

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 15, 2022, 7 P.M., Zoom

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: **Jon Campbell, Dale Chayes, Zanna Gruber** (Vice-Chair), **Aaron Moore, Bruce Rachman, Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington** (Chair), **Joe Will** (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Josh Haines, Everett Kenerson, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, **Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, Bethany Nichols, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Todd Tsakiris, Tom Wolf**

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources, briefly), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT), **Hilary Reid** (Acton citizen)

Opening

John opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of November 16 and January 18 minutes

For the November minutes, Joe needed to update the Attendees information.

It was moved, seconded, and voted by roll call 7-0 with Jon abstaining (not at November meeting) to accept the November minutes as amended.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call to accept the January minutes as presented.

Concerns from the public

None.

New/Special Business

New steward for Robbins Mill

Bettina introduced Hilary who is volunteering to be the steward for Robbins Mill Conservation Land.

LSC Annual Report

Bettina sent out drafts, got back and incorporated good edits, and put the Report on the ODrive. If anyone has questions or wants to read it, let Bettina know . . . and she thanks everyone for all the help.

Trail routings and re-routings, new and updates (10 min)

In general, some trail reroutes below a certain distance are the responsibility of the steward and needn't be brought before the LSC. Following is the status of more significant reroutes:

- At Great Hill, John believes that a rerouting of the steep portion of the yellow trail south of the Kelley Road entrance is still too steep and more work has to be done at the bottom end, possibly another zig-zag.
- Also at Great Hill, Bethany and John suggest that we not consider a vote on the white-flagged trail on the Magoon land until the weather is better and more folks have had a chance to walk it.

- Bruce is urging the rerouting at Spring Hill of a portion of the yellow trail. He proposes that the reroute (shown in orange below) be along the nearby stone wall. The existing trail is not that good in dry conditions with numerous boulders, and with current snow/ice conditions, it is “downright dangerous.”



Questions?

- What's involved with this new trail? Mark it, cut it, and redo the map. Few, if any, stones would have to be moved.
- How much trail has to be cut? An estimated 100-110 ft.
- How do we close off the old trail so it doesn't become a “both” sort of thing? Usually using dead wood.
- Could we close the stone wall in this case? Shouldn't be necessary. Might have to reroute the Jay Lane red trail connection about 5 ft.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call to accept the proposed trail reroute.

- At previous meetings, there was discussion about a short reroute at Nagog Hill, but there has been no LSC vote of approval.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call that the entrance trail from the Nagog Hill parking lot out to the big meadow be rerouted to sit along the side of the nearby stone wall to provide a drier trail and allow for disposal of the bog bridge that is coming apart.

Invasive plants Eagle Scout project

The Scout for this project is a young man turning 18 in June so he would have to crank up the project quickly. There was a group discussion including the Scout who was advised by Bettina, John, Gary Kilpatrick and others on the possible project and things he could and could not do. Bettina has not heard anything more from the Scout since then.

ABRHS Senior Community Service Day 2022 (ABRHSSCSD2022)

Melissa Dempsey of Acton-Boxborough Regional High School had sent an email that ABRHS was resuming its Senior Community Service Day after a Covid layoff. The Service Day would be on April 29, 9:45 am to 12:45 pm, but proposals have to be submitted to Melissa by March 3.

Questions:

- Any adult who would work with the youth on this would have to be CORI'd, but by whom, the High School or the Town? Unclear. Bettina will find out more about this.
- Do we know of any possible projects? Usually that would be up to the steward who would want to work with the students.

Bettina spoke of her past experiences with student work days, the overseer's responsibilities, and the detail that must be attended to. She will follow up with an e-review of these things to stewards.

Additional Regular Business

Parcel issues

– Great Hill cistern, and the like

John's concern centers on someone falling through the cistern cover as we have no idea of the state of the cover, and we have no idea of what's inside the cistern. John Chalmers, who lives on Piper Road on land abutting the Gaebel land, suggests getting a big metal plate for a cover, and he would be willing to help install it. Tom Tidman plans to have a look at it on a site walk that Bettina will set up when the snow melts. She will report back to the LSC and the LSC will have another look and evaluate.

John had mentioned other sites in Great Hill for such installations from the past, but he is not concerned about those as he is aware of what's inside and has no concern about anyone falling into any of them.

There is an installation at Wetherbee that John and Bob Guba covered about 10 years ago. John expects revisit and inspect it.

Per Bruce, there is an installation at Camp Acton that's about 12 ft deep, but it is so hidden as to not be a matter of concern.

In general, the LSC should make sure that information like the above is passed on when a parcel gets a new steward.

– Heath Hen Meadow (HHM) bridge 01/25 CPC presentation recap

Bettina delivered a “great” presentation to the CPC. John added a comment to the effect that if this bridge does not get built, then it will disappear. The Select Board “prioritized” Town projects into “High”, “Medium” and “Low” categories at its 01/24 meeting. The HHM project was one of five in “Medium” (none in “Low”). The CPC deliberations on all projects are scheduled to begin 03/08.

If there is no funding this year, the current bridge will survive at least a year (thanks to Bruce's recent work on it) and next year there could be a sign at the bridge to get people to show up at the CPC meeting and show support. Also, if funding does make it to Town Meeting this year, showing up at Town Meeting to support the project is a good idea.

Still to be determined: How to anchor the beaver deceivers in the middle of the stream? Rebar, using a little hooky-doodle (check with Bettina).

– Morrison Farm update — Bettina on 02/08 meeting

Bettina, Morene Bodner (member of Agricultural Commission), Town Manager John Mangiaratti, Town Planner Kristen Guichard, Assistant Town Planner Kaila Sauer, and Julie Pierce Onos, Town Economic Development Director, met to talk about the plans that Bettina shared with the LSC at its 12/21/21 meeting. The group was favorable to the idea, but the Town Manager asked that this be tabled until after Town Meeting so the focus can better be on the Asa Parlin house project — to which the group agreed. John noted that the Morrison Farm plans should also include removal of the “junkyard” behind the barn.

– Nagog Hill/Grassy Pond orienteering

Dale attended the Conservation Commission meeting two weeks ago. For most of the time, there was no quorum so the Cons Comm didn't vote on the Valentine-land trail in North Acton. Dale provided the Cons Comm with some information on orienteering (that the LSC has talked about it several times, and that he has shared information on his proposal with Tom Tidman on a site visit) and his proposal is on the Cons Comm agenda tomorrow night. The Valentine-land trail is also on the agenda for formal approval of a Notice of Intent. The hang-up on that project is that it cannot be approved unless it has a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) file number, and to get that number, the project has to

provide the DEP with a filing fee. It had been felt that such a project for a public trail didn't need a filing fee, but a fee is necessary because the trail is to be on private land.

– Other

There will be an Order of the Arrow (scouting) work party coming up to put in the orienteering course if Cons Comm approves the orienteering project. If there is no approval, the work party will do something else constructive.

Updates

– Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Nothing in particular to report on it right now, but if people want to look through the "just expired" OSRP, it can be found on the Town website:

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-50377/2015%20Acton%20OpenSpace.pdf>

– Trail blazing

Bill wondered whether plastic tags have been considered, instead of paint, to mark trails. Plastic tags and other types of blazes have been used on Acton trails. Right now, little medallions are being used for the Assabet River Blue & Green Trail. The Discovery Museum uses plastic tags (showing Bessie) for its little loop at Great Hill. Plastic tags are expensive and people can steal them. When used for a long term, they have to be attached so that they can be loosened over time to avoid having the tree envelope them. Paint works really well: It is easy to use, inexpensive, cannot be stolen, and does not contaminate (although a paint blaze (facetiously) condemns the tree).

– Website — Volunteer/Sawyer confusion

Peg Sestrich has fixed a home page layout problem that caused people who wanted to volunteer to send such a message to the sawyers instead of to the volunteer site.

Peg is moving to Montana but she can still work with the LSC.

– Other website/email issues

A link on the LSC website to "meetings" yields a list of meetings from a few years ago. Needs to be fixed. The Town website lists LSC members. The list needs to be updated.

Tom Wolf is still not on the LSC email shell. Bettina will notify the Town officials who can fix this.

– Maps — New for Wright Hill

Bettina is emailing with Jim Salem about this. She is waiting for a response to her most recent email. Jon has some feedback on this that he will share with Bettina offline. No responses from any other LSC folks. A while back, Bob Walton did a generous community service project . . . buying appropriate supplies and sending a list to Bettina about where he would like additional poster shelters to go on different trails.

Bettina can run this list by Tom Wolf (who asked about map shelters). Bettina could also send a request to all committee members to list any "You Are Here" map-shelter needs on their parcels.

Dale has a map box, and a new sign and sign post, for the Grassy Pond entrance to Nagog Hill. He'll install same when the ground thaws.

Bettina has one map box on hand. Bruce had made 6 boxes that have all been installed. He can make more if needed (although he has a kiosk to make yet!).

Next month's (March 15) agenda

John will resume his presentations on invasives.

John notes that it's almost garlic mustard picking season. Also, freezing weather affords a good time to get into parcel areas that are difficult to get into at other times so as to cut Asian bittersweet. It's really easy to identify.

Bettina introduced Hillary who is interested in becoming steward for Robbins Mill. Bettina will reveal to Hillary the location of the key to the shed and give her a tour of same. Bettina also plans to remain employed by with the Town until "at least January" instead of leaving Town employment at the end of June, which is when Tom Tidman will be retiring. Bettina shared more information about the 06/22 event honoring Tom at NARA. The LSC should be thinking about what it might want to also do for Tom. Bettina continues to raise the chainsaw training issue with the Town, and she shared a video of a recent moose appearance on the east side of Acton.

Adjournment

8:14 pm

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 15, at 7 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Draft Meeting Minutes of November 16, 2021
- Draft Meeting Minutes of January 18, 2021;