

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 18, 2022, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

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

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

Others: **Bettina Abe** (Acton Conservation), **Mike Gendron** (Acton Conservation Agent), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Bob Walton** (Acton citizen)

Opening

Aaron opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of August 16 and September 20 minutes

August minutes still not completed. September minutes approved as submitted.

Concerns from the public

none

Invasive plants 2022, Part 7

No new slides; just a reminder that Fall is a magical time to hunt invasives. The bittersweet is turning yellow so it's really easy to see. Walk around your parcel and look for trees that have a lot of yellow growing up on them that they shouldn't have.

Bridges/boardwalks

– Heath Hen Meadow bridge

Per Bettina, we have a very good staging setup and we've had some very successful workdays — quite a lot of volunteers cutting up deck boards and moving them and other materials to the bridge site. We are starting from the Heath Hen Meadow end. We did some layout work over the weekend, and we are ready to go with the first four sections. We need special screws in order to drive through the Trex and into the aluminum framing, and they have been a challenge to find. Each board will have 2 screws in 4 places (8 screws per board). There are 20 boards per section and 21 sections, so that's something like 3500 screws ($2 \times 4 \times 20 \times 21 = 3360$). We cannot find them in local stores, so we are ordering them online and we are praying that they will be delivered soon, maybe tomorrow. If they don't come, we must delay installation of the first four sections, but we can continue to prune overgrowth at the cemetery end of the bridge.

Workdays will be Wednesdays and Fridays starting at 1:30 and then Saturdays and Sundays as well, depending on who can come. It is likely that our core workers will be Brian Dranka, Jon Campbell, and Ken Appel (who will be joining the LSC as steward of the Assabet B & G and Canoe Launch). They've had a lot of experience with these poles and brackets. We will keep going until it gets too cold, and hopefully we'll get across the water by then.

– Nashoba Brook bridge (South)

Tom believes that he has all the materials needed for the bridge repair, including his purchase of some needed lag screws and T brackets. Now the challenge is to find a good time for a work party. Hopefully, he

will have it organized in the next few weeks. Tom can send Bettina the receipt for his expenses so that she can submit it to the Town for reimbursement.

– Nashoba Brook bridge (Pencil Factory)

This is being pursued by the Historical Commission and it appears regularly on its monthly agendas. Historical Commission minutes are posted only through May. They show (“survey work is complete”) that some preliminary work has been done, but there’s a long way to go. The CPC has compiled information on possible future CPA funding requests and include a Historical Commission 2023 request for \$300K, and a 2024 request for \$100K. Some concerns:

- It’s a lot of money for CPA dollars, especially when you can walk 50 yds along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and access the parcel that is at the other end of the proposed bridge.
- It seems highly questionable that a bridge could be built at the site because of several issues with its earthen environment. The site might not even be strong enough for an excavator, much less a crane for a prefab bridge.
- Getting all the permits needed (as learned in the River Street Dam and Jenks projects) will also be a challenge.
- Folks should watch this project very closely, and if they have an opinion, they should voice it to the CPC.
- The CPC itself is very concerned about, and supportive of, the amount of money that Open Space will need in the coming years as two expensive land-purchase possibilities are looming: the Conant land that includes the portion of the Isaac Davis Trail from Main Street to Great Road, and a large parcel along Wetherbee Road.

– Jenks bridge

Experience with the 53 River Street Dam project suggests that this needed improvement at Jenks is going to be complicated. The town is working with a “very good” engineering company, SLR. When work involves a stream that’s a major tributary, as is Fort Pond Brook, lots of permits are required. So, at this point, Bettina has applied for a grant for Phase One which is basically the hydrology, bank symmetry, and other engineering studies of the waterway. Information garnered will inform Phase 2 which will be the actual permitting. Phase Three will be the actual construction. Thus, doing this culvert at Jenks probably will be an expensive project. However, in these times of climate change and flooding there is a lot of money going towards hazard mitigation and prevention. We have learned that the current culvert is five times too small for the volume of water passing through. Bettina has applied for a federal BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) grant, a federal program that supports local communities on hazard mitigation projects. Although it’s a federal grant, the state must look at the application (for \$87,535) in comparison to all the other requests coming in from within the state and make the final decision. Should Acton be chosen, and whereas it would be a federal grant, Acton would have to contribute a portion of it. In the meantime, Phase One is also being submitted to the CPC for a CPA grant. Bettina will keep the Committee informed.

– Grassy Pond boardwalk

Bettina, Mike, and the ACT checked it out yesterday. Bettina sent Gary Kilpatrick an email asking him for a list of materials needed to fix the two crushed sections, copying John and Bruce, who do a lot of repairs. John is almost certain that we have (at the Morrison Farm shed) the wood needed for the repairs, but still we would have to replace it. Bettina asks that John send her a list of the wood that would have to be replaced.

Other parcel issues

– Spring Hill

ACT is going to have a workday at Spring Hill on Sunday from 1 to 3 pm. Rebecca, Spring Hill’s new steward, is on the list to participate. Anyone else will be welcomed.

– Nashoba Brook

Bob Walton (with Andrew his giant poodle) has been doing an “unbelievable amount” of work removing invasives at the Davis Road entrance. Under discussion is the use of cardboard and mulch to do a buffer along the stone wall that will double the size of the small meadow there. Bob will be through with the east side early next Spring.

Updates

– Valentine property trail

It is thought to be under way and going okay.

– Maps

We’re a “little bit stalled” right now, being busy with other projects.

– Mowing

The Town is working on trying to satisfy all the idiosyncrasies. The brush hog broke while mowing the Guggins Brook easement at Half Moon Hill. Over half the meadow remains to be done when the equipment is fixed. However, John points out that there are meadows that haven’t been mowed in years, and they should have been prioritized ahead of meadows that were mowed this past year . . . specifically, the inner meadow at the Arboretum. It’s turning into a seed bed of invasives for the rest of the area. Bettina will make sure that it gets mowed.

Contract worker Sam Bell has finished mowing the three sites for which he is responsible, Nagog Hill and the fields near Knowlton Drive and Anthem Way

– Chainsawing

We did get another course. Unfortunately, the dates didn’t work for many people. Aaron will attend, and we will keep searching for more training, particularly for the folks who had only had a one-day session previously, and, of course, for anyone who wants to be trained. Also, we continue to work on funding for sawyers’ personal protective equipment (PPE).

– Website

Bettina will ask Peggy Sestrich to post for a steward for Great Hill.

– LSC membership

Rebecca has been sworn in as an Associate member. Joe will send out an updated LSC roster. Members should send Joe any changes they would like made re their information on the roster.

– Other

On November 10, the Planning and Conservation Departments will host a virtual (Zoom) public information session on the 2023-2030 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Next month’s (11/15) agenda

Keep the updates that are on tonight’s agenda and add the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Evaluate meeting

“Shortest meeting ever”; lots of thumbs up.

Adjournment

At 7:32 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 15, at 7 p.m.