

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 18, 2018, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bob Farra, Bob Guba, Joe Holmes (Chair), Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Zanna Gruber, Jim Snyder-Grant

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison), Jon Campbell (new Acton resident), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President)

Joe H called the meeting to order at 7:08 P.M.

Review and approval of August minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously.

Dog Park Committee presentation

No representative of the Acton Dog Park Committee (ADPC) was present. Towards the end of this meeting, Joe W gave a brief description of the sites the ADPC is considering.

LSC membership

New regular members are on the next Board of Selectmen agenda. There is no new steward yet for the Wills Hole/Town Forest parcel.

Discovery Museum mini-trail

The mini-trail in Great Hill would be a very short loop that is wheelchair and stroller accessible. There would be an accessible ramp to get down to the trailhead from the Museum property. It would be “after” the stone wall but in a dry part of the parcel. The trail could possibly be a boardwalk, or made of material like that being used for the new accessible trail at Ice House Pond. Tom Tidman would have to flag it, do measurements, and determine any wetlands issues. The opinion and approval of the LSC would be sought for anything used on the trail.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that the Discovery Museum proceed with its planning of the mini-trail and share with the LSC the plans as they are developed.

Acton Forum article input

Per Jim, the Acton Forum is an “online presence that is rebooting.” It asked Jim to say something for it about the LSC. Jim will send to the Committee the general article about the LSC and Town Conservation Land that he sent to the Forum, and will also send out what he gets back from the Forum. The LSC will be able to change things before anything goes online.

Acton TV YouTube video

Acton TV needs an LSC representative to present LSC information in a video. Joe H and Zanna will do

it together. Bettina could help prepare salient information. Perhaps the Acton Forum article (see preceding item) could be used for a script.

Town website: LSC information, link

Clicking on “Land Stewardship Committee” on the Town website takes one off the Town site and onto the Acton Trails website. Clicking on any other committee on the Town site takes one to another page on the Town site, which includes a link to that committee’s membership, something not available on the Acton Trails site. Jim is sure that the Town’s Information Technology (IT) Department can make an LSC page on the Town site happen. Jim went over a draft of information to share with IT that he and Bruce Rachman had discussed. Jim will send it to Bettina who will take it to IT. LSC comments on what Jim will submit:

- There should be links to the Conservation Commission; to the Acton Trails website; to the YouTube video (see previous item).
- There should be an “Overview” like there is for the Conservation Commission — a description of what the LSC does. (Jim will add this.)
- There should be a new name for “Resources,” since there is only one link.

Acton Trails website: Who is Webmaster? How to change website?

Jim summarized his and Bruce Rachman’s review of the site:

- There should be a person, or persons, in charge of the website who would review proposed changes and make the changes. Jim would work with the person(s) but he does not want to be Webmaster.
- How are changes made? A couple years ago, individual stewards were provided passwords and instructions on how to change information on their parcels. Four or five stewards have done this. Changes to non-parcel pages would be made by the Webmaster. Karen Mackin, a volunteer, can help edit jpeg files and remake pdf files. However, there are lots of changes needed, so it may not be useful to do it this way. Should the pdf maps be updated or should webmap fixes wait until the next generation of maps? Some red boardwalks should be blue (Wills Hole, Grassy Pond). Also, printing out of the new maps does not work well yet.
- Who can suggest changes? Anyone.
- How are changes reviewed? A change is made. The LSC is notified of the change. Concerns come forward to the Webmaster who will help work things out if necessary. The Webmaster can bring any issues to a monthly meeting of the LSC.

If the above process is what LSC members feel is okay, the LSC can make it formal next month.

In the meantime, Bob G will take on a limited task of Webmaster to, at least, fix all links with Jim’s help.

Acton Trails website: map discussion

The four North Acton CLs (Camp Acton, Robbins Mill, Spring Hill, Nashoba Brook) should link to both Tom Tidman’s original pdf maps and the DeLorme “North Acton Trails” pdf map made by Bruce Rachman. Tom has made a hand-drawn North Acton Trails map (that Bob F has been putting into the Robbins Mill map boxes). Should Tom’s map replace Bruce’s DeLorme map? Jim would like to make a new North Acton Trails map. Why can’t the Town’s IT department be making the Acton CL maps? Jim: “That’s a good idea. We’ll work on it.” Why doesn’t IT use “ARCgis” map-making software (produced by ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute)) as used by the Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Carlisle Trails Committee? At least one LSC member feels this would be better than what is currently used.

Laurie reviewed the circuitous (to see the sights) path of the Bay Circuit Trail through Nashoba Brook/Spring Hill CLs and the desire to do something about the wet stretch on Spring Hill between the two red trails.

John explained his curiosity about an access trail to Great Hill from Francine Road.

Should the LSC eliminate the diagonal trail through the northwest meadow at the top of Wright Hill? Jim reviewed the history of the trail.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to eliminate the diagonal trail from LSC maps.

Also, the trail at the northwest meadow completely encircles the meadow. Should the LSC eliminate part of it (e.g., on the north and east sides)? This part of the trail is maintained by the abutting landowner, Leo Fochtman and it allows a hiker to go around the meadow either clockwise or anticlockwise. There is no need to eliminate it. (Per Jim: A complete yellow-trail loop for Wright Hill has been defined, but has not yet been blazed. Perhaps the LSC would like to include the southern meadow in this loop.)

The current Wright Hill map also shows one odd little trail done by Jim to help with maintenance. Per Jim, mowing it with Leo's mower is a convenience, but it doesn't need to show as part of the trail system. Jim will remove it from the trails map.

Also, re Wright Hill: There is no "Wright Hill" link on the Acton Trails site. No maps have been printed yet, and there are no map boxes at Wright Hill. Perhaps parking should show on a Wright Hill map before any can be printed. Jim will be writing a description of the Wright Hill CL.

Acton Trails website: How to change text, e.g., Stoneymeade

Susan described the walk that the ACT will be sponsoring on October 14 to show off the "amazing" 32 acres of privately-owned fields (including one of the three largest agricultural fields in Acton) adjacent to Stoneymeade. The fields are all in Acton and Susan would like the Stoneymeade description on the Acton Trails site to correctly represent this. Bettina will help Susan work up some acceptable wording and they will send it to the text-updating Webmaster Bob G. (Note discussion above on website text changes.)

Acton Trails website: How to add links, e.g., LSC Membership List, Maintenance Tasks (and update), Invasives file, You Tube link, . . .

– Yes to linking to the LSC membership list from the Acton Trials website.

Digression: Not all current members have been sworn in by the Town Clerk. Question for Janet: How can Committee members with day jobs get to see the Clerk if the Clerk is available at no time other than 9-5 on weekdays? Janet will ask the Town Manager about having additional Clerk hours in the evening to help get people sworn in. If Bettina will get a list of non-sworn-in members to Joe H, he will remind them.

– Yes to linking to the LSC invasives file.

– Yes to what stewards do. (This could also go on the Town LSC site under "Resources".)

– How about a link to a list of Town meadows? No, that would be an internal document for the members.

– How about a link to a meadow-mowing schedule?

Digression: Bob G had updated the 2009 meadow-mowing document. Bettina had provided Joe H with a 2017 schedule. Joe H observed that the Canoe Launch is now mowable. He will continue mowing it

as a meadow, especially since the Town has a new mower.

– Where to keep LSC working documents would be topic for a future (next?) meeting. The LSC has talked about this before, but no conclusions. Maintenance tasks would fall into this category.

Parcel Business: Wright Hill-Guggins Brook trail easement

Jim has tried an email exchange with Town Counsel but hasn't heard back yet. He will send a follow-up note.

Parcel Business: Nashoba Brook bridges

Bettina is working on ordering stuff for the truss bridge at Wheeler Lane.

Laurie provided a cost estimate for an 80-ft suspension bridge at the pencil factory: \$1200 for materials only, for 40 ft of bridge, so say about \$2500 for materials for 80 ft. Others said that \$2500 is low. Bob F (an engineer) would like to better understand the bridge requirements. The bridge is to span the broken dam at the pencil factory. Anchoring it to the dam abutments would work. Laurie has a book with details. He will share that with Bob. While the nearby Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is ADA compliant, the suspension bridge wouldn't be, although some say compliance is possible. Laurie will look into this.

Parcel Business: Nagog Hill and Heath Hen Meadow (HHM)

Per John, there is boardwalk damage. John has told Dale Chayes about this. John has a list of the wood needed that he will share with Bettina. On the boardwalk on "the far side of the meadow," one of the main supports has rotted through. John will patch what's there. Re the stone wall beside the meadow, everything that the LSC had cleared is coming back. There needs to be meadow clearing like that which was done at the Arboretum.

Per Joe H, there are more meadows that need clearing before the mower is used. Workdays are needed for this. Zanna can do a workdate for HHM. Bettina will help Zanna set up a workdate. Piles of (natural) materials cleared from meadows should be left to biodegrade in adjacent woods, not in the meadows.

Per Zanna, Yuta Aoki is a Boy Scout who will be building the HHM kiosk at the back-of-the-cemetery entrance. Bettina has signs for the Central Street entrance. Bettina, Jim, and Zanna will meet to integrate two HHM descriptions into one piece for the whole parcel in time for next month's meeting.

Per Zanna, there is interest among people from Stow in making a connection of HHM with Stow CL. At present, there is a winter trail. A year-round trail would require building a lot of boardwalk. Per Joe H, a HHM trail to Stow Street would be possible.

Parcel Business: Other parcels

Per Bettina: Tom Tidman says that the LSC can continue cutting the trail through the new addition to Grassy Pond (along Newtown Road), but when? Caution should be shown for the numerous Native American stone piles that are on the parcel. Bob G has reviewed the trail, noting that Tom has removed rocks from a stone wall to allow passage, and suggests that continued cutting wait until the leaves leave the trees. Bettina suggests the end of October. Per Bob, the route must be approved by at least three LSC members.

Bob G explained how to recognize problems at entrances to CLs.

Scoutland update

Janet, Bettina, and Tom have discussed this and did some research. Scoutland Trustee Bill Klauer believes that the other Trustee, Bob Wetherbee, should be present for any discussion about Scoutland.

New Business

None

October agenda

Tennis balls sign at Great Hill — John

Evaluate meeting

Good meeting. Joe H's willingness to use the gavel was appreciated.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, October 16, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.