

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 16, 2016, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe (Chair), Bob Farra, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant, Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Paula Goodwin, Joe Holmes

Nonmembers present: Carolyn Kiely, Barry Elkin (Quail Ridge residents); Ainslie Brennan, Alissa Weiss, Eric Weiss (Breezy Point Rd residents), Linda McElroy (Director, Trail Through Time (TTT))

Bettina called the meeting to order at 7:06 P.M.

Review and approval of January minutes

Linda submitted comments by e-mail responding to items in the January minutes regarding the TTT. These are not adjustments or corrections to the minutes, but the Committee felt them significant enough to recommend attaching them to the minutes.

It was moved, seconded and voted unanimously to accept the January minutes as presented and to append Linda's e-comments to those minutes.

Update: Trails, trail markings, and maps including Linda McElroy's input re the TTT

Linda passed out copies of the latest TTT information panel which uses a blowup circle to highlight the area where Native American sites and artifacts are located. It is one of three panels that will be on the Native American kiosk, which is southwest of the Plantain Cluster. Each of four Native American sites will also have a panel.

Re having maps in map boxes: Linda has no problem with the idea. In fact, it's a great idea to have a map box on the Native American kiosk. Bruce would like to re-shingle that kiosk. At the same time he could put another piece of wood on the front and put a map box on it. Linda disagrees with Bob G and Bruce who feel that the kiosk panels are too high. Bettina suggested second map boxes at each of the Wheeler Lane and Davis Road kiosks. That would be acceptable to Linda.

Linda has been editing and updating the site information. In the future, Linda would like to get the TTT website up — Bruce is willing to help. Beyond that, it's important to put up a TTT kiosk at the TTT "hub," Wheeler Lane. It would be fairly large with four posts, four panels, and a roof, and be located near Linda's wildflower garden. Linda envisions it as a walk-through kiosk with two panels on each side. It would provide information on the Mill Site, and the TTT in general. And with a TTT map box, any TTT map box on the smaller kiosk at Wheeler Lane wouldn't have to be there permanently. This larger kiosk would be in lieu of an observation deck that would have held the four information panels. Linda will go to the Community Preservation Committee (her funding source) as to whether it would have any problem with that switchover (from observation deck to kiosk). Bruce to Linda: When you are ready for a kiosk, we have Eagle Scouts!

Linda plans to have green markers on the parts of the TTT that differ from the Nashoba Brook yellow trail. Bettina and Linda will make the rounds of the trails and identify everywhere there s/b green arrows — single or double. Bruce pointed out that the CPC would love to mark the TTT green trails on

LSC maps. Linda is willing to cooperate in any way.

In the future, Linda plans to stay involved, but won't be doing fieldwork. She and Jim suggest that the LSC consider having someone as Steward of the TTT.

Concord Water Department Project at Nagog Pond

Carolyn presented the Nagog project, a project well known in Town with everyone who's interested already "clued in on it." The point of this presentation being that the opponents of the project would like the LSC to voice its position.

The two biggest things of interest to the LSC are 1) the solar panel array and 2) total fencing of the Concord Water property, both occurring on land that abuts Nagog Hill Conservation Land (CL). The solar panels will be not far from and facing the 20-ft wide Conservation easement containing the trail that joins three Acton neighborhoods to the CL. (The trail will be passing through "an industrial site" according to Carolyn.) A large number of trees will be removed. Fencing will impact access trails to the CL and wildlife corridors. It will reduce the stewardship of the neighbors. Both the solar-panel array and the fencing will disrupt the aesthetics of the area.

Timing: Originally, construction was to be completed by the end of 2016, but now the completion date has been pushed back to April, 2017.

The LSC guests from the abutting neighborhoods would appreciate knowing the LSC view on the project, "It would be wonderful if the LSC could take a vote on this and let other relevant groups know its position."

Bettina pointed out that the LSC does not have to decide anything at this meeting, but LSC members can get involved with this on their own. The Board of Selectmen (BoS) next meet on this on 04/11, and getting something to the BoS by then would be a "noble goal." Bettina will draft a letter, send it to the Committee to get its edits, then bring it to the LSC March meeting where the Committee could vote approval of the letter

Brainstorming stories for the LSC website

A few articles are posted already. Paula will do the writing, but she needs ideas. Ideas:

- See stories on the old website;
- some things on invasive species;
- geology of the parcels;
- favorite places on the parcels,
- lots of history (e.g., pencil factories), and
- animal stories.

A steward could look through his/her parcel description and pull out some ideas.

Update: Canoe Launch trail

Can postpone to March meeting.

Hemlock Wooly Adelgid at Guggins Brook

Can wait on this.

Update: The LSC website; editing of website pages (Stewards should have theirs done.)

Website is functionally the same as last month. Some stewards have edited the parcel information.

Many have not. Within the last three hours, Jim has sent an email to all of those (except for Stoneymeade and Wetherbee Stewards). There is nothing else that can't wait.

Update: The Assabet River Blue and Green Trails Project

Tom Tidman and Bettina have walked it and have to walk it again, inviting others to have a walking party. They also met with engineers to talk about the trails and the two parking areas.

Beavers at Nashoba Brook

Permission for beaver killing has to come from the Board of Health (BoH). The United States Geologic Survey folks have already set one trap and are going to the BoH Monday night. They need a permit because they want to use a special trap. They are storing a boat near the site. There was a general discussion about beavers.

Morrison Farmhouse: Should 0.5-acre lot containing house be excised from Town land and sold to private interest?

Joe W pointed out that Habitat for Humanity (HfH) is interested in renovating the Morrison farmhouse for use as affordable housing. To do this, the Town would have to rezone so that a standard house lot could be established around the farmhouse and then sold to this private party (HfH). The Morrison Farm Committee (MFC) voted an emphatic "No" to this idea. After not taking any stand on the farmhouse in the past, the MFC then decided that it should now do so and, after discussion, voted that the farmhouse, having been given extensive due consideration, should be demolished. According to Joe, the demolition vote is what is "being heard" by various parties, while the first vote—not privatizing a small parcel of land out of the East Acton Village Green-Ice House Pond-Morrison Farm-Robbins Homestead-Woodlawn Cemetery-Woodlawn Chapel continuum (save for the Rail Trail) has barely caused any ripples. Joe asks that the LSC take a stand on this as its interest, while focusing primarily on CLs, extends to all Town lands.

Bettina will do some fact-finding on this, so there will be no vote of record tonight.

Other parcel information

- Robbins Mill: Needs a sign. Bettina will get one made.
- Spring Hill: Its back-to-back signs (interfacing with other CLs) are done.
- Pacy: Pacy has 3 access points, one each on Tuttle Road, Central Street, and Tupelo Road. Two entrances have signs. There is no sign at the Tuttle entrance. Tom Tidman is in favor of it. Bettina says that we first have to find the easement. Joe H says that it's a 60-ft wide easement.

A discussion ensued related to boundaries of Town land with neighboring private lands. We want people happy with Town actions on abutting Town lands, so we don't want to antagonize the neighbors. (Example: Bob G tells of checking out the Pacy land on the Tuttle side where there could be a beautiful trail, and the neighbors called the police.) Particularly difficult is the issue of a neighbor encroaching on CL. It's best if you can first get the neighbor to "buy in" to non-encroachment, and if a sign is necessary, help with deciding where to put it.

On signs, the Town doesn't put up a sign unless there's a trail. The granite markers you may see were provided by the state when the land was bought.

The north end of Pacy could use some tick awareness.

- Heath Hen Meadow: Paula and Bob G checked out the island winter trail to the tip of the Whitcomb

Land in Stow. There appears to have been lots of human winter activity on the trail.

- Joe W mentioned the four open-space opportunities that the Open Space Committee feels could come to the forefront of consideration soon. These include the 176 Central Street parcel that would become part of the Mt. Hope Cemetery-Heath Hen Meadow lands, and the Magoon property that abuts Great Hill.

Workdate calendar

No discussion.

March agenda

No discussion.

Evaluate meeting

No discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 15, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.