

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 16, 2020, Virtual Meeting, 7 P.M.

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members:



Dale Chayes



Bob Farra



Zanna Gruber



Joe Holmes



Bruce Rachman



Laurie Ullmann



John Watlington



Joe Will

(Note: There is one regular membership open on the Committee.)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Andy Gatesman, Josh Haines, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, Nan Towle Millett, **Aaron Moore**, Jim Salem, **Sherman Smith**, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), **Jon Campbell** (Acton resident), **Mel Lima** (Acton resident), **Kathie Watt** (Acton Resident, Children's Discovery Museum staff)

Mel is interested in applying for Sherman's position as Steward for Pratts Brook.

1. Opening

Bruce opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m., with a quorum of 6 voting members present — Bob, Zanna, Joe H, Bruce, Laurie, and Joe W.

Bruce read the script provided by the Town for remotely-conducted open meetings.

2. Regular Business

Review and approval of May 18 minutes

Approval was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call.

Citizens' concerns

• Pump track revisited

Bruce sent a letter from the LSC to the Board of Selectmen (BoS) which reflected the vote from the May meeting supporting the pump track at Wills Hole/Town Forest, as well as the Committee's related concerns. Bruce shared a copy of the letter on screen and read it aloud. Bettina will send a copy to the Committee. Per Bettina, the topic is tentatively on the 06/27 BoS agenda. Selby and Tom Tidman would present pump-track details (how to build, etc.) to the BoS. Bettina gave directions on how to find the BoS agenda online and

pointed out that any Committee member can attend the BoS meeting and comment again if so desired. Aaron, steward of Wills Hole/Town Forest, reiterated that he doesn't approve of the project at the proposed site.

Russell Mill in Chelmsford is a nearby example of a completed pump track.

- Discovery Museum trail

For its visitors, the Discovery Museum promotes "Bessie's Trail", a 6-min loop over Great Hill trails that are blazed red, blue, and yellow. The three colors make it difficult to give museum-goers easily-understood directions and some of them get lost. Kathie would like to fix this with a system — in place in time for the Museum's re-opening later this summer — that would allow for very simple but effective hiking directions.

The ensuing discussion showed that the LSC is supportive of some distinctive trail marking, possibly

- an additional single-color blaze,
- arrows,
- sign posts at trail intersections (where people really need help),
- wooden markers with a special image on them, or
- a second, unique blaze in the form of markers, like those used for the Bay Circuit Trail or the Trail Through Time. The blaze would include an image that museum-goers can relate to — the simpler and cleaner the better. It would allow for simple Discovery Museum instruction like



"Here's an example of our Bessie's Trail marker that you are going to follow." It would provide for a system that could be set up quickly, like in a month. The idea of a special marker, such as a disk like Bettina has used for the Assabet River Blue and Green trail, sounded "great" to Kathie. Bettina and Kathie will talk offline about this.

It was moved, seconded and voted unanimously by roll call that the LSC approve the request by the Discovery Museum to add some blazing to their Discovery Museum loop using some sort of small disk or marker.

During the above discussion, Joe H also suggested that the LSC make sure 1) that all blazes (and, consequently, markers) that are supposed to mark the loop are indeed there, and 2) that the trail that branches off to the private (Nylander) property be identified as doing just that — an identification that John agrees should be done, but probably would disappear rather quickly.



Covid-19 issues

- Bruce has seen a lot more trail usage than he's ever seen, with nothing but good behavior from the users. The trails are great. It's dry, and there's not a lot of bugs.
- John has noticed that Massachusetts state parks have stopped using paper maps because of Covid-19. He's not noticed that Acton ever did, but is Acton back to normal on this? Bettina: The Acton Board of Health has never made any requirements regarding our paper maps.

Parcel Concerns

• The field mower

Bruce has concern involving use of “the beast”. It wouldn’t start for Bruce at Wetherbee. Joe H had tried to use it the same day without success. Has anyone else used it? John said that it was running fine for him (“started right up on the second pull”), but it is a beast. Bettina and a friend worked on it for 2-3 h. Bettina described problems they had and things they did, and eventually it was working fine. It starts well when it’s cold, but not when it’s hot. Others shared problems that they have had with the mower. Bettina couldn’t find the manual that had been, and is supposed to be, in the shed. Bruce tried to find it online with no success. The mower is probably from a small-volume manufacturer and doesn’t have a manual. One could, however, get a manual for just the stock motor.

• Naming parcels

Joe H pointed out that one thing put off from last meeting was talking about the name for the Caouette-Simeone parcel. He shared this picture of one of two existing signs, paid for by the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), that have been made for the parcel and are now in Tom Tidman’s office. The wording on the sign is what was wanted by the ACT and the Sudbury Valley Trustees. A question is, “What does the LSC want to call this land?” The LSC had developed Acton Conservation Land Naming



Guidelines that mention things to check in the naming process, a process that concludes with the LSC recommending a name for the Conservation Commission to vote on. In this case, Joe is seeking Committee thoughts and approval of a name. Points made:

- The Caouette-Simeone parcel was not donated to the Town. It was sold to the Town by Mary Ann Caouette, who felt strongly that the Simeone name should be preserved. Adjacent to the parcel is the Stonefield Farm for which some sort of preservation agreement might be negotiated by the Town, so it’s important that Mary Ann be happy and possibly help “grease the wheels” for future acquisition of this land.
- Most of the Town parcels have the name “Conservation Land.” But this is one of the few farms in Acton owned by the Town, so in this sense, we could call it the “Caouette-Simeone Farmland” of the “Caouette-Simeone Farm”. Joe was thinking that either of these would be a good name for the parcel until he received the picture of the sign.
- Exceptions to parcels having “Conservation Land” in their names are the Arboretum, the Canoe Launch, and two that include “Town Forest”.
- There are three uses of “conservation” in the sign shown. Why not go with something nice and clean, like the “Morrison Farm” sign?
- It might be good to review the LSC Naming Guidelines that we put together a few years ago for some guidance.
- The first two lines of this sign should be adequate — without all the fine print underneath.
- Those named in the fine print were involved in the acquisition of the parcel and probably want their names on it.
- This is a metal sign, not wooden like our others.
- This is not worth battling over. It’s just a sign.
- If there is a conservation restriction on the land, its sign should mention this.
- If the Town were to gain some sort of right to the adjacent Stonefield Farm, the LSC could re-consider the Caouette-Simeone Conservation Land name at that point.

It was moved, seconded and voted unanimously by roll call that the LSC accept the sign (shown above) as is.

- Nashoba Brook south bridge

Joe W pointed out another item that was left on the table at the May meeting so that Laurie would be able to address it, viz. the structural integrity of the south bridge over Nashoba Brook. According to Laurie, he and Bruce checked it out and it seems fine in general.

- Grassy Pond beaver activity

Kathie wondered about the Grassy Pond long boardwalk in from Newtown Road. Beavers have built a dam where water flows out of the pond close to the Newtown Road intersection with Arlington Street. The dam caused the water level of the pond to rise and flood the boardwalk. (The water level has now receded due to the dry weather.) The flooding caused some damage to the boardwalk and also caused users to be creative in making the boardwalk passable. Joe H confirmed that the boardwalk is due for some maintenance. Bruce and Bettina will check this out. Joe H may join them.

Online maps new feature(s)

Joe H showed the current map for Morrison Farm and pointed out the trail that Peggy Liversidge has blazed blue (running roughly E/W immediately inside the woods north of the meadow). Joe plans to change the map accordingly and also put in the rest of the yellow trail loop. This will complete the map with respect to what the stewards wanted to show, so maps can be printed for the Farm's map box.



Joe W asked about a new post at the intersection of the red trail from the cemetery with the yellow trail in the meadow. Joe H installed it and plans to mount a double yellow arrow and a single red arrow on it. Joe H assumes that since the field mower doesn't knock down nearby bluebird houses, it won't knock down this post. Also, Joe plans to use another bluebird house post for another yellow arrow.

Next month's (July 21) agenda

Nothing mentioned.

Evaluate meeting

Nothing mentioned.

5. Adjournment

At 8:00 p.m., the meeting adjourned.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, July 21, at 7 P.M.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of May 18, 2020