

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 20, 2022, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

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

Associate (nonvoting) members: Josh Haines, Everett Kenerson, Gary Kilpatrick, **Mel Lima, Bob Mackin**, Jim Salem, **Hilary Reid**, Bill Smith, Todd Tsakiris

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Conservation), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Rebecca Harvey** (Acton citizen), **Bob Walton** (Acton citizen)

Opening

Aaron opened the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of August 16 minutes

Minutes not yet available. Moved to October agenda.

Concerns from the public

Bettina will send LSC's expressions of gratitude to retiring Committee members Laurie Ullman and Phil Keyes for their 30 years of service.

Invasive plants 2022, Part 6

John shared information on mugwort and Japanese barberry using these PowerPoint slides:




Mugwort ([Artemisia Vulgaris](#))

A weed (it may grow up to 6' tall)

Spreads mostly by root rhizomes, but also by seed.

Regular cutting to control, if pulling can't be done.

Check: leaves and root rhizomes



Mugwort is a grassy weed that appears frequently at edges of parking lots and all over the edges at the Arboretum. It spreads by root rhizomes (Def: continuously growing horizontal underground stem which puts out lateral shoots and adventitious roots at intervals). John has been quite successful at pulling it up. There are a number of native plants that are “close” to mugwort. To correctly identify it, you may have to look closely at the individual leaflets (silver on the back), and also the root rhizomes. A good indicator that you’ve found mugwort is that the pulled plant gives off a very pleasant smell.

Japanese Barberry ([Berberis thunbergii](#))

A low bush (although it may grow up to 8' tall)

Spreads mostly by seed, but also by buried stems.

Regrows from buried stems.

Repeated cuttings at ground level and/or pulling of roots required to kill.



Check: yellow root and stem wood, straight thorns

Japanese barberry has little fine spikes with its little leaves. Native barberry seems to be completely gone. There is a native plant that looks like barberry but it does not have any spikes and you should try to leave it alone. To check that you are actually pulling out barberry, you should see an amazingly bright yellow once you cut the root or the stem right near the root.

Valentine property boardwalk assistance w/Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF)

Bettina spoke to a request by Steve Tobin of the CCF for help from anyone interested in building boardwalks on the trail easement across the Valentine property in North Acton. That trail will become part of the Bay Circuit Trail, but not an LSC trail, per se. There was brief discussion on CCF’s aim to use concrete bumpers for the boardwalks sills.

Bridges

– Jenks

Bettina reviewed the situation re the Fort Pond Brook culvert on the entrance trail to Jenks. A problem is that the current culvert is undersized. Culverts are supposed to be 1.2 times bank-full width. After consulting Mike Callahan of Beaver Solutions (also the Beaver Institute) and Town engineers about various possibilities and considering costs, Bettina says the Town is now considering one large concrete culvert. To that end, the Town will be applying for a grant to hire an engineering firm to do a complete study and prepare three proposals — possibly for a trail bridge and other kinds of culverts — for the Town to consider. Then, based on price and efficacy, “we’ll” move forward on getting funding to replace the whole culvert.

– The tractor that mows Jenks is 6 ft wide, so the minimum width of the bridge would have to be 8 ft, but plans would be to make it 10 ft wide.

– A trail bridge could support the weight of a tractor (as is the case with the Assabet River Rail Trail bridge over Fort Pond Brook) but is probably unnecessary as a culvert can be reinforced with granite-block sides. Also, guard rails can be installed with a culvert, and that will be looked at by the engineering firm.

– Heath Hen Meadow

Bettina has her purchase orders and will be ordering needed materials. They will be stockpiled in Scott Howe's yard at the end of Robbins Street. Bettina will set up a work schedule. Folks can e-inform Bettina of their availability for working on the bridge and she will put together some work brigades.

– Nashoba Brook (downstream)

Tom Wolf has the lumber. He met with Bruce to get his ideas on how to approach the project. Now he's looking for a date to schedule the work, probably on a Sunday in October. He is to give Bettina the details on the project, including the maximum number of people needed, and she will pursue volunteers to do the work.

– Caution: Be sure to schedule enough time, like 4 to 8 hours.

– On top of the wood pile beside the shed at Morrison Farm there is a long plank for replacing the railing cap on the bridge at Wheeler Lane. Tom will check it out.

Updates

– Maps

Nothing to update from Jon. Per Bettina, the Town has a new Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Officer, Kristin Alexander.

– Mowing

The Town did a great job of mowing at Great Hill although the mowing occurred before the common sumac turned red so we missed a pretty time of year in the upper meadow. Also, the Town is in the process of mowing Morrison Farm, and that too may be occurring a bit too early as a lot of the milkweed pods have not yet matured into seed form. On the other hand, the Town has lots to mow on the mowing schedule and it is likely difficult for it to abide by mowing requests based on plants blooming, etc. But it doesn't hurt to try such requests. Sam Bell, a contract worker who had been doing part of Morrison Farm and part of Nagog Hill, now will do all the Nagog Hill meadows only. The Town will do all of Morrison Farm. Bettina will be making sure that the Town mows all the meadows at the Arboretum.

– Chainsawing

Dale submitted a list of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that he thinks all of our sawyers should have and has convinced the sawyers that it is stupid to go without. Bettina surveyed the sawyers, compiled a list of the PPE that they don't have, and submitted the list to her supervisor, Kristen Guichard, who should see that these needs will be covered in the Town Budget (between \$2K and \$3K). This is quite likely to be approved as the sawyers are volunteers and they need to be safe. It costs a lot less to have our sawyers outfitted in proper safety attire than it would be for the Town to hire one or two full-time sawyers. The LSC thanks Bettina for pulling all this together.

Bettina also is trying to arrange for another chainsaw training session, something better and more in depth than the last one that was available to the sawyers. She will keep the LSC informed.

– Website

No update.

– Morrison Farm shed

Bettina spoke of some funds available for use at Morrison Farm. She suggested the need for one, possibly two, wheelbarrows, and possibly some new loppers. (John noted that he had sharpened all the loppers that are in the shed within the past year.) Anything purchased would have to have some use at the Farm, but could also be used at other parcels. Any new wheelbarrow(s) would have to be secured by chain outside the shed. Stewards should let Bettina know of any other needs that come to mind.

– LSC membership

Attending this meeting is Rebecca, the prospective steward for Spring Hill and the person who puts some lovely nature videos on YouTube.

We are hoping that Ken Appel will be our new steward for the Canoe Launch and the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail. He's traveling right now but is in the process of being confirmed.

Parcel issues

– Bulette/Town Forest

Bettina, Jody, Mike Gendron, and Laurie Ullman consolidated some trash that had been lined up along the trail that enters the soon-to-be new addition to Bulette at the end of Genevieve Lane. They returned today to dispose of the trash, but a forest fairy, or a multitude of forest fairies, had beaten them to it. Bettina described additional work that needs to be done related to an old dumping site on the property.

– Spring Hill

Rebecca has described a problem with a boardwalk. Bettina is asking John and Bruce to have a look at it and advise, as we could have a volunteer group work on the problem during the ACT's Spring Hill workday on 10/23 (rain date 10/30). Jody already has a good number of volunteers signed up for that workday.

Rebecca described a proposal she is planning for a barbed-wire removal project along the stone walls in Spring Hill. John, and others, are willing to help Rebecca with this, and once figured out, John would like to attack a somewhat similar problem with rusty wire (not barbed) by Morrison Farm's wet meadow.

Next month's (10/18) agenda

Have a five- or ten-minute social period at the end of the meeting.

Evaluate meeting

"Well done, Mr. Chair . . . two thumbs up!"

Adjournment

At 7:56 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 18, at 7 p.m.