

**Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 15, 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, **Hilary Reid**, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

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

Aaron opened the meeting at 7 p.m.

Review and approval of August 16 and October 18 minutes

October minutes approved as submitted; August minutes approved with “Dale points out that we currently use a Google list server and a Google spreadsheet to try to keep track of sawyer-specific requests.” replacing a longer narrative.

It was also pointed out that when Joe circulated the minutes, he sent along a current LSC roster with the request that Committee members send any additions or corrections to Joe.

Concerns from the public

Bettina introduced Ken who is in the process of becoming steward of the Assabet River Blue & Green Trail and Canoe Launch, and Steve, a member of the Rec Commission and the Community Preservation Committee, and who lives adjacent to Great Hill (currently without a steward!).

Invasive plants 2022, Part 8

John discussed Norway Maple and Winged Euonymus using these PowerPoint slides:

Norway Maple (Acer platanoides)

A fast growing tree, which crowds out native Maples and other native trees.

Spreads by (distinctive 180°) seed

Regrows from cut trunks

Girding, or repeated cuttings and/or pulling of roots required to kill.



Check: white sap at end of leaf stem when broken off

Winged Euonymus ([Euonymus alatus](#))

A slow growing bush (although it may grow up to a small tree)

Spreads mostly by seed, but also by buried stems.
A dead tree falling on a bush will make a thicket!

Regrows from root fragments or buried stems.

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



Check: “wings” on small branch stems

Re the Norway maple: There are patches in most of our conservation lands. One problem is that once a single Norway maple gets established, it seeds and spreads very quickly. The seed is very distinctive from that of a normal maple. The bark is a little smoother than a normal maple, but the best way to tell a Norway maple is to break off one of the leaves right where the stem hits the twig and look for a milky sap. The normal maples in this area all have a clear sap. One of the worst mistakes in trying to control this tree is to just cut the tree. If the tree has any heft at all (bigger than about one to two inches), John suggests girding it (cutting and removing about 6 inches of the outer layer of bark all the way around the tree). Two or three months after girding, the tree should be checked again as the milky sap can run down the cut and regrow bark over part of the gird, requiring a saw and a chisel for removal.

Re winged euonymus: Bob has been working on this a lot at Nashoba Brook, and there's a couple people who have done an amazing job recently working it on the southeastern side of Great Hill. Winged euonymus is a slow-growing bush, but once started it's almost impossible to stop, it can grow to a height of over 10 ft, and it is very difficult to remove. It is very insidious. For example, everywhere it gets buried by a falling tree it will simply resprout — one of the major ways it spreads — forming thickets in the vicinity of a few fallen trees. If you see a branch sticking into the ground, pull out the branch as otherwise the winged euonymus will spread out roots quite easily from the tip of the branch. Winged euonymus is recognized by its wings. They're on four sides of the branch. Generally, if a plant doesn't have wings, John doesn't touch it as there may be some native euonymus, notably Eastern Spindle Bush, that doesn't have wings. Winged euonymus is really hard to uproot. John either girds it or cuts it back, and then repeatedly cuts it back over two to three years.

John pointed out that Asian bittersweet (presented last month) is an invasive that can be easily spotted in the woods right now. Also, it's a good time to spot glossy buckthorn by its glossy leaves although there still are a couple of native plants that are holding only their yellow leaves.

Bridges/boardwalks

– Heath Hen Meadow bridge

Per Bettina, the first workday was September 29 when materials were delivered. The first section was installed on October 19. There have been 18 workdays, a total of 54 hours on site, and an average of about six workers per day. So far, 10 sections or 100 feet have been installed from south to north, with 20 feet of

handrails at the north end. Work has stopped about midstream on the brook as the weather was getting colder and more unpredictable and the holidays were coming. Work will resume in the Spring. The new part is four feet wide and a full foot higher than the old boardwalk, but it is well-aligned with and securely step-connected to what remains of the old bridge. Bettina thanks the “incredibly awesome team of volunteers for just incredible work” and hopes that all have an opportunity to “check it out”.

Joe noted that the child-care center on Central Street takes its kids to the bridge occasionally and suggested that it may be rather easy for a child to go under the lowest rail on the new bridge. Bettina noted that the railings are above the walkway at 18 inches and 36 inches, and that we could still build toe bumpers, something that merits continued observation.

– Nashoba Brook bridge

Tom wants to do a little work yet on the railings and to clean up some of the old wood, but there has been some progress in the last month. Tom thanks Bruce for his help in repairing a section last weekend.

– Jenks culvert

Bettina had applied to the state for “Phase 1” funding for this project. The application deadline was yesterday so Bettina will follow up online to see whether there has been any decision yet.

– Grassy Pond boardwalk

Gary Kilpatrick has reported (including a picture) that the boardwalk has been repaired

– Related to above

What to do with the old wood from the above projects? If it’s trash with no recycling value, haul it to some place where the Town can pick it up. Let Bettina know about it (a picture would be desirable) and she will have the Town pick it up. If it’s reusable (safety included, e.g., nails pounded flat), send Bettina appropriate information and she and Mike could pick it up and take it to the shed at Morrison Farm. The wood left over at Heath Hen Meadow could still possibly be used there. Also, Jon Campbell is eyeing that wood for use at Guggins Brook. There are also a couple of new pipes that might be left over at Heath Hen Meadow.

Other parcel issues

– Spring Hill

Jody reported that ACT’s Spring Hill Workday had roughly 30 participants, including 20 high school students and eight adults. The day was damp and overcast. The students were “pretty enthusiastic”, and they were able to spruce up the trail relocation that Bruce had set up. There is still more work to do.

Updates

– Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Per Mike: There was some “really good feedback” from the Public Forum. Although we were looking for a little more participation, at one point there were 45 participants. The next step is to use the survey data and the Forum feedback to draft goals for the Plan and present those goals to the applicable committees (including the LSC) for their feedback. After that comes the writing of the Plan. For that, much help will be needed.

– Community Preservation Act (CPA)

Mike has submitted an “Open Space Preservation Plan” that would 1) provide for getting baseline documentation done for some Conservation Restrictions dating back to the 70s and 80s that are held by the Town, and 2) provide a second brush hog for the Town to help get meadow mowing done in a timely and efficient fashion, minimizing mowing disruption caused when the Town’s lone brush hog breaks down. There is also a proposal to regrade the Camp Acton roadway and replace the culvert under it with pipe. Another proposal is for funding a fix of the Jenks culvert that Bettina spoke about. There is a request for \$600K for the Open Space set-aside fund. There is no proposal yet from the Historical Commission for further work on a bridge over Nashoba Brook at the Pencil Factory.

Per Steve: The Recreation Department submitted a request for \$300K for replacement of the boardwalk and bridge at NARA, but that request might be less if some funding from the state comes through. Also, Steve noted that Mike's brush hog request was for a new John Deere product. Does it have to be John Deere? Are there alternatives? Can the machine be used instead of new? Steve, a member of the Community Preservation Committee that decides CPA grants, is simply suggesting that Mike be prepared for such questions from the CPC as total funding requests significantly exceed the funds available so cuts will have to be made. Mike based his request on what the DPW currently uses and believes that it needn't be the specific equipment he cites in his proposal. He would appreciate any input from the land stewards on alternative equipment that would lessen the amount he would need from the CPA.

– Maps

Per Bettina: We have a bunch of map updates in process. The Town has a new GIS person, Mary Murphy, on the IT team. Mary helped put together a map for us for the OSRP Forum. Now that work at the Heath Hen Meadow bridge and the Arboretum is slowing down, Bettina will follow up with Mary on the maps that are in process. Also, with Jody, Mike and Bettina's input, Bettina would like Mary to finish a map for Caouette Farm.

– Mowing

The Town has apparently said that it is done with the Upper Meadow at the Arboretum. Dale will check out what bus the Town is throwing us under. John has cleared out any downed wood in the meadow (as of a couple months ago) and there are some rocks. If Dale determines that he can bring in a machine, Bettina will make the meadow appropriately accessible via the road into the Arboretum from Wood Lane.

– Chain sawing

Aaron was the only one signed up for the 11/5-6 course but has no report due to a conflict. Bettina made a list of personal protective equipment (ppe) that sawyers need. She checked with the Town and found that there will be enough in the budget to buy everything on the list for sawyers who need it. She will look at a couple of vendors and then be in touch with the sawyers. Purchasing the ppe could possibly drain the stewards' budget (until next Town Meeting). However, there is a good supply of materials on hand (e.g., for the bridge work), so we should be okay.

– Website

Bettina was going to post the need for a steward for Great Hill, but now will first let Steve decide whether he wants to join this "madcap group". Bettina suggests that Steve meet with John and walk the parcel with him. John suggests an email contact first, at wad@alum.mit.edu.

– LSC membership

Tom is now a regular (voting) member. Ken is still in the process of getting confirmed.

Phil Keyes, an original member of the LSC, a former Executive Director of the New England Mountain Bike Association, a long-time steward of Spring Hill, and a sawyer, was in a vehicle accident on Route 2A a few weeks ago and has been in a coma ever since. Please keep him in your hearts and thoughts. (Clerk's note: Phil passed on November 16. Google "Phil Keyes" and find much more of his accomplishments.)

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/philip-keyes-obituary?id=38200954>

Next month's (12/20) agenda

No new suggestions.

Evaluate meeting

Collective "thumbs up".

Adjournment

At 7:39 pm. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, December 20, at 7 p.m.