

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 20, 2024, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

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

Associate (nonvoting) members: Stuart Amir-Lin, Ken Appel, Josh Haines, Jody Harris, **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)

Aaron opened the meeting at 7 p.m.

Review and acceptance of July 16 Minutes

July 16 Minutes are not ready yet.

Election of officers for the coming year

Tom Wolf was nominated and voted 5-0 to be Chair. Election of Vice-Chair tabled until September meeting.

Concerns from the public

None.

Invasive plants, August 2024

Japanese Barberry — John presented from the Acton Invasives Wiki:

http://ec2-44-218-8-154.compute-1.amazonaws.com/aiw/index.php?title=Invasive_Plants_Around_Acton
selecting the Japanese Barberry page:

http://ec2-44-218-8-154.compute-1.amazonaws.com/aiw/index.php?title=Japanese_Barberry

Also,

the plant's bright red berry should be appearing in another month or so, and this makes the Japanese barberry stand out — as occurs in an area at Great Hill that has otherwise been cleared of ground cover by deer. At Great Hill there was a huge patch along the stream between the two hills that was pulled out by a volunteer, and it has not come back.

Bob cited a couple places at Nashoba Brook where common barberry exists. John suggests that we flag those sites to help avoid pulling the common barberry. Bob points out that in some places common barberry is considered invasive or is pulled because it helps spread wheat rust (the latter not in issue in Massachusetts).

Bob also raised a concern about Japanese knotweed at Wills Hole/Town Forest along the yellow trail west and then south of the driveway #17 in the accompanying picture. There are two medium-sized patches, one large patch, and a small patch opposite the large patch. One medium patch is definitely in wetland. The others, not sure. Ian will visit the sites with Conservation Agent Olivia Barksdale, DPW's Shawn O'Malley, and Bob (if given a day's notice) to determine if any of the four patches are in wetlands. If so, the Conservation Commission must be involved with any proposed work. One concern is whether the Town could get a truck over the yellow-trail bridge near the end of #17 to bring in materials to cover the knotweed.



Ian's Trails Tales

None tonight.

Ian's updates

- Scoutland: Ian is still trying to connect with Bill Klauer, Scoutland Trustee.
- Pratts Brook pitch pine management plan: Pitch pine is a globally endangered species. Adam Nolde, Select Board member Dean Charter, John, and Ian recently looked at the Pratts Brook pitch pine population, one of the farthest west in Massachusetts. Per Dean, the Town used to clear and monitor the site a bit but hasn't done so in years. The four talked about different management strategies and Ian will draft a management plan. He will seek guidance from Mass Audubon, which has some experience with the species, and possibly see if the State could provide some help. Any management practice likely won't start until next spring. It should include a lot of invasive species clearing and a bit of sawyer work taking down competing species. The hope will be to increase both the pitch pine and blueberry patches. Hopefully by this winter, Ian will share a draft of a management plan with the LSC for its review and blessing. Given that, he will then take it to the Conservation Commission. If Cons Comm approves it, the plan could be put into practice.
- New Conservation Restrictions (CRs): The Anderson Conservation Land (CL) CR first draft was sent to the state by the SVT in 2022. Three updates were sent this year along with a query as to whether the state needed anything else. Waiting for response. The Piper Lane CR draft was sent to the state by the SVT on 07/24/23. SVT is waiting for some closure on Anderson Land CR before re-addressing 4 Piper Lane.
- Geocaching: Ian sent the interim geocaching policy to his first geocache applicant. The applicant wants to place a geocache on municipal land (just off the Assabet River Rail Trail near the Caouette Farm CL), which is not supervised by the LSC, but the applicant seems to have interpreted the policy exactly as the LSC intends. Ian shared the application information with the Committee. The applicant included photos, one of which showed an "Official Geocache" tag, something new to Ian and which could possibly become a policy item. Ian's follow-up with the applicant was that Ian would visit and assess the site (yet to do), then get back to the applicant if the geocache got approved or denied.

Based on this initial application and the fact that the applicant had no questions about it, Ian is positive about the geocache application draft. Per Ian, the LSC will still need to have a more formal discussion at a different meeting about what to do with the already existing (and sometimes impossible to find) geocaches.

Rebecca points out that the Nashoba geocache with the night lighting is still “out there”. Per Ian, this is not allowed. Ian will arrange to meet with Rebecca and she can help him remove the geocache’s 3 or 4 pieces (one about 10 ft up, possibly requiring a short ladder) along with its solar panel.

Blue and Green Trail: Joe inquired as to a possible extension of the Blue and Green Trail from its current trailhead on Old High Street to the other side of the street. The B & G Trail would extend a very short way on the east side of Old High Street to the Assabet River. Per Ian, the property owner of the site is required to do some sitework which could include such an extension. When Ian gets more information on this from the Conservation Commission, he’ll report on it.

Wetherbee CL (abutting): Dale inquired as to whether there has been any progress on acquiring the abutting land. The Town is still negotiating with the owners. It has applied to the State for some funds to assist with a purchase. Per Ian, we should hear back from the State near the end of September.

Morrison Farm CR: Dale inquired. Per Ian, a Morrison Farm CR or AR is not being worked on right now, having stalled at a Select Board (SB) meeting early in the year. The Agricultural Commission presented the idea to the SB. The SB felt there was need for more public input on what the public would like to see happen with the Farm. Ian has met with the Ag Comm, the ACT, and some other interested parties, and all are agreeable on seeking public input, but so far Ian knows of no direction on how or by whom it should be pursued.

549 Main Street CR: Dale inquired. Per Ian, that CR is done and is with the State. Ian is waiting to hear from (or will reach out to) Matt Mostoller, Acton Water District (AWD) Manager, about how the trail system will be set on the parcel. The current trail system has been tentatively approved by Sudbury Valley Trustees, co-holder of the CR with the Town, and by the LSC. The LSC has voted to have a steward for the parcel (Brewster Conant Jr., perhaps — Ian will check), but has not yet found one. The hope has been that the trails would be public by the end of summer. Re 549 mowing: Ian doesn’t know who’s mowing at present (if you see someone mowing, say something) and mowing the trails (not the meadow) is supposed to be LSC’s responsibility, agreed to by the AWD.

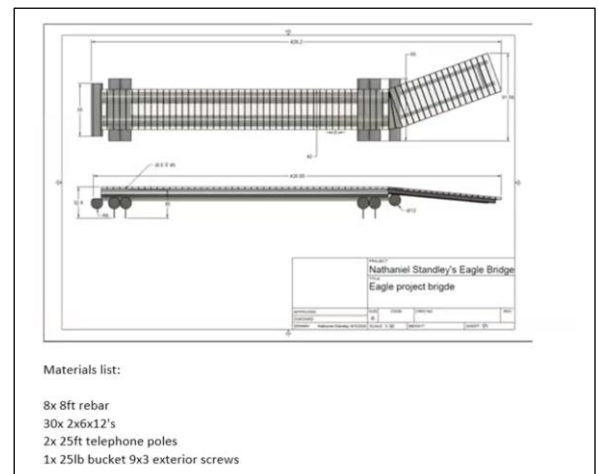
Other parcel issues

Grassy Pond: At the entrance across from the Church of the Good Shepherd tomorrow morning, Dale and Ian will start some sawyering activity by clearing a birch tree and a big pine tree. Second stop is another fallen blazed tree (not specified where).

Camp Acton: Per Dale, there's a pile of broken pines along the access road where the gas pipeline goes by. Dale and Bruce Rachman will coordinate cutting the pines into manageable pieces and getting them out of the way in time for the annual pre-Thanksgiving Boys Scout event that draws many visitors.

Pratts Brook: Pictured at right are plans for a Scout project, replacing the “telephone pole bridge” over Tenney Brook. Possibly happening in October, it may require a lot of volunteer work (including sawyers) removing the telephone poles currently in place and getting new poles to the site. As shown, the bridge will be over 25 ft long. Ian will be filing an RDA (Request for Determination of Applicability) of the Wetlands Protection Act to bring to the Cons Comm to help the Cons Comm decide on the use of telephone poles to rebuild the bridge.

General: Jody Harris and Ian are actively blazing and reblazing trails. If stewards have trails in their parcels or see a need for reblazing on any parcel, let Ian know.



Warning (per John): ground hornet season is here. He's gotten his first sting of the Fall, so it's time to stop pulling up bushes.

Updates

- Mowing: Ian will be contacting Sam Bell, the Town's contracted mower, to set him up for the Fall.
- Chainsaw training: We should be thinking now about scheduling some training any time we can get it.
- Website: Ian has a meeting with IT next week. It could include discussing the invasives website. Following that, Ian suggests that Bob meet with IT to work out details for its transfer.
- Shed: Per Bob, what to do about the following fasteners currently in the shed?
 - Hot-dipped, or galvanized, nails? Dispose of.
 - Crib screws (1 5/8-in.)? Keep for use with kiosks.
 - Plain steel (galvanized but not hot-dipped) or zinc-plated bolts, also, some nuts (decent sizes but not galvanized)? Keep, useful on many things.
 - 1/2" x 3" carriage bolts with nuts? Dispose of, possibly give to the DPW.
 - Hex washer head stainless steel screws? Dispose of.
- Wood chips and tree trash: Process any requests through Ian who will be in touch with Acton Tree Warden Ryan Hunt and the DPW as needed. Dale and John described the fallen mulberry tree and invasives situations at Wheeler Lane, and Ian will follow up accordingly.

Next month's (09/17/24) agenda

Vice-Chair election, Knotweed (invasives in general, control), Pratts Brook bridge, Scoutland, 549 Main Street trails and steward, Chainsaw training, Spring Hill boardwalk (Ian to meet with Bob offline re dates and times), IT map work

Evaluate meeting

Awesome; new Chair outstanding

Adjournment

At 7:51 pm.

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