

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 18, 2018, Town Hall, Room 121, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Dale Chayes, Bob Farra, Joe Holmes (Chair), Bruce Rachman (Vice Chair), Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Jim Salem, Sherman Smith, Jim Snyder-Grant

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison), Brian Dranka (Acton citizen)

Joe H called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. with 4 voting members present — Dale, Joe H, John, and Joe W. Per the “Town of Acton Committee Handbook,” Joe H designated Jim S-G to be a voting member for the duration of the meeting.

Citizens' Concerns

None.

Review and approval of November minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously.

LSC Meeting's Norms and Expectations — Joe H

In an effort to have a meeting run more smoothly with more control and less socializing, Joe H would like the committee to agree on meeting norms, rather than norms having to be imposed.

Discussion points:

- When Jim S-G was Chair, he had time limits and assigned a time keeper, which can be “incredibly effective.”
- It would be wonderful if people could come to a meeting having read any background info, so that no time would have to be spent on it.
- All should try to stick to the agenda. If you would like to speak, raise your hand.
- Sometimes there can be “rounds” whereby everyone has a chance to say something. This allows a shy person a chance to say something, and everybody knows they will have an opportunity to speak.
- Try a timekeeper; try rounds. Don’t abandon a tactic if it doesn’t work one time.
- Have someone other than the Chair keep time. As an example, Dale became timekeeper for this meeting.
- What is helpful to the Chair for getting a meeting back on track? Part of it is recognizing that it is off track.
- For a more orderly meeting, raise a hand to get attention, call out norm violations, don’t talk until the Chair recognizes you.
- Encourage people to arrive on time, or arrive early for one-on-one special discussions (e.g., bridge plans) and to get some socializing time with friends.”
- On the agenda, put amounts of time for a topic (e.g., 10 min) that would seem likely to require, say, 5 min or longer, but do not set times (e.g., 7:30 p.m.) for starting discussion of a topic (except in special cases).

– Jim shared a list of some of the ideas he heard:

Be on time, be ready to start the meeting at 7.
Be prepared for the meeting.
No interruptions.
One person at a time.
Time the agenda items — if facilitator wants.
Take responsibility for staying on topic.
Speak when it's your turn.
Speak loudly enough when it is your turn to be heard.
If you can't hear, it's always good to say so.
Facilitator can decide that folks raise hands.
Facilitator can use rounds.
Facilitator gets to set format.
Facilitator can get a time-keeper volunteer.
Give facilitator respect and support.

LSC personnel — Trail blazer

Jim S-G would like to write a note to the LSC Volunteers saying that the current LSC Trail Blazer, Peggy Liversidge, would be happy to help a volunteer become a blazing person . . . this could even be a current LSC member. Per Jim, the LSC has had two trail blazers over 20 years (although some folks have done their own blazing). It's an established, long-term role. The Acton Trails website has Blazing Guidelines:

<https://www.actontrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/TrailCuttingBlazingRev3.pdf>

and the LSC can screen and help with training.

The “sense of meeting” was that Jim can proceed with the search.

LSC personnel — Guggins steward

Jim S-G is in his last few months as land steward for Guggins Brook. He would like to send out an announcement to the LSC Volunteers, similar to the Trail Blazer announcement, re a need for a new steward for Guggins Brook. Suggestions: Check with Guggins Brook neighbors for anyone interested; put a sign on the Guggins Brook kiosk. However, be careful about this as Guggins needs a lot of work — its tasks are not as well-defined as are a blazer's and can be labor intensive. Bettina will create a flyer on this and will run it past Joe H. The need can also be posted on the Acton Trails website.

LSC personnel — Wills Hole/Town Forest steward

Nothing new.

Trails and Trailheads — New trail on new Grassy Pond (Newtown Road) parcel

Committee members have walked it multiple times and flagged it. Linda McElroy, who wanted assurance that the trail not be a threat to possible Native American stonework on the parcel, is okay with the current plan. Cub Scout Pack 1, chartered out of the Church of the Good Shepherd which is across Newtown Road from the new trailhead, will steward the trail.

Approval of the trail was moved and voted unanimously.

Trails and Trailheads — To show (or not) parking locations on maps at trailheads w/o parking lots (e.g.,

on streets)

Concern was expressed at the November LSC meeting that the Acton Trails maps are marking legal parking (e.g., street parking) that is not on Conservation Land (CL). Jim S-G gave two reasons why he thought the LSC could show such marking.

1. Jim talked with the Town about any legal risk. Since such parking is legal parking, a map can suggest that it would be a “fine place” to park. There should be a clear way to tell such parking on LSC maps. Currently the marking is an encircled P (e.g., at the Kelley Road entrance to Great Hill).
2. For years, the LSC parcel write ups have been telling where to park. The write ups call them out, but our maps don’t. Judgment is involved here for on-street parking. For example, it’s LSC’s choice to not put Ps on Piper Road (for Great Hill parking) where parking would be legal, but quite likely unsafe. Such judgment calls have been made for the Town’s rail trails. (An example of non-CL parking that is off-street occurs at NARA, where an uncircled P is used in a NARA lot alongside the Wills Hole/Town Forest map.)

We have criteria for labeling parking, but it needs to be written down. It’s legal to park anywhere you do not see “No parking” signs.

Jim, “hearing” that members seem okay with using a symbol (that could be changed later to something other than an encircled P) for on-street parking where such parking would be legal and safe, asked for a Committee vote on this. There was agreement that the LSC should do this so the maps will match the parcel descriptions. The mapping group will come back with a specific symbol proposal for each of the two types of parking.

Trails and Trailheads — Parking at the Discovery Museum trailhead

Per Joe H: Is it okay to use a P (see previous item) for the Great Hill trailhead at the Discovery Museum? There is a trail between the trailhead and a museum parking lot. (Here the meeting digressed to a brief discussion regarding the Museum’s proposed accessible trail into Great Hill.) The Committee will shelve this parking symbol concern until it learns more from the Museum.

Other Acton Trails website items — New online map features

1. The map shows parking lots along rail trails. See, for examples, the P at the Ice House Pond parking and the P behind Donelan’s Supermarket.
2. The map shows a complete Bay Circuit Trail through Acton, except for the short crossing of Scoutland. Laurie, Acton’s representative on the BCT Committee, expressed concern that this LSC map depiction of the BCT from the intersection of Routes 27 and 225 (along the BFRT to the Nashoba Sportsmen’s Club, then along Rte. 27) to Carlisle Road has not been approved by BCT officials. Instead the BCT is waiting to learn whether the Valentine land easement comes through. If it does, then the BCT would proceed from the intersection of Routes 27 and 225 along the BFRT for about 300 ft to an entrance to the Valentine land, and cross the Valentine land to Carlisle Road. A BCT map shows such a gap south from 27 and 225. Laurie believes that the Acton Trails map should do likewise. Joe H and Laurie will discuss further “offline”.

Unrelated observation: On the map, the Stoneymeade meadows don’t show up like the Morrison farm meadow does.

Other Acton Trails website items — Recruiting mapping help

Jim S-G would like to seek help in working on the Acton Trails maps from LSC Volunteers. The LSC expressed no concerns with this.

Other parcel information/issues

- Burn piles. Discussion points:

- Even though it used to be common practice, people now think it's a good idea not to burn.
- Burning must be legal. Nobody burns without permission. If people want to burn, go through Natural Resources (Bettina).
- There is a burn pile on Wright Hill . . . Jim S should get permission for a burn. Nagog Hill also has burn piles. Dale suggests that these be moved.
- If stewards don't burn anymore, they should build the debris piles in the woods, not the meadows. If they get permission to burn, they must do it safely, per Town regulations. Fires can go for a long time.
- If a pile is to be in the woods, make sure beforehand that there are no invasives involved.
- There needs to be some level of guidelines for burning.
- Burn permits are clear, but these should be reviewed.
- There is no way to get the Town chipper to help reduce burn piles, in general.
- This is not a burning issue for a lot of people.
- Make a list of where burn piles are and discuss each individually — a future agenda item when such a list exists.

- Camp Acton

When will aggregate be delivered to Camp Acton? When the Town can fit it into a schedule.

- Nagog Hill

No tractor can get to the demolished shed until the ground is frozen. Several volunteers will be needed for moving the debris, although not many should be present when forklifts are working.

- Great Hill

The gate now is locked, after a truck had crossed the meadow in an illegal logging attempt on a downed oak tree.

- Nashoba Brook

The status of a proposed bridge near the pencil factory was reviewed. See November minutes. To do any bridge work here, it is best to wait until the spring.

New Business

The Town offered Open Meeting Law (OML) Training on this day. OML discussion points at this meeting:

- All formal subcommittees, even one of only two people, are subject to the OML. Informal groups are not.
- It is not a violation of OML for the Committee Clerk to send out draft minutes to the entire committee, as long as comments are sent only to the Clerk. It is a violation of OML for members to cc any other committee member on such comments. Any revised minutes that reflect such comments can be shared with the whole committee for discussion only at an official committee meeting.
- There should be no LSC business-related emails sent among committee members, even among sub-quorum subsets, because of the risk of email forwarding creating a quorum.
- There should be nothing in meeting minutes that did not happen at the meeting.
- No LSC member can e-respond to a query and cc the whole committee unless the question and answer are entirely about logistics or facts. Should there be an email with a question about a matter that the committee might be voting on, only the Chair (no other committee member) should respond, and only to the sender. On any single-recipient e-response, a committee member can let the whole

committee know that s/he responded, but cannot include the content of what s/he said. Bettina (not on the Committee) can respond. In general, let Bettina respond to public inquiries. She too can let the Committee know that she's responded. If a committee member has related thoughts to share, route them through Bettina only.

– When LSC members walk through the woods together, can they talk to each other? Per Jim S-G, this was discussed a few years ago. Generally, such talk is not committee business, it's just talk to do whatever work is underway. Jim will find and pass out this information to the Committee again.

January agenda

Burn piles.

Discovery museum trailhead parking.

Evaluate meeting

This was more orderly than the past couple meetings. The hand thing was awkward, but seemed to work. This meeting was much better — especially Dale keeping time. A good meeting!

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 P.M.

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