

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 21, 2021, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: **Dale Chayes, Zanna Gruber** (Vice-Chair), **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), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Bob Mackin** (Acton citizen), **Bill Smith** (Acton citizen), **Scott Smyers** (Owner, Oxbow Associates, and Acton citizen), **Bob Walton** (Acton citizen), **Tom Wolf** (Acton citizen)

Opening

John opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

Regular Business

Review and approval of August 17 minutes

With small changes re John's invasives presentation, approval of the minutes was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously.

Concerns from the public

Scott was given the floor to share information about what he would be willing to do at Jenks. See "Parcel issues – Jenks" below.

New/Special Business

Committee members and auxiliary personnel

- Laurie will have two helpers at Nashoba Brook: Tom and Bob W.
- John Morris (not at this meeting) is interested in doing trail work on the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail and could help with the Canoe Launch, but he is not particularly interested in becoming a steward.
- Bob M is in the process of being approved as a steward — to be responsible for Bulette.
- Bill would help at Morrison as a "floating" steward; also a member of the blazing team.
- Jody and Todd Tsakiris would be the other members of the three-person blazing team. Jody's husband can cut trail-marking arrows, a sample of which Jody brought to this meeting.
- There is no replacement yet for Joe Holmes (Canoe Launch).
- Bob Farra has resigned as Robbins Mill steward.

On legalities: A sworn-in member of the LSC is considered a Town employee and is protected by Town insurance. There are some trainings that one must receive to join the LSC, this includes training to be a sawyer. An LSC member cannot operate any power equipment without Town permission. Presently, there are three LSC members ready to be trained as sawyers, Aaron, Jon, and Jim Salem. Hopefully training will be offered in November.

Joe pointed out that Tom Tidman, Bettina, and Fran Portante of Acton Natural Resources (NR) will be leaving Town employment, the first two at the end of June, 2022. There is good chance that the Town will be reorganizing the responsibilities of NR. If the LSC, with a vested interest in such reorganization, would have an opinion on what could be done, it could develop a proposal for the October meeting and then e-

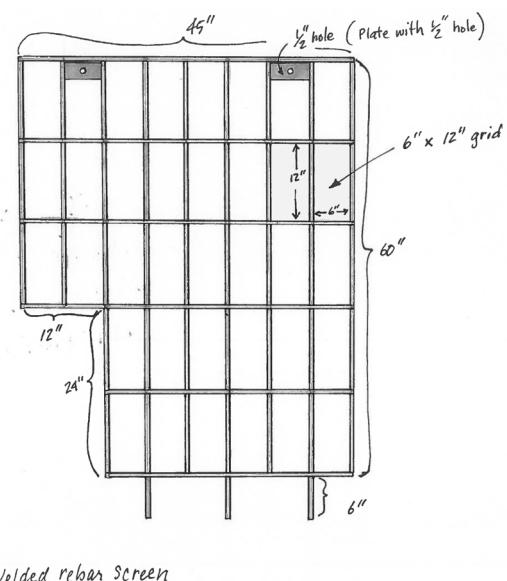
convey it to the Town Manager. Hiring and firing is the Town Manager's responsibility, but reorganization is different. This is an item to revisit and will be on the October agenda.

American Rescue Plan Act

Joe shared Town information on the Act which seeks to assist financially with issues created by Covid-19. It was noted that the pandemic caused significant increase in the use of Acton trails, possibly resulting in increased maintenance costs, including costs for repair of boardwalks and major bridges. Particularly cited were the bridge at Heath Hen Meadow (HHM), the Nashoba Brook boardwalk near the Potato Cave, and the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) gap in North Acton. The Town deadline for public comments is October 13. If either John or Laurie think it's worth pursuing, John will work on something for Nashoba Brook and Laurie on the BCT easement in North Acton.

Stream and pond safety

Bettina reviewed the drowning of a 12-year-old Labrador retriever in the culvert at Jenks (after having e-shared the information). Tom Tidman designed a (removable) metal grate to install at the upstream end of the culvert, the Highway Department is building it, and NR will install it. Bettina wants all stewards to check their parcels and let her know of any similar hazards. NR will decide on signs that may need to be posted. Bettina shared a sample. There is concern about such blocking of culverts. Such a grate could seriously impede water flow and someone would have to clean it. A discussion ensued on beaver behavior and pet/wildlife safety in such situations. It was moved, seconded, and voted 4-2 (John and Dale opposed) that the LSC supports allowing Bettina to put up warning signs near such bridges (like the bridge at Jenks).



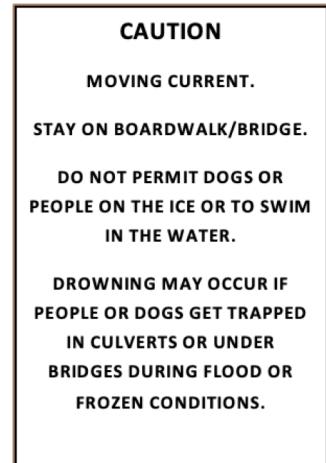
Welded rebar screen

2022 CPA proposals

The LSC will support a CPA proposal for the HHM bridge. Bettina described plans for the bridge. The price of the bridge may have gone up from \$29K to \$35K. Joe pointed out that another possible CPA proposal of interest would be the second year of funding for the Nashoba Brook bridge at the Pencil Factory site. This would be a proposal by the Acton Historical Commission (AHC) in the CPA historical category. AHC secured a \$40K CPA grant this year to pay for permitting purposes at the site.

ABRHS volunteer postings

Joe pointed out that the AB schools have announced that they have resumed posting in-person volunteer opportunities (often used by LSC) after having been allowed to post only virtual volunteer positions for the recent past. The link: [Volunteer posting request form](#)



Invasives, continued

Nothing tonight due to size of the agenda. Multiflora rose next month.

Additional Regular Business

Parcel issues (with parcels in alphabetical order)

– Bulette

A wetlands filing is in process by the builder of the PCRC development on Newtown Road. There will be a Scenic Street hearing in October that would require removing part of a stone wall to allow for a 4-car parking spot on Arlington Street. Mapping of trails is in process. There is a red trail that goes a little way in from Arlington Street. The loop trail, and the connector trail to the current Bulette/Town Forest trails, are not yet blazed. Bettina and Bob M, Bulette's new steward will meet offline to prepare a proposal for the October LSC meeting.



– Camp Acton

- Dumpers are still dumping on the property. Is it possible to get a sign that says "No Dumping"? Town IT will pay for an on-site camera that will "bink" on Bruce's phone when it detects motion.
- Jody noted that the ACT October 16 award ceremony honoring Bruce is to be at Camp Acton (not Scoutland).

– Canoe Launch

The knotweed seems under control and the missing picnic table has been found.

– Grassy Pond

The Board of Health has on its next docket a health permit request that would allow a private septic system to avoid being flooded by a beaver dam where Grassy Pond Brook leaves the pond. Such a private need is the only way to get permission to trap beavers on Conservation Land. Hopefully when the beavers are trapped and their dam taken down, the long boardwalk from Newtown Road will no longer be under water. In time, however, it likely will have to be rebuilt, possibly raised from its current height. Right now, there is also a tree on the boardwalk.

– Great Hill

The Department of Health tested the pond. It's okay for swimming (including dogs).

– HHM

- Bruce and Bettina have a plan for the “interim” repair of the boardwalk/bridge until CPA funds (hopefully) would become available right after Town Meeting on May 16. Bruce provided details of the plan. Bettina pointed out that there are a whole bunch of wood 4-by-4s at the River Street Dam site that could “work” for a temporary HHM fix.
- Beaver damming has caused some flooding of the red trail along Muddy Brook on the west side of Mt. Hope Cemetery. John, with approval of Acton Conservation Trust (holder of the conservation restriction on the parcel), has rerouted the trail, harming nothing but invasives. Downstream from the dam there remains a need for a bog bridge or another reroute.

– Jenks

Scott Smyers, a professional biologist, lives near Jenks. As owner of Oxbow Associates (Boxborough), he does invasive species control. The Jenks meadow has a dense poison ivy under layer. Scott explained how Oxbow would target the elimination of the poison ivy at no cost to the Town. He is presenting to the LSC tonight as part of his efforts to get all stakeholders “on board” and is presenting to the Conservation Commission tomorrow. Per Bettina, Acton’s NR would be okay with it. It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that the LSC is in favor of allowing Scott to address the poison ivy situation at Jenks. Scott will make sure of where any chemicals will be applied. He has talked with Josh Haines, Jenks steward, about this and Josh understands what Scott will be doing.

– Pacy

This agenda item was not discussed.

– Other

- 53 River Street will be municipal park. It has a “bad, bad” case of knotweed. Any construction will not do away with it. John plans to send a note to David Martin, Chair of the 53 River Street Master Plan Committee, that the knotweed should be eliminated. Scott described some ways to get rid of it.
- Ground hornets are active now. If, in the woods, you feel a sharp pain, start running!

Trail blazing needs

- If a steward wants some blazing done, at the minimum send an e-mail to Jody, Bill, and Todd. You could also e-mail the whole committee as to what you think are blazing priorities. Is there need for a form summarizing blazing? If it would have a “.gov” extension, that could be a problem with Google. We should keep trying to get Google Forms to work.
- Bettina will e-send to Peggy Liversidge, acknowledging her many years of blazing service.

News from the shed

- For blazers, paint and paint brushes are in the shed. Jody has taken one brush. The paint is blazing paint only; can’t be used for the BCT or the Trail Through Time.
- The field mower is running okay. Users: Don’t forget to add oil after every 2-3 hours. You might check the oil on every use. There was further discussion on field mower maintenance, including John explaining what might bend the field mower wheel.

Website issues

- Peg Sestrich did a great job bringing in helpers.
- The Google Groups address is the correct address for the sawyers.

Maps update

- Dale will send instructions for how to put an arrow on a map.

Next month's (October 19) agenda

- Notify Joe and John with any other items.

Evaluate meeting

Great job in 1 h 15 min.

Adjournment

8:15 pm

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 19, at 7 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of August 17, 2021