

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes

October 19, 2011

Acton Town Hall

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Dave Cochrane, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge, Ann Shubert (minute taker), Jim Snyder-Grant (chair)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Tom Arnold, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Heidi Sikina, Laurie Ullmann

Nonmembers present: Tom Tidman (Natural Resources Director and Town Liaison)

Meeting Minutes: The September minutes were approved.

Associate/Regular members: Both Associate and Regular members can vote, although if the issue is important and opinion is split, the vote will include only Regular members. The nomenclature difference enables the Committee to have an easier time getting a quorum.

Great Hill reroute: There are signs of erosion on the informal trail on the east side of Great Hill. Bob and Philip flagged this trail a while ago, including a switchback reroute of the steepest part, but it has not yet been cut, and Jim questioned whether the Committee wants to go ahead with making it a formal trail. Bettina has asked some users of the trail how they liked the rerouted trail and all were in favor of it. Philip noted it will be necessary to use the bench cutting construction technique to create an almost flat trail surface on the switchbacks. He said that it will be difficult to put the trail in and estimates that it will take 8 people approximately 6 hours to complete the job. Jim said that there is no rush on the job and it might be possible to wait for an EMS work day or have it be an Eagle Scout project. Philip said that he might be able to borrow some needed tools from NEMBA. Bettina could write up a draft of the project once Philip gives her the pertinent information. Philip said that only one tree on the trail would require the use of a chainsaw. Philip and Bob both agreed that this is one of our more challenging projects.

“You Are Here” notice boards: Philip said that the “You Are Here” signs at Spring Hill are unreadable because they have been there for about a year, nails have perforated the lamination allowing water to get in, and there is sun fading. The “You Are Here” signs at Great Hill are in frames. The frames work but cost about \$50 each. Possibly the price would be lower if more were purchased. Philip will check on the lowest price and get back to Bettina. It was agreed that up to \$500 could be spent to buy more frames for the “You Are Here” signs.

Encroachment enforcement update: There was discussion of how to approach the dumping of trash on Town property, especially along the Capt. Handley access trail. Tom Arnold will draft a letter after going out to view the situation with Jim. Joan suggested that sample letters from the NOLO books could be used as a guide. There is a file drawer of such letters in Tom Tidman's office.

Chainsaw training: Dean Charter is willing to train more people in the safe use of a chainsaw. Bruce, Dave, and Josh Haines are interested. Bob said that there is a need for more tools – especially chaps and helmets with eye protection. Dean does show people how to sharpen their chainsaws. This is not too difficult. Jim will contact Dean, who can work with the three above to come up with a time for their instruction. Bettina will be the link for getting chaps and helmets.

Debrief on 8 Green Community Service Day: All were very pleased with the work done by the 8th graders on their community service day. They did work at Nashoba Brook, the Arboretum, Guggins, and Grassy Pond.

Tree removal along Nashoba Brook: Dean Charter is going to remove some of the big trees along the stream at Nashoba Brook. Tom Tidman will check with the Conservation Commission to see if a filing for this work has been completed. The old building at the Wheeler Lane entrance to Nashoba Brook has been removed.

Debrief on volunteer appreciation event: About 20 people came to this fun event. There were a few high school students. The food was excellent. Bettina will send thank you notes to those who brought food. The feeling is that this is a worthwhile event.

Volunteer encouragement strategies: Jim sends a note of thanks to those who sign up to volunteer. In the letter he asks them what kind of work they want to do. Someone is needed to sustain the group of volunteers. Philip said he could send out a note directing them to the minutes should they want to read them in order to be better informed.

Nagog Hill/Hybrid Farm update: Bettina and Tom Arnold met with Rita McConnon regarding her use of Nagog Conservation Land for her horses. In the 1980s she had an agreement with the Town whereby she purchased 2 acres from the Town and it was agreed that 8 horses could graze on the Nagog Hill meadow. Now she has 30 horses that have been grazing on the land. This has been very destructive. The matter is being taken up for consideration by the Conservation Commission.

Follow-up on bench policy discussion: The Committee approved of the information in Jim's bench policy letter. It will be presented to the Conservation Committee with the hope that they will adopt this policy. Much thanks went to Joan for her work on this issue.

Scout Land update: We will need Bill Klauer's permission to lay out the Bay State circuit trail over Scout land. Dave will contact Bill Klauer once he receives an email from Jim as to how to accomplish this.

Quail Ridge update: Jim was contacted by Pulte Homes who are anxious to complete the trail that will cross a piece of the Quail Ridge property. Jim met with Mark Mastrianni and Jim Bardoleno and they worked out the trail construction details. Jim will send them the text for the signs to be placed on Quail Ridge indicating where the trail goes.

Evaluation of meetings: Jim would like feedback regarding our meetings as to what went well, what could be improved and so forth. Bob suggested that there be an indication in our agendas as to which items are urgent or need acting upon. Joan would like the agenda items to be taken in the order listed. Tom A. would limit the number of agenda items.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40. The next meeting will be held on November 16 at 4:00 PM.