

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 20, 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: Ken Appel, 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), **Diane D** (Westford citizen), **Mike Gendron** (Acton Conservation Agent), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT), **Adam Nolde** (Acton citizen), **Bob Walton** (Acton citizen)

Opening

Aaron opened the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of November 15 minutes

Tabled until the January meeting as they are not yet ready.

Concerns from the public

None.

Bettina introduced Adam who is interested in the LSC. He also serves on the Finance Committee.

Invasive plants 2022, Part 9

If possible, John will be joining us late and his invasives presentation will move to the January agenda.

Parcel issues

– Robbins Mill — Tenneco maintenance

Hilary learned of this after Tenneco had done its work, but she will check on the boardwalks that sometimes have to be moved for the maintenance.

– Morrison Farm

The Agricultural Commission is trying to draft a Conservation Restriction (CR) to protect Morrison Farm from being developed. One aim is to get its approval via a warrant article at the 2023 Town Meeting. The Ag Comm is working with Susan on this because a goal is to have ACT and the Town be co-responsible for the CR. As part of the process, the Ag Comm is presenting to various Town committees and seeking their support. One sticking point is the buildings (house, garage, and barn) that would not be part of the CR. The Ag Comm could possibly partner with the Historical Commission to put a Preservation Restriction on the buildings and/or get the National Historic Register of Historic Places involved with the farm and abutting Concord Road properties.

One question to be resolved is what to do with the deteriorating shed north of the barn and the shed in the horse paddock. Currently, because of the recent reorganization of Town departments, it is not clear what Town department is responsible for managing the Farm property, which is municipal land, not conservation land. One likely candidate is the Department of Public Works (DPW). In the past, some stewards have offered to help with these structures, but that would require some funds. Others suggest that these outbuildings be taken down due to their serious state of disrepair.

Unrelated to the above, Joe notes that an Acton business on Route 2A posted an advertisement on the Morrison Farm kiosk. Generally, the rule for Conservation Land is that no advertising is allowed. However, such advertising (on municipal land, at least) could be in support of small business. We can talk with Acton Economic Development Director Julie Pierce Onos about this as she has developed lots of initiatives to support local businesses. In the meantime, if something gets posted on your parcel's kiosk, you can remove it and call it to Mike's and Bettina's attention.

– Spring Hill

Mike and Bettina put up some signs in what they think are the right places. Rebecca and/or Jody and/or Bruce should check that this is so, and that the signs are securely mounted (as the battery on the drill being used was dying). The recently-closed portion of the yellow trail still needs to be physically closed. Also, new blazing has not yet happened.

Rebecca has seen one of the signs but wonders about any other signs that might need replacing. She, and all stewards, should e-notify Mike and Bettina, and copy Jody with any concerns about signs.

– Nagog Hill

Mike and Bettina will get a new sign made for the parking lot at Nagog Hill Conservation Land. The current sign looks “terrible”. The stone monument that's there (explaining the origin of the parcel) also could be cleaned. Bettina will ask Shawn O'Malley how this can be done

Updates

– Bridges/boardwalks

At sundown this past Saturday at the Heath Hen Meadow bridge, several volunteers who worked on the bridge had a winter solstice hot chocolate toast. The structure is “doing great” while it waits for work on it to resume this coming Spring. Jon may be able to repurpose some of the old boardwalk sections at Guggins Brook, and Bettina will keep this in mind re a possible Eagle Scout project.

Another possible project that Bettina will share with the Eagle Scouts would involve a wet area along a trail at Grassy Pond that Gary Kilpatrick has pointed out.

Bettina and Mike must pick up some materials left by Tom Wolf at the bridge over Nashoba Brook that Tom was responsible for repairing.

– Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Town Recreation Director Melissa Settipani has scheduled an OSRP meeting for January 19 at the Rec Center. Liaisons from Town committees will give feedback from their groups, discuss the proposed goals of the OSRP (shown here),

Goal #1: Protect critical environmental resources.
Goal #2: Improve and expand recreation opportunities.
Goal #3: Preserve historic, cultural, and landscape features.
Goal #4: Incorporate sustainability in future open space and recreation decisions.

and try to help frame what will become the document's backbone.

The meeting is intended to rework the proposed goals and possibly add new goals, specifically:

Action Item for Committees/Commissions:

There will be a number of sub-goals and projects under each main goal, but now we need your committee/commission's help with locking in these main goals. Will you please have OSRP on a December agenda? Please talk with your commission to see if these are the goals we want to set. If you'd like the wording changed or there's a goal we're missing, please edit and send along with your liaison. The Town's working group will hold a meeting with all the liaisons in **January** to finalize the goals of the OSRP.

The LSC had no immediate feedback and appointed no liaison to attend the January 19 meeting. After this meeting, anyone can bring specific feedback to the liaison meeting or share it with Mike who will present it at the meeting.

– Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is now hearing the 2023 proposals. It heard the housing proposals recently and will hear the recreation proposals on January 10. They include a Camp Acton proposal, a proposal for culvert replacement at the Jenks parcel, and a proposal for replacement of the bridge at NARA. Bettina has applied for Federal/State grants for the Jenks culvert replacement, but hasn't heard anything yet. The Camp Acton proposal is for repair of its access road and replacing the culvert beneath it at about the halfway point. Anyone interested can find the proposals online or can learn more about them at the January 10 virtual meeting beginning at 7:30. The CPC hears the historic resources proposals on January 24 and the Open Space proposal (requesting \$600K of perhaps \$1.2M available) on February 10. There are some significant land purchase opportunities coming up for which Open Space will need a lot of money to be competitive.

If you want to learn more about a CPA project, let Bettina or Mike know and they will send you a link to the proposals. You can also email the CPC to voice your support for the Jenks and/or Camp Acton projects — or any project.

– Maps — Valentine Trail

The Carlisle Conservation Foundation has completed the “Jack and Betty Valentine Trail” that is largely in Acton (small portions in Carlisle) that traverses the Valentine property at the very tip of Acton in the north.



It reroutes the Bay Circuit Trail via an opening that the DPW cut in the guard rail about 20 ft south from the BFRT parking lot on Route 27. From there the BCT goes to Acton

Street in Carlisle, and then southwest on Acton Street/Carlisle Road to the Robbins Mill trailhead.

This reroute is not part of any Acton conservation land, so adding it to an Acton Trails map would be difficult. Jon and Bettina can meet offline to discuss. On the Acton Trails site, it could go under “Resources”. Jon notes that it already appears on OpenStreetMap. Interesting fact: The boardwalk on the trail uses concrete sills.

On maps in general, Jon and Bettina will do an inventory on what they’re working on and try to push their map work through Mary Murphy, the new GIS person on the Town IT team.

Jon has just finished inputting the changes to the Anderson parcel (that will be part of Bulette/Town Forest) and the changes are starting to replicate across the different systems. If you zoom way in, the map will look correct (with changes) right now. If you zoom out, it won’t, which is typical of how servers replicate map changes. By tomorrow, all changes should show. If you notice things like colors that are not right, let Jon know and he can fix.

Bettina notes that the subdivision plan for Genevieve Lane next to what will be the expanded Bulette/Town Forest parcel shows a trailhead between the last two houses on the cul-de-sac. It will be bounded by two split rail fences. The developer has hauled away all the debris that Mike, Jody, Bettina, and Laurie Ullman had gathered from the nearby trails and, eventually, the developer will build a boardwalk over Grassy Pond Brook. Bettina has mentioned to a potential Eagle Scout that a kiosk could go on this trailhead. Eventually, Jon will include all these new things on the expanded Bulette/Town Forest map.

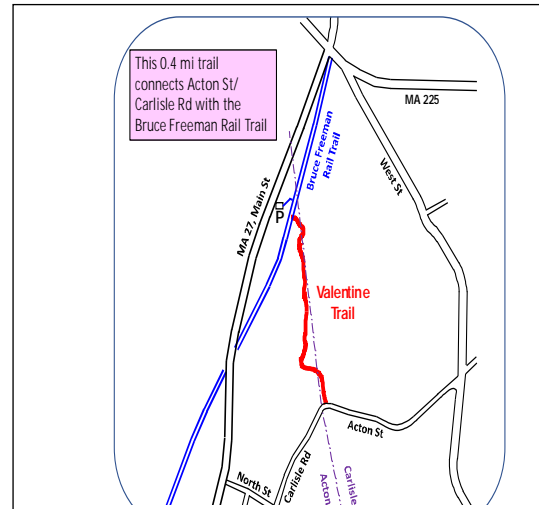
– Mowing

Dale mowed most of the Arboretum Upper Meadow. There’s more to go but it can’t be done when it is wet because everything can get torn up. Conditions are perfect when the ground is frozen and there’s just a little bit of snow. One place that hasn’t been mowed is the inner upper meadows at Nagog Hill. Shawn O’Malley may have had his Town crew do something there. We should check on this. Dale has been somewhat inactive recently for personal reasons and thanks Bruce and John Watlington for stepping up and filling in for some of his duties.

– Chain sawing

Bettina is putting together spreadsheets and looking at vendors for personal protective equipment (ppe). She should finish that task by the new year. Bruce suggests that public descriptions of blowdown locations should be improved. Bob suggests using GPS and giving coordinates of blowdowns. Bruce feels that using arrows on the Acton Trails maps would be adequate. Perhaps the Acton Trails website should give some instructions on how to use the arrow feature.

Adam explained that his interest in the LSC stems from wanting to offer his services as a sawyer. The LSC heartily welcomes his interest and explained that such a role requires membership on the LSC in order to be covered as a Town employee. Bettina explained the safety concerns re sawyering, the training and equipment required, how formal training is pursued, openings that exist on the LSC including some responsibilities that Adam might have depending on LSC needs. She did not need to explain the committee-application process because Adam is on the Town’s Finance Committee. Bettina would welcome further conversation with Adam about joining the LSC.



– Website
No update.

– LSC membership

Bettina is retiring from Town employment March 30 and would like to join the LSC. There is one regular (voting) position open. A current Associate member could apply for it through the standard committee application process.

Next month's (01/17/23) agenda

Liaisons for the OSRP. Invasives.

Evaluate meeting

Thumbs up!

Adjournment

At 7:47 pm.

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