

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 20, 2018, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

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

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Sherman Smith

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison)

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:06 P.M. Bettina brought chocolate covered animal crackers

Review and approval of January minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously.

Equipment Storage Shed, Location, Funding

Several possible locations have been presented to Tom Tidman, including Morrison Farm, “behind” a cemetery, and near the Public Safety Facility. There has been no decision yet, although Morrison Farm rose to the top, given that a shed could be a “tagalong project” to the irrigation project that will be happening there. Tom will ask for end-of-FY (06/30) funding. On June 30, we should have some idea of whether there will be money for a shed. \$ are needed over and above any CPA funding. Bettina told of her Arboretum shed experiences.

Online Maps — “Acton Trails Map” release to public — When? What needs to be done yet. How to integrate maps into the website? New trails and other features

One of Jim’s goals is to know when we are ready to integrate the online maps (actontrails.org/map) with the Acton Trails website. Jim used a projector to show new features of the online maps. He demonstrated the four controls at the top of the map. 1) The top right control lists the 19 sites presently under LSC stewardship. 2) The layer control shows the Bay Circuit Trail overlaid on the map. It also accesses an aerial view of the community. One can see individual trees. This control can be used for other things as well. 3) Zoom out. 4) Zoom in. Three trail areas have been added, 1) the trails north of NARA, 2) the trails at the High School, and 3) the trails at the Stow line. Also, private trails can be marked “private,” and they disappear from the map.

Jim would like to assemble a group of people who might be interested in getting together for a couple hours and address some questions such use of coloring, color coding, how to show interplay among wetlands, meadows, and woods, and different ownerships of the land. (Bettina and Sherm would be interested in helping with the use of color.)

What about a “print view”? Don’t have that yet. Would like to explore how to make this work. You can print screens. You can print using computer technology. Pdf printable maps will continue to be available from the website. A discussion on printing ensued.

About integrating the online maps with the Acton Trails website: For a specified parcel on the online map, look at the upper left corner of the screen. The parcel name is shown along with an “i” for

“information” symbol. Click on that symbol and the screen will open on that parcel’s site on the web. Conversely, the website page for a parcel presently shows a low-resolution 15-year-old photograph. Replace the photo with a static map of the parcel. Click on that map and be taken to the interactive map.

Also, an easy way to go from an online map to the Acton Trails website is to click on “Acton Trails” in the upper left corner of the online map. Jim has a notion on how to go from the online map to a parcel write-up. There eventually will be a “Take me to my current location” button. Interactions with cell phones needs to be improved yet. In particular, it would be good to have a “you are here” locator. Joe H has added all the parking “P” locations. Not all kiosks are marked yet.

The pdf maps would stay with the website. They have certain aesthetic qualities. The online maps are more accurate.

Question for the LSC: Is this (current state of the online maps) ready enough for prime time? Can we make it go back and forth with the website and keep working on it at the same time? Jim also asked for other thoughts on things yet to do, and how to do connections.

Bruce would like to see some more fully-scoped debugging before going live, especially making it easy to integrate with the phone.

QR codes for the new maps: The mapping team will print and test them and give them to Bettina. These codes would be different from the current QR codes. (The current QR codes at kiosks are in various shapes, including the laminating. Stewards should check the codes on their kiosks. Bettina has a better technique now for making codes for kiosks.)

Update — Wright Hill-Guggins Brook easement trail

Jim reports that there is nothing to share yet. Feedback is still being collected from various groups, and the easement info has to go to a lawyer.

Update — Blazing at Morrison Farm

Joe H sent an email on this to Andrea Ristine, Acton’s Municipal Properties Superintendent. No response yet.

Update — Heath Hen Meadow trail issues; Paula’s thinking

1. Whether to change the yellow/blue trails arrangement at the south end: To Paula, current yellow trail works fine, so why change it?
2. Whether to change the “hook” at the end of the blue trail to Winter Island to a straight path, or make a loop there: Paula: It would be nice to cut that off; i.e., make it straight. (Joe H has blazed a straight path, as used by all skiers and snowshoers, with orange tape.)
3. Improve the end of the yellow trail at Billings Street: Paula hopes to have a conversation with the property owner and has tried to get in touch. Next, Paula and Bettina will write a letter to the property owner about making a small change to the trail, although right now it is not clear whether the yellow trail is on private property or whether the change would be on private property. Caution, however: The LSC has never had any issues with the previous owner or the current owner, so why open a can of worms?

Update — Other parcels

- Camp Acton: Bruce needs more boards to rebuild a bench. Bettina knows of his needs.

– Pratts Brook: Some boardwalks are deteriorating and Sherm could use some wood for fixing them. He needs four to six 2x6s for boardwalk planking. Sherm should measure for what he needs and get the information to Bettina.

– Nagog Hill: Ticks are active. There's a hunting tree stand on the Groener land. There may be illegal hunting going on. The 5-ft-tall sign that directs people to Hazelnut Street has been vandalized ("Hazel" has been crossed out). Bettina wants to change the sign to "Skyline Drive" anyway. A discussion on heights of signs ensued. Concord has done the surveying and the boundary at Nagog Hill has been established. Acton could now relocate the portion of the yellow trail that parallels Nagog Pond back onto Acton CL. Relocating would eliminate the rock stream crossing. If the LSC would think that this is an improvement, it could be done. Bettina suggests that the LSC let the Board of Selectmen work this out. Has Concord taken down the "Private Property" signs? There's one along the boardwalk. Peggy Liversidge has blazed the new trail from the Skyline Drive parking. Nagog Hill needs a new steward. Steward Elan Riesman got married and turned in all his tools to Bob G.

The need for a new Nagog Hill sign across from the Grassy Pond parking generated more discussion on signs. Bettina has an extra sign that could go there. Per Bob G, the CL signs should be made wider (top to bottom), with a 1.5 in. clearance at both top and bottom. This would allow mounting of the signs without interfering with the lettering, something that can't be avoided with current signs. (Discussion.) Joe H pointed out that all these signs are made out of quick-rotting wood. Why not make them out of pressure-treated wood? Or put on a base coat first. (Discussion.)

Bob G: What is the Committee's feeling about getting parking lots paved? If not paved, they need grading in the spring. As they are now, snow plows dig them up and they don't get re-graded. Grassy Pond needs to be graded and graveled; the nearby Nagog Hill parking also. (Discussion.) As it is now, re-grading is always near the bottom of the Town's priority list. The Committee should bring this up with Tom Tidman.

An e-note from Wright Hill Steward Jim Salem prompted a discussion on blazing. To allow Peg Liversidge to retire from this task, the LSC needs a skilled, meticulous person (or persons) — not any old blazer — who can please the LSC "experts." Jim Salem could try to do some recruiting. One possibility would be an e-mail to the Volunteer list. Peg would like to have a transition period to help out. "Blazing Guidelines" are in print. Joe H would like to know the process for changing LSC Guidelines. For blazing, he would like to change from oil-based paint to latex paint, and list paint colors. (Discussion on colors.) The blazer gets supplies through Bettina.

New Business

– Acton-Boxborough Senior Community Service Day is Friday, May 4, 2018, 9 am to noon. Project proposals are due Friday, March 9. Any ideas? Jim has worked with high school students to pick garlic mustard and it's worked out well. He will write up a proposal for a garlic mustard crew. Joe H pointed out that the Billings end of the HHM trail could use some wood chips.

Brainstorming WildAware stories

WildAware and *The Beacon* have been out of sync. The Beacon wants articles shortened from 650 words to 500 words, which seems difficult to do. There is a backlog of articles: a moose encounter, daddy longlegs, woodpeckers. One idea: Do 500 words, then link to additional text on Acton Trails or the WildAware Facebook page.

March 20 agenda

Is it time to talk about mowing, or would this be timelier at the April meeting? Incidentally, Joe H tried to move the mower. The place to where he wanted to move it was occupied with previous-generation mowers.

Evaluate meeting

Not having as many agenda items as in some previous meetings is appreciated. It matches the LSC style — wandering off topic — better.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 20, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.