

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 15, 2018, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bob Farra, Paula Goodwin (Vice Chair), Bob Guba, Joe Holmes, Bruce Rachman (Chair), Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Sherman Smith

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison), Dale Chayes (Acton resident), Mackenzie Cooper (Department of Natural Resources job-shadowing intern), Mark Flaum (Acton Boy Scout Troop 1 Troopmaster), Dave Goulet (Stephen Goulet's father), Stephen Goulet (Eagle Scout prospect)

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

Review and approval of April minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously.

Heath Hen Meadow (HHM) Eagle Scout bridge repair — Stephen Goulet and Dave Goulet

Stephen explained his plan for his Eagle Scout project — repairing and raising the bridge at HHM. The bridge was damaged by a falling tree in a late February storm. Also, it regularly experiences high water levels due to downstream beaver damming. Stephen would repair the broken part of the bridge and raise the bridge about 6 in. He would begin the project in the early fall when the water level should be lower and volunteer help would more likely be available. There would be no damage to beaver dams. Stephen is looking for LSC input and will write up his proposal.

Bob G, one of the original bridge builders, thinks it's a great project, particularly the challenging task of raising the bridge. Bob explained a way to raise the bridge (in increments, section by section as railings can take a little stress). He has printed design drawings of the bridge, will give them to Stephen, and invited Stephen to discuss the project further with him.

Stephen explained that he lives "just down the road" from HHM, so getting stuff there will be easy. He has several offers of waders, and the LSC has a battery-powered sawzall that he can borrow. Bob G pointed out the accessibility offered by the fire road from the Mt. Hope parking, but some obstacles will have to be removed from the road. The LSC will help with this and with working out other logistics. Bettina should be Stephen's contact with the Town (and the LSC).

Monthly workdays/projects/sites for the *live blue* Ambassadors (New England Aquarium, Lucy Indge)
Program coordinator Lucy Indge strongly prefers her teams working at HHM for various reasons, including the continuity provided so they can see results. Groups will work at HHM May 26 and June 30, but no other future dates are set. Six to 10 kids will work 9:30 to noon, or so, identifying, pulling and disposing of invasive plants. Generally, the group is given some publicity, including pictures.

Bob G: Perhaps the Ambassadors could be used at Nagog Hill where the clearing of stone walls has left lots of wood that needs to be cut up and moved to burn-piles.

Joe H spoke of an adult version of the Ambassadors working at the Canoe Launch. This won't involve Lucy's group, but Joe is free to get in touch with her to discuss Canoe Launch projects.

Bruce mentioned an infestation of buckthorn at Camp Acton.

Paula will send an email to Lucy on any possible project that is brought to Paula's attention.

In a related discussion about volunteers listed through the Acton Trails website (with background work on the spreadsheet done by Jim and Bettina), Bettina explained the listing process. She pointed out that one can email the whole group (e.g., announcing and describing an upcoming workday) or one can email an individual who has specified that s/he has particular skills.

Acton Trail Map — Town Forest access trails from Quarry Rd

Bob G gave a history of the current red trail that parallels the road to the private artists' quarry/workplace (around which the yellow trail loops). The Town used to pump water from the quarry to what is now NARA. It dug a trench, installed a pipeline, then filled it in. This pathway became the red trail. However, it does not meet the conditions for a red trail; in particular, there is no parking on either side of Quarry Road at the trail's entrance. The trail map doesn't go only to locals. Anyone could come in a vehicle and expect to park and enter the Forest at that point. There is no reason to show an access point when you can't park there. The LSC should eliminate the red trail from the map and possibly fill in the pipeline path with forest debris. Similarly, the dotted trail shown on the NARA side of Quarry Road shouldn't be there. That pathway in NARA should be blocked off. If the LSC agrees, it could ask the Town to do this.

Removing the red trail from the map was moved and seconded. Vote was 4 in favor and 2 against the motion.

For Bob G, Bettina will set up a meeting with Tom Tidman regarding the boulders on each side of Quarry Road at this site.

Acton Trail Map — Trail blazing at Morrison Farm

Jim, Joe H, and Joe W walked the parcel, talked about how to blaze the trails there, and shared the resulting color map with the LSC. Points made in ensuing discussion:

- Should include a trail to the causeway that would link to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) behind the Powers Gallery on Route 2A.
- Should fill in the “backyard trails” too.
- There could be a trail north from the Morrison Farm to the Post Office property if it were possible to gain easements from owners (identified by Joe H) of two private parcels.
- Per Dale (who is heavily involved with search and rescue): Lots of blue trails is a bad idea. We should do trail marking to make it easier to find people.
- Have only have one or two blue trails. Show just one blue that cuts across the parcel. Don't blaze the meadow trail that is now shown in blue. There is no need.
- Joe H can come back with a revised version. Then the LSC can put it to a vote. If there should be blazing on cemetery land, then the plan (that portion at least) should go to the Cemetery Commission.

Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk, Heath Hen Meadow Steward for 2018-19 (vote at June or July meeting?)

Bruce thinks he'll be “moving on” from current position as Chair, but will stay on as a voting member. For Chair, you need someone who can stay on topic, run a business meeting, and understand the details

of things on the agenda. How long must the Chair serve? At least a year. Linda McElroy was Chair for 15 years, Jim for 10 years, Bettina for 1 year, and Bruce for 2 years. Bruce suggests Joe H for Chair. If so, Bruce is willing to be Vice Chair. Election will occur at the June or July meeting.

As for HHM, the LSC is losing a very valuable steward(Paula), and the LSC thanks Paula for her service. Could Jezzana Gruber, current steward of “HHM North”, also be steward of HHM? Bruce will ask her. If Jezzana is unable to do so, the LSC could put up a “want ad” on the HHM kiosk(s).

About other stewards: Dale will take over at Nagog Hill from Elan Riesman (to whom the LSC extends its thanks and appreciation as well). Dale would prefer to be a voting member and, in any case, has to go through the volunteer-approval process, beginning with an appearance before the Volunteer Coordinating Committee. Bettina will advise him on procedure.

The LSC has 9 regular (voting) positions and 15 associate positions. At present, there is room for more associate members. There is a “sort of” opening at Wills Hole/Town Forest as current steward Joe W has expressed interest in being steward for Morrison Farm.

In general, the LSC could advertise Committee openings on its kiosks. Also, it could send a notice to the Volunteer list.

Parcel Business — Wright Hill-Guggins Brook easement trail

Nothing new.

Other Business

- The field mower tires have been fixed.
- From the BFRT, one can see a tree down on the Line-of-March Trail. Bettina will email the landowner, Phoebe Conant.
- Acton Boy Scout Troop 1 is still using Scoutland, accessing it from Canterbury Hill Road.
- Bob G, Bruce, and Dale will survey the boardwalks at Nagog Hill.
- Bettina has to create a purchase order for the Camp Acton project. As part of the project, she will call the Axe Brothers Tree Service to take down some trees.
- At Nashoba Brook, Bruce removed the Davis Road kiosk roof that was on the ground.

June 19 agenda

There should be discussion on the BFRT in conjunction with Acton Conservation Land (notably Nashoba Brook), the Bay Circuit Trail, and possibly a(nother) trail to Westford. For discussion:

At the Pencil Factory, there should be one unified historical site. This would require a site study, and money. To be historically compatible, there couldn’t be a causeway (a major project) there, but there should be something, restored enough, to provide for pedestrians. Also, any significant historical items presently in the brook should be pulled out and, along with other historical artifacts, be appropriately displayed.

The Westford Trail Committee is interested in talking with the LSC and will be on the June agenda.

Representative(s) of the LSC (Laurie, along with Tom Tidman?) and Steve Spaggs of the Carlisle Land Trust could plan to meet with Betty Valentine on changing the easement on the Valentine land to allow for a much better connection with the BFRT. Laurie will talk with Tom about this.

Evaluate meeting

Participants “can evaluate the meeting on your way out.” No evaluations.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 19, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.