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**Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, June 17, 2014, Town Hall, Room 126, 7 P.M.**

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant (Chair)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Bob Farra, Elan Riesman, Jason Temple, Joe Will (Minutes)

Nonmembers:

John Watlington (Acton resident), Joe Holmes (Acton resident), Sherman Smith (Acton resident), Tai Wu (Acton resident)

Jim called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

Review and approval of May 28 minutes

- Quartermaster is the Sea Scout equivalent of Eagle, Scouting's highest rank. The Scout kiosk project at Nashoba Brook was to help earn the highest rank. In minutes, "Commodore" is changed to "Quartermaster."
- Minutes changed to show that the Cub Scouts, not Bettina, will contact Allen Warner for backpacks. (Note: Allen Warner is retiring so we should find out where the backpacks are going.)
- Approval of corrected minutes moved and voted unanimously.

Discuss idea of new associates sharing parcels with more experienced stewards

The LSC practice had been to give new associates parcels of their own without a lot of help. The LSC would suggest talking to the previous steward, or talking to Bob Guba. Jim has heard back that new stewards are a little "left out there." Now we are suggesting that the first thing would be to have a new associate serve on a parcel with another steward.

Peoples' thoughts:

- Bob Guba would like to hear from a new steward if s/he is finding problems out there, and, if so, work with the steward. Bob's idea is to have Conservation Land problems fixed. Bob can walk into any parcel and find things that need fixing, "It's how you look at things."
- Bruce: I think it's a good idea. Bruce had walked with Jim when Bruce joined.
- Jim: If we like the idea of apprenticeship, we can change the number of associates.
- Bob: We could split into Land Stewardship and Trails Committees. The LSC could do the talking and the Trails Committee could do the work.
- Bruce: If a steward is leaving a parcel, s/he could write up a "hit list" for the next steward.
- John: A year of stewardship overlap would be even better.
- Bob Ferra: This is a good idea; it makes a lot of sense.
- Jim: We have a lot of experienced stewards at the adjacent North Acton Conservation Lands. Another idea might be to have a new associate help out in all those parcels, and learn from those stewards.
- Bob Guba: Those parcels need assistance. Need associates to cut the summer growth. Laurie gets behind with this and the trails fill in. The trail to Jay Lane gets filled in. Camp Acton, no problem. (Bruce: Buckthorn is getting out of hand at Camp Acton.) Bruce does the access road twice a summer.
- Bettina: At the Canoe Launch, we could use a co-steward or backup steward. The knotweed is bad

and needs work. Bettina got to it last week, but couldn't finish. Would love some people to go there next weekend. Could use a weed-whacker too. Bettina needs to show where the groundhog holes are. Send an email to Bettina if you can help. Bettina is going away Friday for a week.

- Hacking it is the best way to keep the knotweed from getting very big. Cambridge Brewing Co. is selling Japanese knotweed beer. Other recipes discussed. If you are going to eat it (knotweed), avoid road runoff and poison ivy.
- Jim has asked for trail-widening volunteers and could put them onto it.
- Jim can't handle Guggins, Wright Hill, and being the LSC Chair. But an associate could help and Jim could still be Chair.
- Joe Holmes has been weed-whacking the Arboretum blue trail near Wood Lane.
- Jim would welcome thoughts from associates (at this meeting). Jim sees nods that associates think this is good idea.
- We should get these minutes to potential associates as well.

### Committee membership

Jim has come to some conclusions (from last meeting).

The three regular members with terms "coming due" are Tom Arnold, Phil, and Nan. They are having hard times making evening meetings but would be associate members. Three associates who would be regular members are Jason Temple, Bob Farra, and Joe Will.

We will update the roster with new member information.

– Are the new people chainsaw trained? No.

Laurie, Bruce, Bob Guba, Phil, Josh Haines, and Andy Gatesman are our current sawyers. Jim took chainsaw training, but he's not good at it.

The Maynard chainsaw session was a good one.

– Who appoints committee members? Jim sends interested parties to the Web for the volunteer form.

Newly interested folks go through the Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC). VCC will send people to a couple LSC meetings. If still interested, they go through Jim (Jim and Charlie Aaronson of the VCC talk a lot), and then to the Board of Selectmen (BOS). The BOS, with a recommendation from Jim, appoints.

### Davis Road entrance and meadow

This started with a note from Philip re young people parking in the mini-meadow above the Davis Road parking lot for Nashoba Brook. Jim described the parking and meadow. The meadow used to have a gate. It rotted through and was taken away. Young people then would drive into the meadow as Phil's note indicated.

Jim: First thought, we need the gate back; second thought, we could add a few boulders far enough apart so just the mower could get through; third, we could abandon this notion of having a lawn and let it go to meadow.

Bob Guba: It used to look terrible with bad plants. We should keep it as it is. It's on the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) and is a nice small meadow. So, we could put boulders in and have the town mow it fairly regularly to keep down invasives.

Bruce: Can the town put a garbage can there?

The recent group didn't leave garbage. Experience shows that garbage cans don't get emptied.

Bob: It's better to educate: Carry in, carry out. People should carry a little bag in a pocket.

Tom Tidman's group can take on adding the boulders.

They could also remove the remaining iron pipe (part of gate).

### Bench donation application (Great Hill)

First, an update on Luna's Bench at Pratt's Brook for which Bettina has completed an application. We have a bench policy. In fact, we wrote the policy and the Conservation Commission approved it. A bench could be wood, granite, or plastic depending on the site. Bettina was to research the three possibilities.

Bettina would be much happier buying a wooden bench but would be happy to buy a granite bench (per a suggestion by Bob Guba, whose opinion Bettina values). It costs way more. (The wooden benches at the Arboretum cost about \$500, are good, and last a long time.) Bettina would inscribe a granite bench where your butt goes. This would be a rough surface. Bettina would just carve Luna's name in the granite. Doing this on a polished side is more expensive. Bettina would also like a bronze plaque.

Bettina checked with Acton Monument Company. It can't do a bench for a price she gave. Swenson Granite Works owns the quarry for the particular type of granite she likes.

Bettina moves to install a stone bench at Stone Ford at Pratt's Brook "In memory of Luna, 2005–2014." Bob Guba seconds.

Discussion: Bob: At the top of Northfield Mountain, there's a memorial bench. It's plastic fiberglass with a plaque. Bettina knows the substance. It is synthetic.

Dave likes stone. It will last forever.

Bruce likes stone, but keep it within Bettina's budget.

Jim is happy to invite donations. Bettina already has one offer.

Bob advocated granite because there is no maintenance.

Bob: Granite legs are 100 lb each and the ledge is 250 lb. If weight would be a problem, the LSC can get it in.

What about the shape? Suggestion: Make it bone shaped. Bettina will choose the shape.

Vote on motion: unanimous approval.

A Great Hill bench: A memorial bench is proposed for "Sunny" on a grassy area near the pond, facing and overlooking the pond so a family can sit and watch their dog playing in the water.

Jim: We may delay on this, as it's not clear who has jurisdiction. In the most recent Open Space and Recreation Plan, there is a notion of something more elaborate there, e.g., a handicapped accessible trail. Tom Tidman suggested late this afternoon that Tom, Jim, Bettina, and Recreation Director Cathy Fochtman go out there and think about this, then come back to the LSC.

Bob: This land is not Conservation Land. It was purchased under a federal grant. It was a "recreation zone." Later parcels acquired at Great Hill were Conservation Land.

Bruce: We go there to let dogs play in water. A good quality bench would be great.

Bettina: Lots of handicapped people go there. People would love to be able to rest there.

Bob: Is there any overall plan for that area? Jim: No.

Bruce: It's a very sunny spot. A stone bench might not be that inviting.

Bettina: We should follow up on the offer. We can always move the bench.

Jim will take back to Tom and Cathy the enthusiasm of the LSC about this. At some time, we will be mapping benches at Great Hill, but we have plenty of time for that.

Discussion sidebar:

Tai Wu: There is interest in benches at Morrison Farm.

Morrison Farm is not in our jurisdiction yet but Cathy Fochtman can be contacted about benches.

Who gives permission for Morrison Farm maintenance?

Bettina: Tom Tidman does the fields. Bruce can contact Tom about cutting in the woods. The LSC is enthusiastic about Bruce doing this.

#### Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) access points to Acton Conservation Land

Conservation Commission has just approved a “special order of conditions” for 4.8 miles of the BFRT in Acton. Jim pulled out Phase 2A maps of the BFRT (online at “Bruce Freeman Rail Trail”), finding the sections close to Nashoba Brook. Right now there are informal trails in three places: The Stone Chamber, the trail near Sawmill Road, and an informal crossing further downstream closer to Davis Road. To connect down near Davis Road, you have to walk on the rock wall. There is another entrance that reaches the brook on the other side from where pencil factory kiosk is.

All of the BFRT stuff is cast in stone; any connection has to be done after the trail is built. That’s two years in the future. However, we need to talk about this now so trail builders can think about it as they do the work. Examples of why we need to do this now: In Westford, someone built a fence across an easement. Also, remember that the trail will have guardrails.

We’ll dangle this out for now and get back to it.

Suggestion for Jim: Find the pages online and identify the pages to go to quickly. John will help Jim with this.

Are we all members of the BFRT? Find out more at <http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org>. Tom Michelman, Acton resident and President of the Friends of BFRT, is moving out of town and wants to spend money: Kiosks w/maps would be nice; so would accesses that tend to encourage pedestrians and discourage bikes, etc.

#### Robbins Mill trails

Three trails Jim wants to talk about:

1. Trail at height of Robbins Mill land: Bob has noted that at the yellow trail “pinch point” there is a cut-through and he proposed a reroute of the yellow trail. We are not going to do this. Phil sees no evidence of a cut-through now, and the current route is interesting. Bob has filled in the cut-through thoroughly, so that is solved. Current route is too nice. Issue has “gone away.”

2. Dotted red line (on map Jim shared). Current trail is red line; dashed white line is gas right-of-way. Dashed red line is Bob Guba’s rerouting. The current red trail is heavily used. The advantage of Bob’s proposed trail is that it crosses the pipeline at a very less soggy place. Right now, it’s just damp; there is no open standing water. Phil didn’t find the right crossing. Phil, Bob, and Jim will get out there at the same time.

Bob had proposed the alternative trail in case the gas company would say “no structures” on their property. Bob Farra has contacted the gas company. It took a while to find the right person. Bob spoke with the person “responsible for now.” The gas company would be happy for us to put in a non-permanent structure. They are in favor of us using the trail. Bob’s contact said to give us a sketch and map and he will talk with the engineering group in the company.

Bob Guba: Tell them that we would plan for six 8-ft-long bog bridges, each at least 3 ft wide (to provide for skiers) with 3-4 planks. You should be able to pick up and set aside each bridge. The gas company does maintenance twice a year (at least last year they did it twice). The first is to clear out all wood. The second is to mow. The gas company would like several contacts so that contact could be facilitated when maintenance is due. Bob G will draw up plans for Bob R to be in touch with the gas

company. We will do the bridge as originally conceived; there will be no reroute. The gas company would let us know when they are coming through so we, or they, can move the bridge. The machine they use would crush a bog bridge.

Bob G says that each bridge needs 3 sills—two ends, one center. Bruce had a picture that Bob said was “sort of” the idea. On top, there would be longitudinal planks to make it a “bog bridge.” It would be 36 inches across with small gaps between planks. Plastic would be nice as it would be lighter and more easily moved.

Bob F will sketch out the plan. Each section would require about four volunteers to move. Judging by tracks, most users in winter have been skiers.

Bruce: For maintenance, we may have to move just one section. No, we probably will have to move everything since they cut the whole right of way.

Bruce: We could offer to cut around the walkways. Derision.

Bruce, Bob, and Bob will exchange ideas about this.

We still haven't had plans for the link to Spring Hill. Trail is cut and being used, but the water crossing needs a bridge. An Eagle Scout candidate is assigned, but no plans have surfaced yet.

3. The third trail is our access to Carlisle Road. Jim referred to a map. The BCT goes from Wheeler Lane up Highway 27. As for a trail to avoid this, we plan to go from the far side of the Wheeler Lane bridge up to and across Scoutland, and then cut across town-owned land just uphill from Robbins Mill Pond. The first part of this is a curse-inducing boulder field with basketball-size rocks everywhere, and now they are covered by ferns. Bob G has flagged a fine trail through there, but we can't establish details there until the ferns are gone. We will wait for nature to take care of this in the fall. There are lots of animal shore-access trails there. The trail is good from Capstone Quarry to the Carlisle Road parking lot. It's flagged, but it needs more flags.

The Scoutland conversation is still in the same place as at our previous meeting. Bill Klauer is looking to recruit a third trustee for Scoutland who might be in favor of an easement. A possible long-term goal is to have the Trust turn over Scoutland to the town.

#### Bay Circuit Trail reroute through Valentine Conservation Restriction

Jim showed a map. At Carlisle road, turn right onto the sidewalk, go past the cemetery and get to the end of the sidewalk and to Acton's border with Carlisle. A trail easement is the dotted line off to the left. Most of it is on Acton land. It goes to the BFRT. This essentially trades walking along Route 27 to walking along Carlisle Road. Jim, Laurie, and others have tried to walk the easement but it has proved difficult. There are flags there, but they are wetlands flags. The map is the best we have as to where the trail is. We have to ask the Valentines if they want the trail to be as on the map. If yes, the Valentines will have to have a survey crew come out. The plan is to meet with the Valentines and the Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF) as to where the trail is. The corridor is 15 ft wide and GPS will not give us the precision we need. Where the easement reaches the BFRT, there is 10-ft wide brook. The rail bed is steep sided there and it would be a challenge to put in steps or something to get up to the trail. The Trustees of Reservations, Friends of the Rail Trail, or AMC may be able to help with the crossing and climb needed there.

This won't be useful until the rail trail is built, but we are starting conversations now with the Valentines and the CCF. The CCF holds the Conservation Restriction, so we have to work through this Carlisle group to do work on Acton land.

### River Stewardship Award

This is Bettina's award from the Wild and Scenic River Council. Jim had nominated Bettina for her work on organizing the effort against water chestnuts, and for also being the first and only steward of the Canoe Launch and all that she has done for that site, including getting a lot of other people to pitch in. In the past, Bob Guba and Linda McElroy received this award for their work in launching the LSC. Tom Tidman has also gotten this award in the past.

### Water chestnut removal

We'll be working at Robbins Mill pond in 3 days—this coming Friday from 10 to noon. Hopefully we will get AB students (and accompanying adults). Each participant needs waiver, and proper clothes and shoes. We will have boats and laundry baskets. Would not recommend waders, as pond can be very muddy far out. You can park in the driveways of abutting property owners Dave Marshall and Dick Fields. We will do this again on Saturday, July 19, from 10 to 2. Historically, we've had around 75 people. We did this for three years at Ice House Pond. We pulled massive piles of plants and now you can see water there.

### Parcel reports

#### •Nashoba Brook

(During Davis Road entrance and meadow discussion) John: At Wetherbee, there are some young trees among the apple trees. They are oak trees, at least one-year old. Bob Guba says that we need to work on the oaks and the buckthorn there. He was thinking of weed-wrenching the small oaks.

Bob described what buckthorn looks like and gave more detail as to where the Wetherbee buckthorn is. He's mowed it down effectively to the left of the trail at the kiosk.

Bettina: You can get an app to see what buckthorn looks like.

#### • Nashoba Brook/Robbins Mill

(During Robbins Mill trails discussion) Bettina had a fabulous paddle on Friday night. She paddled upstream, around the beaver dam and tree, and got close to Carlisle Rd.

Bob Farra: Can I borrow the sawzall to tackle the percolation pipes problem at Robbins Mill? Bob has dug them out and will give Bob Guba the coordinates. Bob G will cut them off and Bob F will carry them out. They will be in touch with each other about this.

#### • Pratt's Brook

Bob Guba reports that Sherman and John told Bob about another cut through. Per Bob, Pratt's Brook probably is No. 1 for people cutting through. The cut-through on the trail past the pond is significantly blocked. Bob has also blocked some of the others. There still is one more on a switchback, due probably to bikers. Bob is thinking of getting help to force the narrowing of the trail. Sherman can help. For winter, maybe we need some warning signs at entrances where the trail is steep. Bob has had a sign "Please do not cut switchbacks. Prevent erosion."

#### • Camp Acton

Bruce has similar problem (trail erosion) at Camp Acton with the short red connector trail. That trail is a mire of low spots and mud. The tracks of vehicles eroded that trail. Bob Guba thinks a front loader was used to move bridge sections at Spring Hill and used this access. Others agreed. There's a question now of how to make this not so muddy. The trail could use chips, or perhaps an ATV could bring in sand or gravel. Bob pointed out that this is an historic site and suggests folks read the History of Camp Acton.

#### • General

Jason: What do we do with the poison ivy that's coming in on trails? There's grass whipping. There are people who will suit up and pull things out. Spraying can be done only by certified applicators. At Camp Acton there is no poison ivy remaining where the poison ivy was sprayed, but there is some poison ivy "further over."

Evaluate this meeting

It's a good meeting because Jim went through the whole agenda and ended right at 9 o'clock.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, July 15, at 7 P.M., in Room 126.

These documents that served as background to this meeting were sent by email to the [lsc@acton-ma.gov](mailto:lsc@acton-ma.gov) list:

- *May minutes* June 17 Joe Will
- *roster* January 2 Joe Will
- *Committee membership after June 30 or so, and ideas about new associate members* June 11 Jim Snyder-Grant
- *Email discussion re: Davis Road entrance* June 17 Jim Snyder-Grant
- *bench donation application #2 Piermarini for Sunny* June 17 Jim Snyder-Grant
- *FW: Valentine Map* June 17 Jim Snyder-Grant
- *Robbins Mill Trail Update* June 16 Bob Farra
- *Canoe Launch Report* June 14 Bettina Abe
- *LSC: Nagog Hill* June 13 Elan Riesman