

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 20, 2015, Town Hall, Room 126, 7 P.M.

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Dave Cochrane, Bob Farra, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant (Chair), Jason Temple, Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Joe Holmes, John Watlington

Nonmembers present: Janet Adachi (LSC's Board of Selectmen (BoS) liaison)

Jim called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. Bettina was designated timekeeper for this meeting.

Review and approval of December 16 minutes

• The Robbins Mill loop trail to the small pond was “cut,” as it had been previously flagged. With this correction, approval of minutes was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously.

Mission Statement update

We had approved it. Tomorrow the Conservation Commission is discussing it. If nothing is wrong, it will move on to the BoS.

Scoutland license update

Bettina will call Bill Klauer by the February meeting to

- 1) find whether there is a third Scoutland Trustee yet;
- 2) let Bill know, if no third Trustee exists yet, that we could supply one;
- 3) find, if there is a third Trustee, whether the Trustees have voted yet on a license.

The LSC observes that no one has used the property for a while. There is no reason why the property can't turn over to the Town.

Mapping update

We definitely want to create new maps. We have a meeting on 02/03 at 7 pm at 25 Half Moon Hill of volunteers willing to work on mapping. Bruce will bring a projector, Jim a screen and snacks. All should bring laptops and thermal underwear. The group will bring results, if any, back to the LSC.

Bay Circuit Trail update

Laurie has info about the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT).

Beth Gula, the AMC BCT Volunteer Programs Supervisor is working on designating 15-16 projects for work groups during 2015. Laurie has thought of two things:

- 1) boardwalks on the Valentine easement land (2 boardwalks and a bridge), and
- 2) a bridge at the pencil factory's broken dam (a longer-term project).

To span the spillway, the wall at the pencil factory should be rebuilt and the concrete slab removed.

Bruce noted that a quarter-mile downstream from the pencil factory there is a rough walk across the brook, a trail that Laurie says he uses all the time. This could be made into a safer, “doable” crossing. It would mean a few signs directing people from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) to the crossing. Include a boardwalk on top of a wall, and people could walk to the pencil factory. We could probably do this downstream crossing for about \$1K. Is this crossing within the boundaries of the Conservation Land? Bruce is not sure. It was also noted that the Historical Commission is planning to seek historic

recognition for the pencil factory site.

Anyway, Laurie will submit this to the BCT as a potential project way down the road. Bruce: The crossing Bruce suggests could be a short-term solution and the other a longer-term solution.

Also from the AMC-BCT meeting that Laurie attended: BCT is beginning to work on developing uniform signage throughout the BCT. Laurie showed a sample of a sign. There is a local version that locals could fill in and the two signs would be posted together. Signage would be placed at parking and obvious access sites. Acton access sites could include Wheeler Lane and Davis Road, the Jay Lane parking, and Stoneymeade. Laurie will come back to the LSC with a BCT signage proposal.

Laurie also showed a picture of new BCT trail markers that would replace BCT's white blazes.

Stow via Heath Hen Meadows update

Jim is nominating Dave to make inquiries of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) and Stow officials about plans for trails on their portions of the contiguous properties. The main questions would have to do with permissions, e.g., does the ACT allow blazes, and whether Stow would like our help on their property. A related question: Do we want to make anything other than a winter trail? A summer trail would mean "giganto" boardwalks. Perhaps Dave could report on this at our February meeting.

Recruiting Stewards update

Joe H is a new Associate member. The BoS voted yes (for Joe), and the Town Clerk has sworn him in. He is now the official Steward for the Canoe Launch. His information is already in the LSC roster.

We still have two unstaffed parcels, Wetherbee and Wright Hill. We also have room on the LSC for 1 regular member and 1 associate member. How do we recruit these people? It's difficult in winter. John will try to locate a couple regular walkers who live near Wetherbee. We could post notices of stewardless parcels on kiosks. Most people who hike the trails go to the websites, so let's advertise there.

Jim will ask the Wright Hill Association, the just-previous owners of the land, if any of them wants to be the Wright Hill steward, or knows someone who might be a good candidate. Jim could put up a sign in the New View Common House. We talked a bit about the future work at Wright Hill. The Town has the right to develop parking near the end of Wright Terrace. There could be a kiosk there. An abutting neighbor may be interested in mowing the meadow, or maintaining the edges near stonewalls, or both.

We need a full conversation about using stewards.

Good chainsaw training: Who wants it? Where can we get it?

Bettina has been bugging MIAA (the Town's insurer) about when the next training is. MIAA will let us know when there is another session near us. We have a clear policy on wearing protective gear, and we need to adhere to it. Bettina: We had training for all who were interested 3 years ago. We also got protective gear that still can be borrowed now by our volunteers. Wearing protective gear while sawing anything is a good habit to get into. Chainsaws can abrade flesh amazingly quickly and effectively.

Rerouting/rebuilding trails subject to erosion or other problems (Example: Great Hill)

John sketched some Great Hill trails and discussed some problems with steep portions, e.g., below Wass Rock; also the eastern blue trail on the Great Hill. A problem is that stuff gets washed off the

steep portions of the trails. The suggestion is to find minor reroutes. Possible short reroutes were discussed for these two trails. John will try to flag some reroutes before our next meeting, and definitely by April. Philip Keyes has a trail inclinometer that John may find helpful. Also, you can get a Smartphone app that can help with measuring trail inclination.

Question for everyone: Are there similar sections on trails in your parcel? We can have a similar conversation about them at future meetings. Joe W will collect trail problematics/proposals.

Bruce cited the Spring Hill section of the BCT that is “horrendous” and was the location of some BCTrailwork recently. Laurie told what the AMC did there and that AMC realized that it wouldn’t help. Problem is that there is one massive “flow” through the property and a boulder field associated with the flow, and a nearby reroute to improve the walk isn’t possible. Bruce says we would need a quarter-mile boardwalk there.

Matrix of what activities are best at which Conservation Land

Joe prepared something like this in January of 2013. Is anyone interested in taking that file and working with it? We could put it on the Web. No one stepped up.

Parcel reports (including possible standardization)

Bob: Every parcel had a report except Stoneymeade. The reports themselves are good and they say everything. They are doing what they are supposed to do. There is not much enthusiasm for standardizing reports. Creativity would be squashed by a template. A checklist might be helpful.

Things are in the LSC file: Duties for a Steward. Other useful facts/ideas for reports:

- a list of abbreviations
- include diameters of blowdowns
- include a photo of blowdown if it’s really big
- a general discussion on writing reports
- when agenda appears, that’s a good reminder for doing parcel reports
- so is the appearance of the first report
- The chair does not need to worry about issues that come up in parcel reports that can be taken care of by others, e.g., the chainsaw crew. The steward and the crew are responsible for directly communicating to resolve issues.
- For blazing, the temperature has to be above 45°F, say 50° and no chance of rain for the next day or two. Peggy Liversidge puts blazing needs on her to-do list as she notices they are needed, and as stewards let her know.

At a couple points in the meeting, there was discussion of a “Leave No Trace” poster, a poster that is popular with the Boy Scouts, and versions of which had been e-shared by Bob G. Bettina will bring a “Leave No Trace” sign prototype to the next meeting. Jim will add “Leave No Trace” (for kiosks) as a future agenda item.

Bettina had given Laurie a set of laminated posters. He could use another.

Bruce: Is there a matrix of kiosks and repairs needed? The Grassy Pond kiosk at Newtown Road needs repair. Bettina: Let me know of kiosks that have fallen over or otherwise need repair. I can give the information to Shawn O’Malley. His crew might have time if winter stays mild, and Bruce doesn’t get to fixing them first. Bob G has a diagram on how to splint a kiosk and specs for other kiosk details.

Alison Field-Juma, Executive Director of OARS, Tom Tidman, and Doug Halley are talking about a trail along the Assabet River with a kayak launch above the dam (right on the Maynard line, on the opposite side of Route 27 from the Canoe Launch). The kayak launch could very likely be handicapped accessible. Alison will try to write a grant to cover a rudimentary launch and will talk to Maynard about hooking up with Maynard's Assabet River Trail.

Jim: At Guggins Brook, someone took down a leaner and a log across a trail – chainsaw work – and never asked or told Jim. Who? Someone cut up a tree that was down in Camp Acton. Who? Let's find the person(s) and perhaps gain a steward!

Per Bettina: Corey York says the town could build the Grassy Pond parking at Newtown Road "any time." Tom will get back to us when there is progress.

Consider what agenda items to deal with in February

The LSC reviewed a possible-agenda handout from Jim. Generally Jim does this on his own to develop an agenda, but wants to try figuring things out with other Committee members as he is leaving as Chair at the end of June. Polling the Committee, top items were:

– Parcel descriptions

In the past for Guidebook descriptions, people made edits and sent their work to Jim or put it on the website. Someone will have to collate these things; also have to be sure to get all parcels covered.

Updated parcel descriptions would go immediately to the website and possibly serve for a future Guidebook. It would be good to include some historical information on each parcel. Jim will contact Peggy who has offered to edit the descriptions. Stewards could pull current descriptions from websites, do their editing, and send their work to Peggy.

– Finding new stewards

See information above.

– Mapping the LSC lands

See information above.

Evaluate this meeting

Great meeting; time keeping was great.

No food. Bruce will bring brownies to the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 17, 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 list:

"HHM report" Jan 20, David Cochrane

"Pacy Update" Jan 19, Jason Temple

"Nashoba Brook report" Jan 19, Laurie Ullmann

"Acton Arboretum report" Jan 18, Bettina Abe

"Jenks Report", Jan 18, Joshua Haines

"Grassy Pond" Jan 18, Ann Shubert

"Spring Hill Report", Jan 18, Philip Keyes
"Bulette update" Jan 18, Andy Gatesman
"Camp Acton Report" Jan 18, Bruce Rachman
"Robbins Mill Trails - Jan Report" Jan 18, Bob Farra
"Great Hill trail Update - January" Jan 17, John Watlington
"Wetherbee Trail Update - January" Jan 17, John Watlington
"Canoe Launch" Jan 17, Joe Holmes
"Nagog Hill" Jan 17, Elan Riesman
"Guggins Report" Jan 16, Jim Snyder-Grant
"WH/Town Forest report" Jan 16, Joe Will
"Pratt's Brook report January", Jan 16, Sherman Smith
"issue tracking" Jan 20, Jim Snyder-Grant