

**Acton  
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)  
Tuesday, October 16, 2018, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.**

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Zanna Gruber, Bob Guba, Joe Holmes (Chair), Bruce Rachman (Vice Chair), Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Sherman Smith, Jim Snyder-Grant

Others: Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Tom Gillispie (Acton Dog Park Committee Vice Chair), Sandra Mika (South Acton Neighborhood Association (SANA)), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President), Michaela Moran (SANA), Barbara Morse (SANA), Alissa Nicol (SANA)

Joe H called the meeting to order at 7:03:07 P.M.

Review and approval of September minutes

A September minutes draft was not ready. Review and approval will have to wait until the October meeting.

LSC membership: New voting members

Dale Chayes and Zanna have been approved as Regular (voting) members. Zanna has been sworn in. Are all Associate members sworn in? Bettina thinks so.

Jim made a general observation on the purview of LSC authority: The LSC has no authority. It is advisory. It has no authority to make decisions, but it does have authorization to do things on land officially designated as Conservation Land (CL).

Acton Dog Park Committee (ADPC) presentation

Tom apologized for missing the previous meeting for which he had a spot on the agenda. Tom gave a general overview of the progress to date of the ADPC, including identifying the six sites that the ADPC still is considering, as well as desirable site options. Discussion points:

- What is the ADPC asking of the LSC? Its support.
- The Dog Park would be on ~2 acres of public land, but not CL. The ADPC does not consider CL as an option.
- The possible site behind Trader Joe's may be CL. Tom will check on this.
- The Walker property on Main Street is high on the site list. A dog park would be good use of that land and it would have a central location, but traffic would be a concern.
- Great Hill (GH) is probably second on the list. The land being considered at GH is listed in Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) 2014-2021 Table 5.C.2 as Article 97 land, which would probably prevent it being used for a dog park. However, that is probably a mistake in the OSRP. Once the protection status for the 9 pieces of GH are cleared up, the OSRP database needs to be revised.
- The soccer people seem to have given up on their use of GH.

- There is no plan to fence in the GH pond. As to access of water, in general, there has to be potable water available at the dog park.

Current users of GH (~ at least half of them, possibly as great as 80% of them) seem to be from lots of places other than Acton. They seem to be strongly opinionated on the location of a dog park. Has the ADPC heard their opinions on the possibility of a dog park at GH? There has not been a whole lot done to alert people from outside of town. Per Tom, hearing that the ADPC should perhaps reach out to these folks is an example of why the ADPC is coming to meetings of other Town groups. In general, the ADPC welcomes the concerns of any of the public at its meetings.

- Tom: The Morrison Farm parcel is probably lower on the list.
- The Morrison Farm land being considered is “wet meadow” (not wetlands).
- Re dog park access: Most dog parks that receive significant tax-based funding post signs that say use is restricted, but there is no enforcement. For dog parks that are self-funded, anyone can donate and use is not restricted.
- Possible big problem that a dog park might encounter would be on Town Meeting floor. There probably would be a lot of people that would protest the building of a facility that could be freely used by non-residents.
- On dog parks in general, the LSC would become less neutral if such a facility would interfere with Acton’s current trail system. For example, there could be strong objection from the LSC if the dog park would use the Quarry Road site because a major trail goes through that parcel.
- Some would object to any site that would require large-scale tree clearing.

#### Great Hill 40B status — South Acton Neighborhood Association (SANA)

Barbara, a Piper Road resident, presented information on the 40B proposal that its opponents (including SANA) believe would be an intrusion on the GH CL and the rest of the neighborhood, as well as creating other undesirable situations. It is an “unfriendly” 40B, so final approval for the project skips over the Acton Community Housing Commission and the Town and goes directly to the State (Mass Housing). The plan will be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen (BoS) on 11/05 with any public comment due to the Town by 10/29. Discussion points:

- What is SANA asking of the LSC? Words of encouragement and support for trying to modify or stop the project.
- If this project would be stopped, SANA is hopeful at doing something that would help the owner deal with the future of this parcel.
- If committee members would have feelings as private citizens, let the BoS know of them.
- There currently is a heavily-used trail through the property. If the development would happen, the developers are offering possible easements through the property that would allow passage through the property.
- There may be some Native American remnants on (or near) the parcel that could be of interest. This should be studied before development.
- No one wants dense development near their house.
- Dense development near a train station can be awesome.

- This parcel is filled with invasives, and is not an area that seems to have any particular plants or trees of special interests.
- Is there room for a fire truck to turn around within the project? Not in the current plan.

Does the LSC have an official opinion on this? Bruce and Bob: The Committee should be against the project. The contents of any motion have to be within the jurisdiction of the LSC.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that Bruce, with help from someone else from the Committee, would draft such a message to the BoS. The message would be reviewed by Joe H, and then go to the BoS.

#### Acton Trails website

Jim mailed to the committee a day or so ago a process for making changes. The process would be leaning on the side of letting changes happen and then the committee could share any concerns. Bob will make changes to text. Bruce or Jim can provide assistance as needed. In general, Bruce will maintain the website. Jim is happy to be webmaster for theme changes, and any “weird” changes — for a couple months. It is okay with the Committee to proceed this way.

Jim Salem had suggested that Jim put out the Committee’s WordPress needs to the volunteer list. This too is okay with the Committee.

Jim had also sent out an email describing recent changes to the site’s front page. The Committee had no questions or concerns.

#### LSC page on Town website

Jim reviewed what has happened. See <https://www.acton-ma.gov/633/Land-Stewardship-Committee>.

The National Council on Aging was interested in having a link on the site (apparently to some NCOA information on “how great it is to volunteer). Joe H will respond (“no”) to, or ignore, this request.

#### New shed: Status update and access to

- The shed needs shelves.
- There is an electrical box, lights, and plugs, and a water tank, but no power yet.
- There is a hole in a wall. There is plastic over the insulation inside. We might want to sheet rock it.

Joe H sent an email to the volunteer list for help with a patch job.

- There is a key in a key box.
- Why not use a code pad on the door? No, they can be mechanically difficult.
- A back door to the shed is not needed. Put in some studs and eliminate it.
- Presently, the new mower is in the shed. The trailer sits outside, next to the shed. The trailer has two lights out.
- Put into the shed a notebook for users to record name, date, and use. Right now, the mower’s oil should be changed soon.
- There should be a scraper in the shed to clean out under the mower after use. A scraper is not needed if the underside is hosed out. Bettina will get a scraper. When scraping, be careful that the mower doesn’t come down on you.
- Know that the gas shutoff is underneath the mower. You always want the carburetor dry. If a user is done with the mower, s/he should shut off the gas and run the carburetor dry.
- Bettina will get a 5-gallon fuel can and a funnel to store in the shed. The fuel can can be filled at the Kennedy Building in Woodlawn Cemetery. Any fueling of the mower should be done outside the shed.

- The shed will eventually store all the LSC tools that Bob has.

#### Scout/ABRHS Senior projects

See “Parcel Business” items below.

#### Parcel Business: Wright Hill-G. Brook trail easement

Nothing to report. Information remains with Town Counsel.

#### Parcel Business: Heath Hen Meadow (HHM) bridge update

The LSC has heard nothing from the Acton scout who was given permission to work on the bridge as an Eagle Scout project, beginning this fall. Zanna and Bettina have tried unsuccessfully to check with the scout recently. There have been other expressions of interest in fixing the bridge, but the Committee has had to put them off. Can the LSC fix the bridge this fall or winter? Must it be fixed at low water? (Currently the water is high.) Per Bruce (shortly after announcing a Boston Red Sox grand slam in its playoff game with Houston), a fix should have been done by now. It has to be done before winter. Bruce, Joe H, and Bettina expressed willingness to repair the bridge now (and possibly jack it up next summer). A discussion followed on what it would take to fix the bridge. Bruce will visit the site to have another look at it.

Bettina has a couple other scouts looking for Eagle Scout projects. Any parcels need boardwalks?

#### Parcel Business: Nashoba Brook bridge(s) update

The lumber arrived, was cut to the correct dimensions, glued, and nailed. The first truss is up on sawhorses. Holes have been drilled in the buttress support. To continue now, hardware is needed from the Town. Once Bob gets to work on a project like this, it is difficult for others to keep up with him!

#### Parcel Business: Camp Acton boardwalks

The accessible campsite needs to be excavated and otherwise prepped first, and then will need a whole bunch of boardwalks. The Camp Acton kiosk needs repair too. There are Scout and high school senior projects that could be done at Camp Acton. In fact, a couple of high school seniors have expressed interest in building boardwalks.

#### Parcel Business: Kiosk update

The HHM kiosk is “to do” yet. All its materials are here. Completed kiosks include ones at Nagog Hill (Skyline Drive) and the Arboretum (bog entrance). Question: When will kiosks get QR codes?

#### Other parcel information

- The Arboretum lawnmower has been fixed.
- Greg Sutherland, on the volunteer list, has contacted the LSC for projects to work on. Gary Kilpatrick has used Greg at Grassy Pond. If anyone knows of a project that needs volunteer help, touch base with Greg.
- At the 11 Milldam Road entrance to Nashoba Brook CL, there is a lot of dumping going on outside the no dumping line. Dumping is also occurring on the other Milldam Road corridor to the yellow trail. Bob suggests that the Town use a big rock to prevent any vehicle from backing into the woods. Bettina has checked the situation at 11 Milldam, took pictures, and will let Tom Tidman know.
- The Town did not mow close to the big rock in the Nashoba Brook meadow at Wheeler Lane. Spearmint is profuse around the rock.

New Business

Joe H will be recording the ~5-minute “Land Stewardship Committee Spotlight” at the Acton TV studio tomorrow. It can be done in front of a screen that will allow for background images.

November 20 agenda

No suggestions.

Evaluate meeting

Great meeting!

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, November 20, at 7 p.m.,pm in Room 9.