

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 25, 2024, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

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

Associate (nonvoting) members: Stuart Amir-Lin, Ken Appel, Josh Haines, Rebecca Harvey, Everett Kenerson, Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, Adam Nolde, **David Pinsky**, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris, **Bob Walton**

Others: **Ian Bergemann** (Acton Land Stewardship Coordinator), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Jim Snyder-Grant** (Select Board (SB) LSC liaison)

Aaron opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. Because attendance was two voting members short of a quorum, Bob and David were appointed to be voting members for the evening.

Review and acceptance of March 19 and May 21 Minutes

March minutes were accepted as presented; May minutes were accepted with two changes per Bob.

Election of officers for the coming year

Postponed until July meeting.

Concerns from the public

Jim introduced himself as the SB's new Liaison to the LSC, replacing Alissa Nichol who had too many conflicting liaison activities. (Clerk's note: Jim is a former member and Chair of the LSC.)

Ian's Trails Tales

Postponed until the July meeting.

Ian's updates

– Scoutland: Per Ian, he and Bill Klauer, Scoutland Trustee, have been “playing phone tag” and have not yet connected. Ian will try another call later this week.

– Camp Acton memorial bench and scout lean-to: Josh Haines has been working on the bench. The Scout does not want to pursue the lean-to project.

– Nagog Hill volunteer workdays: These will continue on Thursdays, 3 to 5 pm, through July. The June workdays were hindered by the weather until last Thursday. For that first workday, Ian had two volunteers and the work centered on the stone wall beside the yellow trail. Anyone can still sign up for future workdays on the Acton Trails website, or you can email Ian and he'll sign you up.

– Wills Hole mosquito research: This should start in July. Ian will make a flyer for it and a sign for a kiosk. Also, he'll ask if the researcher could talk about the project with the LSC, or present it to the Town.

– Pratts Brook pitch pine: No update.

– Great Hill trail relocation request: A resident of a Piper Lane home that abuts Great Hill has asked that a trail that passes close to their house be relocated further away. Their concern was primarily they have a new puppy that's been barking a lot, and they don't want to upset their neighbors. Ian will map the current trail and a proposed relocation trail about 20 or 30 feet away. A concern is one is pretty steep versus the other

one that is a “pretty easy up”. The relocation will be discussed at the next LSC meeting when there are more members present. Ian told the resident that there is a chance the trail might not get moved, and they seemed okay with that.

– Poison ivy: Adam was interested in what position the LSC has on poison ivy. Per Ian, based on what he’s seen, we remove it when it’s overtaking a tree or preventing access to something visual, like a kiosk sign. Otherwise, poison ivy is native and the birds love it.

– Carlisle LSC request: The Carlisle LSC was given new authority by the Carlisle SB or Conservation Commission. It likes what the Acton LSC does and basically wants to know how we function. Ian has had multiple conversations with the Carlisle contact and will continue to be in touch.

– LSC membership: Nothing new on Jody’s progress towards joining to be the Anderson Conservation Land (CL) steward. Associate member Steve Trimble, Great Hill (GH) steward, has resigned. John Watlington, who is “sort of” the de facto GH steward, and Ian are discussing how to recruit for this, possibly determining that GH should have two stewards. It might be necessary to be more formal about this, possibly developing a good job description.

– New Conservation Restrictions (CRs): 549 Main Street is getting local signatures right now. Then it must go back up to the State and “we should be all set.” After that, there will be signs that indicate public access. One sign will be on the west side of the Isaac Davis Trail’s intersection with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, but there will be no similar sign on the east side as that land remains in private hands. Ian thinks that the Acton Water District (AWD) will eventually reach out to Ian about trail maintenance, and information that should go on parcel signage. Responding to a query, Ian pointed out that a CR on a parcel does not make it conservation land. A CR says simply that the CR’d land cannot be used for any purpose other than what is set in the CR. Susan, for example has a CR on Mitchell-Hardt land. The Haartz Corporation land has a CR that allows it to freely exist as wildlife habitat. The AWD CR is a little different in that it allows certain things required for providing town water. Eventually the LSC will likely be asked to do trail maintenance, but not meadow maintenance (corner of Main Street and Brook Street). The AWD will have to hire someone to mow the meadow. What about invasives management (lots of bittersweet near the woods)? Ian will ask the AWD about that. Bob had done some work on bittersweet on AWD land next to Guggins Brook a while back with the AWD’s permission as long as Bob used no chemicals.

The Anderson Land CR is still a work in progress. Ian is waiting for a survey to come back from the Town’s engineering company. The CR for 4 Piper Lane (part of Great Hill) has been with the state for about a year now.

– Geocaching: Ian will try to send the policy draft soon so it can be studied, then discussed and possibly voted on at the July meeting when meeting attendance should be much better than tonight’s. Last week, Ian received a request to place a geocache in the Assabet River B & G Trail parcel (a quarter mile from the parking lot) and hopes to use the request to see how our policy could fit expectations. Jim will send Ian a draft geocaching policy that the LSC worked on in 2015 and Ian can incorporate any of it into his draft if he chooses. Per Jim, that policy was ultimately not implemented because the Conservation Department didn’t want all the extra work that it suggested.

Other parcel notes

Not exactly a parcel issue, but Susan was checking out the Caouette-Simeone farmland (leased by the Boston Area Gleaners and abutting the Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT)) and she observed “this very nice (ARRT)) kiosk,” but it looked “very unloved.” Question: Who looks after this kiosk? Per Ian: The Acton DPW is currently responsible for maintaining the ARRT. The DPW and Ian will be collaborating on making the AART trail “more interactive”. This will include updating the kiosk with a new map and more materials, and wildlife panels for the trail.

Other updates

- Per Bob: The Spring Hill boardwalk extension is “coming along” and we are designing . . . and redesigning . . . and redesigning and , , , , Bob wants to get the sills in before the rain forces the work under water. Ian could try, as needed, to plan a workday with scouts or others if/when we need to involve larger groups of people
- Ian has to check out Guggins Brook to see how it's doing in terms of the culverts and bridge. He doesn't know yet if there's been any follow-up on anchoring the 284 bridge. He will check. He will also search for a dam upstream to see what all the “hubbubs” about.
- Re the culvert at Jenks, Ian will be following up with a phone call to the State on the BRIC grant that we applied for to help fix it. We've heard nothing from the State since last Fall
- The Grassy Pond boardwalk is still a problem. Ian intends to fix some planks on the boardwalk soon.
- The Anderson land has its new boardwalk — looking “really great!”. The scouts did a really great job.
- At GH, we might be having a scout work on a new boardwalk that John had suggested.
- Maps: After July 1, Ian will try to get access to GIS and start making large trail maps to place on the kiosks to replace the small ones that are essentially screen shots of our online maps.
- Mowing: None of this for a little while.
- Sawyering: At Great Hill, we took down a couple of leaners that were pretty bad. We worked on taking down the mulberry tree at Wheeler Lane. There likely will be a future discussion on what to replace it with and where the \$ might come from.
- Shed: Per John Watlington's email, there's been material left there that needs to be removed, or at least dealt with. In general, Ian reminds all that he can move or remove items from any parcel with his truck. If there is trash, put it at the kiosk and let Ian know.
- Website: Still need to add the Anderson Land along with a narrative about its trails and other features.
- Blazing: Jody's on vacation; back by next week. If there's a blazing need, reach out to her and cc Ian.

Other business

There was brief discussion on the Open Meeting Law. Neither a voting member nor a non-voting member of the LSC should share an opinion with the entire LSC. You can share with everyone a fact (e.g., you observe something of general interest on CL). You can discuss how to deal with a general stewarding issue (e.g., poison ivy), or an emergency (e.g., a significant treefall), but in general with e-issues that could concern the public, no one should “Reply All”. Any land stewarding issue can be routed through Ian.

Any volunteer with whom the LSC works (e.g., Bob has a volunteer ready to help him with a bog bridge at Robbins Mill) must sign the Town waiver. It's online or it can be obtained from Ian.

Next month's (07/16/24) agenda

Election of officers for the coming year

Evaluate meeting

Goes faster when fewer people show up!

Adjournment

At 7:35 pm.

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