

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 20, 2021, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendees (in bold)

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

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

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Terra Friedrichs** (Acton resident), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Bob Mackin** (Acton resident)

Opening

John opened the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of June 16 minutes

Approval of minutes with some Stonefield Farm adjustments submitted by Susan Mitchell-Hardt was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously.

Citizens' concerns

Terra thanked the LSC for its ongoing efforts.

New/Special Business

Beaver Solutions (Mike Callahan)

Bettina repeated the “terrible news” she had received from Mike of Beaver Deceivers LLC (and shared with the LSC on 06/30) that beaver deceivers likely wouldn’t work at Grassy Pond and Morrison Farm. At Grassy Pond, the water behind the beaver dam near Newtown Road has to be 2 ft deep to put in a pipe. It isn’t, so a deceiver won’t work there. A deceiver won’t work at Morrison Farm because of the massive watershed above the dam. Ditto for a non-LSC site on Fort Pond Brook near Kinsley Road. The general conclusion is that the Town will have to hire trappers, particularly for the Grassy Pond site where beaver-caused water levels have put two boardwalks under water, keeping people off the trails. It was suggested that the beavers be left alone at Morrison Farm where dismantling the dam or breaching the dike at the causeway could be tried. The dam could also be dismantled at Grassy Pond, but in any case, the Town should wait until more normal conditions prevail.

Invasives, Part 3

John spoke briefly on glossy buckthorn, preferring to give more information when he would have a projector available. If unfamiliar with glossy buckthorn, look it up. Then take down any glossy buckthorn plant that has berries.

Dog behavior on public lands sign

Bettina shared a “draft” version. She agreed with the suggestion that it needs a police number on it. (Pictured here is the sign after police information was added.)

It was noted that there already is a dog “warning” sign on the Morrison Farm kiosk.

Bettina will make one of these signs for the Morrison Farm kiosk and three for the Great Hill kiosks.

“Floating” stewards and other personnel concerns

- Some of our parcels are very large, and adding more stewards would be a good way to bring people onto the LSC. John described what a parcel steward would have to do “at the minimum” (walk the trails once

a month, pick up trash, call attention to problems observed, possibly to a floating steward). A floating steward would work where needed, as needed, and would keep in touch with the relevant parcel steward. It would likely be a position for someone who has been a parcel steward. There is need for more parcel stewards and new ones could release existing stewards to be floating stewards. Floating stewards would provide new stewards with someone to consult. Floating stewards could cut down on big workdays. Let’s give volunteers a pipeline to become stewards and let’s fill that pipeline. Bettina will send an email on this to the volunteer list.

- Bettina will also send out again the LSC need for a new blazer for the trails.
- Joe Holmes will be leaving the LSC. Jon Campbell would like to replace Joe as a voting steward.
- Laurie is resigning as a sawyer. Bettina knows of three individuals who are interested in becoming sawyers.
- Bettina has asked for a notice on the Acton Trails website for a steward for the Canoe Launch and the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail.

Additional Regular Business

Parcel issues (alphabetical order)

• Bulette

A Notice of Intent to build a bridge is needed for the new trail on the Anderson land.

• Canoe Launch

– With Joe H’s departure, the Canoe Launch and the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail will become one “parcel”. Bettina knows a Massachusetts State Forester who hikes the B & G Trail every day and may be interested in being a steward. Also, we should be in touch with OARS about these sites as both are river trails.

– Joe mowed the Canoe Launch a month ago and noted that a picnic table has disappeared. Terra noted the appearance of a picnic table in West Acton.

• Great Hill

Does the Town mow the trail into the Little Great Hill playing field from the boardwalk? Normally, yes, but John had to weed whack it recently.


NOTICE TO DOG OWNERS
Please prevent dogs from jumping on folks, or charging at them.
Some visitors are afraid of dogs or are unsteady on their feet.
Your assistance to leash or train your pet is much appreciated.



- For information on Acton’s Animal Control Bylaws, please visit <https://www.acton-ma.gov/156/Animal-Control>
- If you wish to report a nuisance or an incident, please call the Police Department at 978-264-9638.
- In case of emergency, please call 911.

- Heath Hen Meadow

Amanda Lewis of Mass Recreational Trails “will let you know soon” re a grant for the HHM bridge. (It didn’t happen.)

- Morrison Farm

Building of the trail alongside Ice House Pond has come to a standstill as the binder needed for the trail surface is on back order. The accessible-to-be trail is gravel for now, extending into the second wet meadow.

- Nagog Hill — Hybid Farm update

Conservation Commission representatives met with Rita, the person selling the farm, and reminded her that she had to clean up the conservation land used by Hybid before the license agreement expires in January. New owners could talk with the Cons Comm only after they actually own the farm. The Cons Comm will listen to any proposal but it has to make any decisions at open public meetings. The sense is that some Cons Comm members will not agree to any license agreement again. Rita’s Hybid was a special case.

- Nashoba Brook

Bruce Rachman has plans for boardwalk repair.

- Pacy

– A tree fell down a few weeks ago. It is still there. Bettina will email a reminder to Jason Temple, and send a note to the sawyers.

– To help clean out his house, Joe H installed two small bog bridges that have metal stringers.

- Pratts Brook stone-bridge update

– Bruce, wife, and dog repaired it. Not sure that it’s back in its original state. Is it possible to find old photos showing the original state?

– When you enter Pratts Brook from Parker Street, you’ll see that John did a beautiful job with the water bar and rock for water diversion, and with removing the honeysuckle.

– Near the Parker Street entrance, the big bridge over Tenneys Brook needs attention (telephone pole sills), as does the boardwalk by Silver Hill. Bettina will let the LSC know if she can get Eagle Scouts to do the work. Otherwise John will do it.

- Robbins Mill

The Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF) is at the stage of determining who is going to get permission to build the boardwalk(s) on the easement and/or adjusted easements over the Valentine land in North Acton. The CCF will be in touch with Tom Tidman on this.

- Wills Hole/Town Forest — NARA Pump Track

The pump track is completed and is definitely being used. There is still some debris there. One cannot see the pump track from the yellow trail. There is good buffer.

- Other

– Bettina will ask that the Town use the restorative justice program to take out the 4x4 posts used in the stockade fence on the Town-owned 53 River Street land, put the posts in the parking lot, and then somehow get the posts to the shed at Morrison Farm for future LSC use (even though 4x6s would be better).

– The MIIA (The Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association) does chainsaw safety training. Bettina will look for such training as the LSC is losing sawyers. Do sawyers have to be stewards? Yes. A sawyer could be any Town employee (as are LSC members).

– Is Stonefield Farm in our future? Not yet.

– An historical kiosk — all historical panels — will be built in the Ice House Pond parking area this Fall. The LSC might want a trail kiosk there also. It could be beside the new trail being built alongside the pond out to the Morrison Farm wet meadows.

Website issues

No issues; some volunteer postings (noted elsewhere in Minutes) needed.

Maps update

Whoever will be taking over from Joe H will need some training in programming and procedures. Joe can answer questions on how to do it. Jon Campbell could help. Also, we could ask for geeks from among the LSC volunteers. All paper maps need to be redone. The Morrison Farm map needs updating. Map work needs to involve Town employee Aaron Green as good gps maps are needed.

Other

- Instead of chopping up wood from parcels, could it be used (i.e., using Town wood for Town purposes)? Probably too many problems, but Bettina had looked into a portable sawmill. The idea would be to stack all wood in one place and then get the sawmill for one day. One problem is that pressure treated wood is needed when there is ground contact.
- Bettina is hosting a water chestnut party at Ice House Pond this Thursday, 07/22. Meet in the Ice House Pond parking lot at 1 pm. Bring your own kayak or canoe.

Next month's (August 17) agenda

- Notify Joe W and John with any items.

Adjournment

8:17 pm

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, August 17, at 7 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of June 16, 2021