

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 17, 2017, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bob Guba, Joe Holmes, Bruce Rachman (Chair), Jim Snyder-Grant, Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Sherman Smith

Others: Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen (BoS) LSC liaison), Leo Fochtman (Wright Hill abutter), Joan Gardner (Acton BoS), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President),

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

Review and approval of September minutes

Due to late availability of Minutes draft, Minutes consideration is moved to **November** meeting.

Community Preservation Act Open Space Opportunity

Joe W gave an update on the Town's Conservation-Land-purchase opportunity at 161 Newtown Road, a parcel that would link the Bulette (+ Anderson) land with Grassy Pond and, hence, Nagog Hill. Tom Tidman presented the proposal to the Community Preservation Committee, which voted to allocate up to \$770K from its Open Space Set-Aside Fund to help with the acquisition. A Purchase and Sale document has been drafted and is expected to be agreed to by this Friday. Susan and the ACT will be raising \$ to help meet the sale price. The purchase will have to be approved at a Special Town Meeting in December.

Mass Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals (MSMCP) Brown Bag Lunch Workshop, "Volunteer Land Stewardship Program ABC's"

Bettina shared a handout re the Brown Bag workshop at Acton Town Hall, Wednesday, 11/15, 11 am – 1 pm. The workshop will focus on Acton's LSC. The workshop idea originated with a chat Terry Maitland, Acton Conservation Commission Chair, had with Michelle Grzenda, MCMCP Vice-President, on difficulties that other towns have with starting something like Acton's LSC. Presenters listed on the handout include Bettina and Bruce. Bettina will share the workshop notice with the Bay Circuit Trail folks.

Japanese barberry, <http://actoninvasives.org/>

Jim provided background on Japanese barberry, connections between this plant and ticks, and a current trial method (fire) for controlling the plant. Much of the recent information comes from University of Connecticut researchers. Bruce said that he received lots of feedback on his email about cutting back this invasive. Joe H is willing to lead people on a barberry removal work party at Pacy, where the plant is pervasive, but he would need guidance on exactly where to start.

Wright Hill/Guggins Brook easements update

Jim talked about easements necessary for connecting the trails of Wright Hill and Guggins Brook, referencing a projected map, and identifying the two private owners associations — NewView and

Gregory Lane — that would have to agree to the easement. Jim said that he cannot advocate for this easement per Town Counsel advice that noted Jim's conflict of interest as one of the NewView owners. So, someone else will have to represent this to both the Conservation Commission and the BoS. Jim indicates that both owner associations are positive about the connecting trail, and he has another formal meeting with the associations. However, he would like to have someone from the LSC help him make sure that the proposed connector makes sense from the LSC point of view. He would like a person or two from the LSC to walk the trail with him, offer their suggestions, and have the LSC make decisions.

- Should the trail be red or blue (blazed)? Red is for access, so it probably should be red.
- Bob G points out that part of Jim's suggested trail is in full view of private homes, and feels that it shouldn't be. Bob has proposed an alternative that "stays in the woods."
- Jim will represent NewView and will interface with Gregory Lane folks. He suggests that the LSC represent the Town's interests. The tasks for the LSC volunteer, after learning about the trail, would be to come back to the LSC and advocate for the trail — eventually doing the same with the Conservation Commission and the BoS. The volunteer would also be negotiating terms of the easement agreement.
- No volunteers came forward at this time. Action on this is stalled until there is a volunteer.

Wright Hill trail, sign, parking, . . . , update

Jim Salem found the tree that had been suggested for the Wright Hill sign facing Central Street and attached the sign to it. There still are saplings masking the sign as you "come around the corner" on Central Street. These could be cleared out. Bettina has other signs and signposts to use at the top of the hill as soon as there is agreement about locations. She will make whatever additional arrows that Jim Salem wants. Having a kiosk by the parking on Wright Terrace is a good idea. Joe H showed a map of all of the Wright Hill trails. Jim noted that the yellow trail is a "maximal" loop, except for the meadow appearing lower on the map. It, incidentally, has a stone wall that needs rescuing.

Heath Hen Meadow North update

The yellow and blue trails (on cemetery land) have been blazed. There is a blue trail that cuts off a north section of the yellow trail. That trail should not be there. Up until last year, there was no evidence of people cutting through there and efforts have been made to keep that cutoff trail impassable. The LSC decides about CL trails and that trail was not put before the LSC, nor was it approved by the LSC for blazing. In particular, note that it is not shown in the map of LSC-approved blazing (that was presented to the Cemetery Commission).

It was moved and seconded that blazes along the cutoff trail under discussion be removed and, if brush (etc.) has been removed from it, that the brush be put back in.

Discussion points:

- The cutoff trail destroys the purpose of the yellow loop trail. Granted that one part of the yellow trail can be seen from the other part, but the intent is for people to walk the loop, not take the cutoff.
- The steward and steward-to-be for Heath Hen Meadow are not at this meeting. They should be heard, if not in person, then in writing.

It was agreed to table this motion and include it in the November Agenda.

Nashoba Brook bridge update

Nothing new. Too many other things take precedence. Maybe the bridge will be installed in the spring, or some other time next year. Someone is needed to take the lead on this.

Robbins Mill/Scoutland update

The trail is pretty much semi-public as scouts and their families and friends use it. However, the LSC is not yet allowed to blaze it, and it really should have access permission in writing. Right now, Scoutland Trustee Bill Klauer is immersed in another issue in town.

Other parcel information

- Jenks: Bob G gave the history of his mowing of this parcel, and of how the dogwood on the parcel is dealt with. He feels that the current management plan is “ridiculous.” On part of the parcel, a year’s growth should be allowed, on another part, two years’ growth should be allowed, but this year they cut it all down. Josh Haines, Jenks steward, was to manage the plan, but the Town cutting of the whole parcel happened so early that Josh didn’t have time to talk with the Town. Josh had wanted to save the “real lush” blackberry patch and some areas for multi-year growth. Perhaps there should be small signs or fencing to preserve the blackberry patch from annual cutting.
- Arboretum: Joe H had a workday at the Arboretum to finish removing old bog boardwalk. No one else showed up. Joe pulled two 16-ft long logs almost all the way out of the bog. He will cut them up to remove them.
- Grassy Pond: Bob wants to take down a leaner that’s been up a long, long time.
- Nagog Hill: If Elan is done using the brush cutter, he should return it. Bruce will send Elan a note on this. The LSC should make sure that someone will commit to maintaining the recently-clear stone wall.
- Camp Acton: Bruce met with tree people today about the trees (3 for sure, 2 maybe) to be taken down for the handicapped-accessible campsite. (May want to only prune one of them instead of taking it down.) He is working on getting a Community Preservation Act grant to do some work including levelling and grading the campsite area, putting down a wood surface, pruning some trees that are “widow makers,” and probably putting up camping platforms.
- Other: Bettina described Friday, Saturday, and Sunday workdays one weekend at the Assabet River trail that included 4, 4, and 6 people, respectively.
- Joe W pointed out that parcels under consideration by the Acton Dog Park Committee (ADPC) for a Dog Park include Great Hill. The ADPC recently asked by email whether the LSC would like to host a member of the ADPC to “give a short presentation and lead a short discussion about possible (LSC) connection/involvement/support” with the work of the ADPC. A majority of the LSC felt that the work of the ADPC is outside the scope of the LSC and if anyone is interested in the ADPC, s/he can find out individually.
- Joe H pointed out that trail names have been added to trail maps, e.g., the Billings, Wildflower, and Orchard Trails at the Arboretum.

Meadow mowing

The LSC is having a “workshop” at Wetherbee next Saturday (meet at 9 a.m.) that will include Joe H (who will bring the field mower), John Watlington, and Wetherbee steward Todd Tsarkiris. In addition to any mowing, the crabapple trees will be pruned (a “good class” for any interested land stewards). There should also be a weed wrench to pull up little oak trees.

Brainstorming WildAware stories

Let Paula know if you have any idea(s).

November 21 agenda

Vote on whether to allow blue cutoff trail at Heath Hen Meadow North.

Send any other items to Joe W.

Evaluate meeting

Good work getting it done early.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 P.M.

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