

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Virtual Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 20, 2021, Virtual Meeting, 7 P.M.

Zoom Participants/Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: **Dale Chayes, Bob Farra, Zanna Gruber** (Chair), **Joe Holmes, Aaron Moore, Bruce Rachman, Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington** (Vice-Chair), **Joe Will** (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Jon Campbell, Josh Haines, Everett Kenerson, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, **Mel Lima**, Jim Salem, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT President), **Jim Snyder-Grant** (Acton Select Board Member)

Opening

Zanna opened the meeting at 7:01 p.m. with 8 voting members, Bob, Zanna, Joe H, Aaron, Bruce, Laurie, John, and Joe W, present. Zanna read the script provided by the Town for remotely-conducted open meetings.

Regular Business

Review and approval of March 16 minutes

Per Bob: In the New/Special Business “NIMBY” item, use the correct name, “Marshall Crossing Condominium Trust”. With that correction, approval of the minutes was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call.

Citizens’ concerns

None

New/Special Business

“Welcome to the Acton Land Stewardship Committee” draft

Now titled “Welcome to the Acton Land Stewardship Committee”, Bettina sent this draft of a guide for Acton’s Land Stewards to the LSC. She has received comments only from John. Jim Salem and others have not yet read it but plan to. Comments:

- An excellent job!
- Section IV. 1. B refers to Conservation Land (CL) that has Bay Circuit Trail trail markers. Robbins Mill should be included and Camp Acton should be deleted.
- Bettina has been using it, will continue to use it, and will consider any edits that anyone wants to send.

Invasives

John and Jim shared slides that can be found at <https://bit.ly/3sDRrMy> as shown on the title Slide 1, “Invasive Plants in Acton”. Slides 2, 3, and 4 are shown below. Remaining slides will be used in future meetings.

Slide 2

What is an invasive plant ?

It is a non-native plant which flourishes due to advantages over native plants (earlier budding, no natural predators, etc.), to the point of eliminating the native plants and creating monocultures.

There are “non-native” plants which are not invasive in our area (i.e. Vinca, Pachysandra, Japanese Snowball).

And there are many invasive plant species which aren’t commonly found in Acton.

A few years ago, an LSC subcommittee identified 8 species which we considered critical for removal and education efforts. There are 2 more you need to know.

See <https://actoninvasives.org/> for the list and additional resources

John provided the above information on invasive plants. Then he presented Slide 3:

As a Land Steward, you should recognize and remove:

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Asian Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)

Bush Honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*)

Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)

Winged Euonymus (*Euonymus Alatus*)

Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) (Wetherbee, Pratt’s Brook, Great Hill, Wills Hole)

Mile a Minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*) (Not seen yet in Acton)

All stewards should be familiar with and able to work against the first six. Norway maples and winged euonymus are more scarce. Japanese knotweed requires elimination by professionals, and mile a minute, although not yet seen around here, scares us. Jim then shared information on garlic mustard using Slide 4:

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

A non-woody plant, with a two year maturity: it doesn't produce seed until its second year.

Spreads by seed, and regrows from root fragments

Repeated pulling of second year plants (shown) required.

Remove pulled plants --- do not compost

See <https://bit.ly/2QiPFU6> for Jim's list of Garlic Mustard in conservation areas



Check: Garlic smell, S-shaped root stem

Per Jim, stewards and others have been working about 11 years now removing garlic mustard from Acton CLs. Reasons for focusing on it are 1) it is easy to remove and 2) it does real harm for reasons described by Jim. It can also be eaten, as in salads. From this meeting, Jim would like to 1) verify who might be interested in removing garlic mustard from any CL, 2) introduce LSC members to his database that shows garlic mustard locations in Acton and 3) learn how to identify volunteers different from those who have already worked with him. Great Hill and the Arboretum have the largest and most complex concentrations of garlic mustard. Spring Hill seems to have none, but otherwise it's present on the other parcels.

Comments:

- What are best times of year to be attacking garlic mustard? New growth is very attackable now. If you wait a few more weeks, one of the stalks will become a strong central stalk which makes pulling it out of the ground easy. Jim thinks of May as prime time. Eventually in June after the flowers drop off and the seed pods start developing, you have to be very careful. Jim and John discussed pulling the plant out at its roots. Doing so can be effective, but re-rooting is also possible. Also, disturbing the soil could make it easier for any seeds in the soil to grow. In any case, it is a good idea to bag what you remove and put the bag into your regular trash. Do not put it into any compost.
- Should we do an email to the LSC volunteer list, asking for volunteers? That's a great idea. Jim should speak to Bettina offline and she and Joe H will see that Jim gets the volunteer list.
- What about weed whacking garlic mustard? Unless you pull the roots, it will come back the following year with more vengeance. If you have a huge, monocultural infestation and you whack two or three times a year, weed whacking can be somewhat effective. And it is better than not picking at all. If the infestation site is not monocultural, you don't want to whack the natives.

CPC update

The CPC meets tomorrow night to continue deliberations. It seems to agree initially on funding the Nashoba Brook bridge at the Pencil Factory for \$40K for its first of two years, and this should be a "sure thing". Andy Magee, Chair of the Acton Open Space Committee, presented the possibility of using \$1.2M

from the Open Space set-aside fund — the greatest amount requested to date from this fund — to purchase an Agricultural Restriction on Stonefield Farm when the farm is bought by the Boston Area Gleaners. Joe W showed maps of the 51-acre farm in South Acton that has 26 acres being farmed and 25 acres in a natural state, and extends from Jones Field to the Maynard line and abuts the Assabet River Rail Trail. The Open Space funds would not be part of CPC grants for this year, but the CPC still would have to approve this use of CPA funds (as an agenda item at a future meeting). Then this funding would have to also be approved by the Select Board and by Town Meeting as a warrant article. As for funding this year, Open Space has requested \$400K, but it could go to \$500K as the CPC seems quite supportive of what Open Space does for the Town. Otherwise, the only 2021 CPA requests that remain to be decided are funding for Gardner Field and the Dog Park.

Additional Regular Business

Parcel issues

- Heath Hen Meadow Bridge

Thank you to Dale for cutting the trees that have been tipping part of the boardwalk. Re the Recreational Trails grant that was applied for to replace the bridge, Bettina thought that a decision would be shared in April but that won't happen until June.

- Bulette/Town Forest

Andy Gatesman, Bulette/Town Forest Steward, is moving to Boxborough and has resigned from the LSC. Andy is one of the original Land Stewards and was on the LSC for over 20 years. Huge thanks from the LSC for all Andy has done. Now a replacement is needed. Bettina will post a notice on the parcel kiosk and LSC members can talk up the parcel, particularly with folks who may live in the neighborhood. This comes at a time that Acton is getting closer to linking the Anderson parcel to the Town Forest. The litigation involving the abutting development apparently has concluded. Susan is expecting to hear from Tom Tidman on this so she can get things rolling on a Conservation Restriction, and related issues. Also, the developer is expected to build a four-spot parking area along Arlington Street, and a boardwalk that will allow residents of the development to cross some wetlands and access the parcel's trails. Joe H noted that there have been folks picking up trash on the Anderson parcel.

- Assabet River Blue and Green Trail

Joe H, Tom Tidman, and Bettina met at the proposed parking area off of Parker St. Potential other uses for that area by the Town are apparently no longer being considered, so development of the parking could proceed. Per Joe, the area needs a little bit of grading and the removal of about 10 six-inch trees and one big oak.

- Camp Acton

There was a torching at Camp Acton that destroyed one of the picnic tables and damaged another. What can be done about this (and trash dumping that regularly occurs)? The Town has a camera with lock that could be put there. But someone would have to monitor this. On the other hand, there are cell-phone based cameras (that can be accessed remotely) and, per Dale, cell phone coverage at Camp Acton is very good. A preliminary task, however, would be to engage the Acton Police on this. There is no point at having a camera unless it is known that the police would follow through if a camera would produce some reasonable evidence. Mel has already done some research on this and will let Bettina know of his findings. Bettina will also talk with Matthew Selby and Tom Tidman about this. In the meantime, John suggests that the Town move the handicapped-accessible picnic table at Great Hill to Camp Acton until a replacement could be made ready for Great Hill. Right now, the picnic table is not too useful for the handicapped at Great Hill as it is sitting in a really swampy area that would be difficult for a wheelchair. Bettina will check with Town staff on this possible move.

- Spring Hill

Joe W shared pictures of signage that Phil Keyes has posted at the Spring Hill kiosk. One references the “Trail Care” app that Phil discussed at a previous LSC meeting. Another shows the QR code for Spring Hill (also posted on all the Spring Hill “You are Here” signs).

Website issues

None.

Maps update

There were no changes to online maps from last month. There was an issue about the Trail Through Time map (re its clarity). Bettina responded to the email inquiry and is otherwise trying to resolve the issue, which has proved to be very challenging.

Next month’s (May 18) agenda

- Invasives, round 2 for 10 min
- Notify Joe W and Zanna with any other items.

(In June, there will be LSC elections. Also, remember to talk up the need for a new Steward at Bulette/Town Forest).

Evaluate meeting

Handclaps and thumbs up

Adjournment

At 7:48 pm, it was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn the meeting.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, at 7 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of March 16, 2021