

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 26, 2022, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

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

Associate (nonvoting) members: Josh Haines, Everett Kenerson, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, Jim Salem, Hilary Reid, Bill Smith, Todd Tsakiris, **Tom Wolf**

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources), **Mike Gendron** (Acton Conservation Agent), **Bob Walton** (Acton citizen)

Opening

Aaron opened the meeting at 7 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of June 21 minutes

Approved as submitted.

Concerns from the public

None

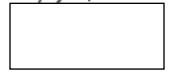
Electronic Systems and Equipment Acceptable Use Policy Acknowledgement

LSC members renewing their LSC membership with the Town were asked, after swearing in, to initial the following:

Electronic Systems and Equipment Acceptable Use Policy Acknowledgement
I have received and agree to abide by the above policy. I understand and agree that:

1. All electronic communication systems including e-mail and Internet as well as all information or attachments transmitted, received or stored in these systems, are the property of the Town of Acton;
2. Such systems are to be used solely for job-related and not for personal purposes;
3. I have no expectation of privacy in connection with the use of this equipment or the transmission, receipt, or information stored in such equipment;
4. I will not use a code, access a file, or retrieve any stored communication unless authorized;
5. The Town of Acton may access or monitor my use of this equipment or systems at any time at its discretion. Such monitoring may include printing and reading all email, attachments, downloaded files and web sites visited or information or data entering, leaving, or stored in these systems.

Initial: 



This provoked much discussion among members about the “above policy” and the Town’s policies, processes, purposes, etc., particularly as they relate to information technology. To follow up, Committee members are to send their observations, concerns, and questions to Aaron who will integrate them into one email that he will send to appropriate Town individuals and departments, and then report back to the Committee as appropriate.

LSC Mission Statement 2022 Revision

Jim Snyder-Grant, long-time LSC member until a few years ago, updated the Mission Statement to include provisions that 1) “Associate members may be from Towns near Acton, at the discretion of the Select Board. Full members must be residents of Acton”, and 2) all members are appointed to three-year terms except for new Associate members who are appointed for a one-year term. There was brief discussion about the residency requirement. It was moved, seconded, and voted by roll call, 4-0 with three abstentions (Yes: Jon, John, Zanna, Aaron; Abstain: Dale, Bruce, Joe) to accept Jim’s changes to the Mission Statement.

Invasive plants 2022, Part 5

John shared information on Japanese barberry and bush honeysuckle using these PowerPoint slides:

Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)

A low bush (although it may grow up to 8' tall)

Spreads mostly by seed, but also by buried stems.

Regrows from buried stems.

Repeated cuttings at ground level and/or pulling of roots required to kill.



Check: yellow root and stem wood, straight thorns

Bush Honeysuckle (e.g. *Lonicera morrowii*)

A low bush (although it may grow up to 8' tall)

Spreads mostly by seed, but also by buried stems.

Regrows from root fragments and buried stems.

Repeated cuttings at ground level and/or pulling of roots required to kill

Watch for non-white flowers, possibly indicating a more invasive variety



Check: larger stems are hollow, smooth leaf edges

Re Japanese barberry: Although a low bush, John has found some “tree size” versions — over 8 ft tall — at the Grassy Pond meadow. Regular cutting will help prevent the little red berries from spreading the plant. The stem and particularly the root are an “incredibly bright” yellow. The thin straight “nasty” thorns can go

through gloves, break off in the skin and cause festering. There are some native roses with straight thorns, but their leaves are different.

Re bush honeysuckle: This relatively slow-growing plant has already flowered (mostly white flowers) so it's too late to figure out exactly what species you find at this time although all of them are invasive. Contrary to the slide, John does not recommend repeated cuttings at ground level anymore. Instead cut a little higher to give you leverage when you try to pry out the roots. The non-, white-flowered plants don't seem to be proliferating around town, so we may be too far north for that sub-species.

Invasives question: Guidance for garlic mustard is to bag up the cut plant and take the bag to the dump, something that is explicitly prohibited at the Acton Transfer Station. Mixing it with the compost there would be a disaster. Something that seems to work: Leave garlic mustard bags, appropriately marked, next to Town trash barrels, e.g., at Great Hill, School Street playing fields, the Arboretum, and they will go to incineration. For other invasives, leave the pulled plants in a brush pile off of any trail.

Parcel issues

– Spring Hill trail reroute

Prepared to flag the reroute, Bruce found it already done and feels that the reroute "makes perfect sense". If the reroute is okay with the LSC, he will remove the one downed tree that's on the reroute. (The reroute is shown in the following maps, with a detailed description included in the LSC June Minutes.)



– Nashoba Brook bridge

Tom visited the bridge, took notes, made sketches, is writing up his recommendations and will possibly have something to present to the Committee next month. Bettina is in the process of writing up a lumber list for a purchase order and will add what Tom recommends to the list.

– Heath Hen Meadow boardwalk/bridge

The Conservation Commission hearing re a wetlands permit for the project was postponed until August 3. Bettina thinks she will have to mention to the Cons Comm that a lot of the grasses near the bridge site will have to be pruned (not killed). She also must get two more quotes for the project from other dock companies per requirements of the Community Preservation Act grant. She thinks she will be able to have Scott Howe, retired Acton police officer, agree to let the LSC stockpile bridge materials on his property at the end of Robbins Street for safekeeping. John wonders about how the materials will be moved from Scott's yard to the bridge site. He would recommend moving materials using the road from Mt. Hope Cemetery as that can place them within 10 ft of the bridge site. Another issue is whether to leave the current bridge in place while the new one is built. Removing it will facilitate the building of the new bridge in a straight line, but it could also draw negative reactions from public users of the bridge. The public will simply have to be told to reroute during the, say, two weeks of bridge construction.

– Other

As the Cemetery Commission is getting more flak from folks who take issue with non-cemetery activities — dogs, skateboards, playing children, etc. — that occur at Mt. Hope and Woodlawn, one can expect to see more signage encouraging respectful public behavior on developed cemetery sites bordering undeveloped cemetery land. In support of moving dogs a little further from developed cemetery land, Joe is suggesting that, on Woodlawn's east side, the red trail that links the soccer field to the Morrison Farm meadow be rerouted at its west end to enter/exit the woods at the stone wall rather than 20 yards (or so) in from the stone wall. John is aware of this and is willing to flag a reroute.

What do we know about the mowing schedule? All the meadows at Nagog Hill desperately need mowing. The three meadows usually get mowed in September. Bettina and Mike will find out what's planned for this year. Shawn O'Malley and crew will have to be reminded to mow the part of the large meadow that previously was part of the Hybird Farm paddocks. Dale believes that all the meadows should be mowed twice a year for a couple years to "put some hurt on all the garbage that's grown in there." He also feels that it would be great to mow them now while it's dry. Mowing now could be doable as the Town contracts the Nagog Hill mowing with someone from Littleton. If that person is willing to mow soon, Dale will take his flail mower in and "drive through the big stuff". Dale's greater point is really to get the mowing scheduling process launched soon. With the reorganization going on at Town Hall and the "getting ready to begin to get started process," mowing this year could easily be overlooked. John has similar concerns about the inner meadow at the Arboretum. It was not mowed at all last year, and it is in terrible shape right now. This is not the first time this has happened. That meadow really needs two or three mowings each year. A common Town response to the need for mowing is that the Town doesn't have the time to do it.

Kiosk signs that seem out of date or are in poor condition can be taken down. Bettina will help with the replacement of discarded laminated items.

Dale voiced concern about a possible Town acquisition of land, the stewardship of which could become the responsibility of the Land Stewards. Others in attendance knew nothing of this. Dale will forward his information to Bettina and Bettina will ask Lisa Tomyl about this.

Updates

– Maps, including North Acton, Robbins Mill, Guggins/Wright Hill, Caouette-Simeone Trail Map

Per Jon, the changes to the Bulette/Anderson land, including the new parking lot on Arlington Street, are now in OpenStreetMap. Jon expects them to replicate into the back end of our Acton Trails map so that he can easily trace them. Bettina has packaged off changes in some other maps to the Town's IT Department.

In the bigger picture, Jon wonders if we want to continue with individual parcel maps when composite maps possibly make more sense because in a composite you can see all the public land surrounding a particular parcel. This could be particularly valuable for folks using the paper maps from parcel kiosks. For example, the North Acton map is effectively a zoom-out from the Robbins Mill map. Discussion points:

- One possibility: Have a larger map on the kiosk and the parcel map in the map box, as occurs at Morrison Farm.
- Or we could post an 8½-by-11 Town-wide map on every single kiosk to help people understand where all the Town conservation lands are.
- However, if you put everything on a map like that, it becomes almost unreadable.
- Providing maps showing "co-located parcels" (parcels that share a boundary) makes a lot of sense.
- Provide a handout with a map on each side, one side showing the individual parcel, the other side showing a bigger picture.
- Have a map where primary trails are highlighted but secondary trails and trails in an adjoining parcel are less prominent.

- For an 8½-by-11 sheet of paper, everything on a zoom-out map will be tiny. On a zoom-in map, stuff on the periphery will be cut off. The North Acton map seems to be about the limit of a zoom-out map that can still show the individual trails.
- The Guggins/Wright Hill map is an example of a map showing two nearby conservation lands but omitting a third (Jenks). Correction to the map: The insert at lower right should say “Index Interval: 50’, Contour Interval: 10’ ”.
- Nagog Hill and Grassy Pond could go on one map without it getting too small. Great Hill is a “good fit”. So is Heath Hen Meadow. In the future we may be able to “smash” Jenks in with Guggins Brook in a Portrait format.
- Bettina will try to get Nagog Hill and Grassy Pond onto the same map (currently in the works) now.
- We should first focus on maps for which the current version is very outdated and then do combined maps.
- On the new Robbins Mill map, Jon suggests that we show Carlisle’s adjacent trails. Also, there is nothing that says one is going into Spring Hill. Bettina will send the map out again so that all can comment on it.
- On the Camp Acton map, the campsites need an update, and the blue trail is out of date. Bruce and Bettina will talk offline re this map.
- Bettina already has a ton of comments from Dale on the North Acton map, but she’ll send it out again for all to have another chance to comment. The new map should include the Spring Hill reroute of the yellow trail, and the Camp Acton corrections. Also, right now, it does not include the Bay Circuit Trail nor the Carlisle Road parking lot. The map should be Portrait instead of Landscape.

– Town Hall: Conservation organization

Mike will be the LSC’s main point of contact and the LSC’s advocate in Town Hall, replacing Bettina in both capacities. Bettina sees herself probably retiring in January or February, to be replaced by a full-time person. She expects to become a full member of the LSC and continue as the Arboretum’s steward.

– Website

No update

– Acton’s Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Bettina sees herself possibly writing it during the upcoming winter as a volunteer after retiring.

– LSC membership

Phil Keyes, steward of Spring Hill, and Laurie Ullman, steward of Nashoba Brook, have resigned from the LSC. Tom, Laurie’s “assistant” at Nashoba Brook, agrees to become its steward and, hopefully, a full member of the LSC. The LSC moved and voted unanimously by roll call to endorse this move. Bettina will do a little research on how this can happen and will help Tom become a full member. She is also trying to help Jason Temple, who has been a good, but unofficial, steward of Pacy, become the official steward of Pacy. Also, John suggests that since Zanna “spends every day” at Great Hill, she should become steward of Great Hill, possibly vacating her HHM stewardship. Zanna will do the “walking the trails” part of Great Hill stewardship, as she does that every day anyway. In the meantime, she will continue as HHM steward. Acton citizen Rachel Krebs is in the process of joining the LSC.

John encourages current members to take “first dibs” on available parcels if a parcel opens that is more appealing than one’s current parcel.

Evaluate meeting

Great meeting (Aaron’s best so far!). Agenda was too crowded. The policy discussion at the start took a lot of time.

Next month’s (08/16) agenda

Sawyer requests and the sawyer list server, a Google group (an issue that Aaron will also ask the Town about in the meantime)

Adjournment

At 8:48 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, August 16, at 7 p.m.