possible trail crossing Scoutland: We'll get this done because we and the Bay Circuit Trail folks want it. Jim has met with Town Counsel on this, has changed the diagram that locates the easement, and needs to get the Scoutland Trustees to sign off on it yet. Some of the Scoutland trustees have died in the last few years. Bill Klauer has been recruiting new trustees, and all involved seem enthusiastic to give LSC license to cross the land. Once a license is signed, we can build a trail through Scoutland. From the existing Nashoba Brook yellow trail at the Wheeler Lane bridge, there is an existing informal trail along an old property bound. Through Scoutland it's a “straight shot.” From the Scoutland boundary to Carlisle Road, it's trickier because of rocks.

Jim's goal is to have the Robbins Mill trails ready and useable by “National Trails Day,” Saturday, June 7, 2014, with Carlisle folks' participation as well.

Sidebar discussion on observation platform on Robbins Brook between Carlisle Road and Scoutland: Steve Marsh has agreed to build it as part of a settlement with the Conservation Commission. Plans

were created by Bob Guba and sent to Steve, but since then there has been no progress. Perhaps they should be sent again. Conservation Commission approval has already been obtained. The trail to the platform site has already been built, made accessible by geotextile fabric used by three Eagle Scout candidates who built it. Accessibility of the platform was briefly discussed.

Action: Bettina will send plans again to Steve, getting a copy from Bob if needed.

Action: Jim to clarify accessibility requirements and process with Tom Tidman.

Plaque policy

Jim shared his draft with a couple corrections from what he had sent to the LSC by email.

Some points from an extensive discussion:

There is a plaque at a Pratt's Brook kiosk.

The plaques must show the year.

Bruce suggested that perhaps there should be an Eagle Scout plaque at Town Hall—a way to thank all Eagle Scouts for their projects.

Tom Arnold observed that the more we acknowledge the people involved with a project, the better we communicate to the users of the Conservation lands. When people see a plaque, they could be encouraged to be more involved.

Moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve this policy.

Action: Jim will propose a plaque for the new bridge at Guggins Brook.

New connector to Great Hill from 394 Mass Ave?

Jim shared maps showing to-be-developed land along Mass Avenue and its abutting land parcels, including Great Hill Conservation Land. The land that holds the former Goodyear Tire shop has already gone through the permitting process (for a new CVS store). Land that holds the former Acton Children's School should have public hearing soon on plans for its development. That land abuts a thin conservation strip that connects Great Hill to Mass Avenue. We may have an opportunity for a trail easement that would provide access from the newly developed parcels to Great Hill that could perhaps be more accessible and attractive than the current access behind the Victor School that opens onto the Victor School parking lot. In any event, Jim wants to make sure that the Acton Planning Department will in the future let the LSC know when there is any hearing regarding planned development on lands that abut Conservation Land.

Action: Tom Arnold and Jim will walk the relevant portion of Great Hill. Jim will suggest a time.

Action: Jim will contact the Planning Department regarding LSC notification whenever a proposed development abuts conservation land.

Next steps on Wetherbee well cover

Joe provided information on the dimensions of the uncovered square well.

Bob said that for a well cover you need a design (one of which he outlined, suggesting that it would be like a cover used at Camp Acton) from which you develop a lumber list.

Action: Bruce will sketch a design, make a lumber list, and give both to Bettina.

Update on parking improvements

• Jenks: The bare area at the back of the Jenks lot has been seeded.

Bob says that stakes have been placed where the sign is to go. The kiosk will be down the trail a bit, in the same place and position as it had previously.

Tom Tidman says that we've found the kiosk, but he hasn't seen it yet.

Bob says that the roof should be removed before moving the kiosk; otherwise you'll lose its shingles. Is this work high enough on Shawn's list? Tom Tidman says that it likely can be done.

Acton: Tom will ask Shawn.

- Guggins Brook: Fixed at Guggins parking: a depressed area that would get muddy, and the drop-off at the edge of Route 111 across which one enters and exits the parking.
- Grassy Pond (Newtown access): Tom Tidman has a sketch of the space and thinks that a turnaround can be built there next year.

Parcel reports

- Spring Hill: Could scouts carry the boardwalk parts to where they are to be installed? No! Shawn's crew will move them fairly soon, probably this Fall before any snow.
- Grassy Pond: Newtown Road kiosk is on its last legs.
- Heath Hen Meadows: HHM is okay. Bob shared points that he's learned from a beaver DVD regarding Bob's work on the beaver dam. We'll need a fenced-in area around the entrance to the pipes that he's installed. We may have the equipment to build such a cage by Friday (11/22). Bob may still want to do some cleaning out of some plant material clogging the inlet pipe a bit.
- Nashoba Brook: Laurie says there's pile of wood chips in front of the Wheeler Lane kiosk that can be used elsewhere. Natural Resources could take them away.
Action: Jim will let Linda know.
- Pratt's Brook: Bob expressed concern that months ago when he fixed a boardwalk, he sent a note to Natural Resources that it would be Natural Resource's task to remove some stringers and two heavy sills that he left. He noted that Theresa reported that this had not been done. Bettina says things are prioritized and coordinating this with the right people apparently didn't work, or maybe the task got lost "in the process." Jim noted that he keeps a list and meets with Tom Tidman once a month. If we get things like this on Jim's list, then that may help keep such tasks from going to the bottom of Natural Resources' to-do list. Bettina added that if something is really important, then somehow give it added emphasis.
- Grassy Pond: The boardwalk is now above water, thanks to Bob and Laurie. Bob sent around a picture showing why you don't want to nail stringers to sills as it took Laurie and Bob hours to get the nails out when they elevated the boardwalk. In general and for the sake of those who have to deal with these things years from now, we should use nuts and bolts, rather than nails, to put things together.

Evaluating this meeting

Bob: Give the Chairman an A (for willing to be the chairman).

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 P.M.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 18, at 4 P.M.

Items that serve as background for today's meeting are here: <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-5798>. They are titled as follows:

- 00 - Agenda for 2013 11 20**
- 01 - Draft LSC minutes 2013 10 16**
- 02.1 - map of Robbins Mill proposed and actual trails with NB-SH-CA**
- 02.2 - email re better GPS tracks for proposed Carlisle Connector**
- 04 - Robbins trail review request email**
- 05 - Plaque Policy First Draft November 2013**

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- 06.1 - Great Hill and Mass Ave: wider view**
 - 06.2 - Map of Great Hill and Mass Ave - zoomed in**
 - 06.3 - Email re: possible new Mass Ave connector**
 - 08 - Wetherbee Open Square Well photo + diagram**
 - 11 - Parcel reports**