

R E C E I V E D
Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2013
Acton Town Hall

JUL 1 2013

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Laurie Ullmann

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman

Nonmembers present: Hart Millett, Tom Tidman (Director of Natural Resources and LSCom's Town staff liaison), Joe Will

Meeting minutes: The January minutes were approved with one change about meadow management plans: there are two such plans for Heath Hen Meadow, so an adjustment is needed to reflect this.

Mapping group: The mapping group has been making good progress on several fronts, which Jim described with the help of a projector hooked up to his computer:

Volunteer Karen Mackin has succeeded in doing some updates to trails on the existing guidebook maps. The blue trails and the new Piper Road access trail at Great Hill have all been added to the map now on the website. Jim noted that any additions to maps (such as the Groener Land and the new access trail at Nagog) will need to have the vegetation and other features (stone walls, streams, etc.) as well as the color added by hand. Tom said he would be willing to do the black-and-white drawings needed for this. It is still not known if we can recreate the electronic coloring and other steps done in the past by Rich Rhode, but Karen and the mapping group will be trying this in the future. An alternative is to only have electronically generated maps, but there is a widely shared sense that the hand-drawn maps are quite wonderful in appearance and usability.

On the electronic side, using Gmap4, an online mapping program that uses Google maps data, Bruce and Bob have now added trail data for all of our parcels. These maps, which are still in process, can be accessed at http://www.mappingsupport.com/p/gmap4.php?q=http://actontrails.org/acton_maps/Actontrails_placearks_map.kml&t=t1. The trails, overlaid on an aerial view of the town, are shown in color and can be zoomed in or out as needed. Bob noted that points of interest within parcels can be identified with icons and when clicked on, photos with descriptions can be viewed. He requested that stewards let him know what features they would like to have identified in this way and, if possible, also provide photos, coordinates, and short descriptions.

Using the OpenStreetMap platform affiliated with MapQuest, Jim and Jason Carter have also begun the process of entering information that will be accessed through mapquest.com to generate both maps and written out directions for walking paths through the conservation lands (using the "Walking Options" selection).

Philip had an additional proposal to allow trail users to easily download parcel maps by scanning "QR codes" posted at kiosks with their smartphones. A free smartphone QR Code Reader app scans these patterned black and white squares (which are a form of barcode) and goes directly to the URL that is encoded. His Friends of the Burlington Landlocked Forest group is implementing this idea, using a postcard-sized notice on kiosks. He will create a mock-up for a similar card that we could use.

Tom wondered if we could arrange a training session at some point for emergency response personnel.

Guidebook revisions: Peggy reported that, although she previously said that she would be sending out revised copies of guidebook entries to stewards, she now sees that she did this some time ago and has received responses from at least some stewards. She would benefit more at this point from sitting down with a few others to go over some questions before contacting stewards further. Jim and Bettina agreed to help with this.

Spring Hill boardwalk: Tom's crew has started working on this. They have already constructed a number of 8-foot boardwalk segments, loaded them onto a tractor, and hauled them out to the site from the Spring Hill Road entrance. These are now stacked at the beginning of the boardwalk, where the central blue trail intersects the loop trail. Bob has been in touch with Shawn O'Malley with suggestions about structural issues and concerns, including how to connect the segments in a way that facilitates repairs and maintenance and that allows the boardwalk to curve as needed.

Invasives planning: Jim has a meeting scheduled for next week with several people who have agreed to help with planning this year's invasives work. They will be prioritizing the areas (on eight parcels) with garlic mustard invasions and working on ideas for recruiting volunteers. He said that the consistent work that has been done in the past few years has led to significant reductions in the amount of garlic mustard at the Arboretum, Wheeler Lane, Guggins, and Jenks. Bettina mentioned that an Envirothon team that is looking for a one-day project for a group of teens might be able to help with this work.

Bettina reported that three dates are again being scheduled for water chestnut pulling this summer at Ice House Pond. As with the garlic mustard removal, the work that has been done in the last few years has been making a clear difference. Robbins Mill Pond was mentioned as another area that needs water chestnut removal work, and the problem of not having a good launch site for the work was briefly discussed.

Stencils and signage for new Nagog Hill access trail: Jim has received permission from both Pulte Homes and the Concord Water District to stencil footprints on the paved road leading from Hazelnut Road to the new trail. Bettina will get the stencils and the paint that will be needed. Also, the Acorn Park homeowners' association and the Water District have agreed to allow a few signs to be installed on their land, and we can replace the large metal sign currently at the head of the trail with a more appropriately sized wooden sign.

Bettina wondered if we might want to put a kiosk here and said that there is a new Eagle Scout candidate (this one a ninth-grader) who might be interested in this project.

Committee membership for next year: Jim reported on several committee membership changes for next year that will necessitate filling three full member positions, as well as the clerk position, and considering one parcel reassignment. First, both Peggy and Ann, the committee's co-clerks, have said they will be stepping down as regular members, although Peggy would like to continue doing blazing and would be willing to help with guidebook editing if needed (as either an associate member or volunteer, as works best) and Ann would be willing to continue to keep an eye on Grassy Pond. Also, Joan Cirillo will be stepping down, leaving a vacancy for both the Wetherbee parcel stewardship position as well as one full member position. Last, Therese Portante has indicated that she would be interested in changing her stewardship parcel from Wills Hole/Town Forest to one closer to her home (near West Acton), although she will stick with her current assignment for now if another is not

immediately available.

Both Bruce and Bob stated that they would be willing to move from associate to full member status. Both of today's visitors, Hart Millett and Joe Will, were also mentioned as possible new members, and Joe indicated both his interest in membership and his willingness to serve as clerk. Other names mentioned were current associate member Tom Arnold (for possible full member status), former member Gigi Hopkins, trail volunteer Gary Kilpatrick, and Scout parent Steve Long.

Parcel updates: Bulette and Grassy Pond: Jim reported that there will be a vote at this year's Town Meeting about a possible Town purchase of the parcel at the corner of Newtown Road and Arlington Street that abuts Bulette. The current plan is that some of the approximately 20 acres would be set aside for a PCRC development but that most of the acreage would not be developed. The area includes some upland areas where a trail or trail network could be cut that would connect Bulette and Grassy Pond.

Grassy Pond: Bob suggested that we do a bit of exploring from the end of Samuel Parlin Drive to see if another access trail could be cut to the Newtown Road access trail.

Great Hill: Bettina has installed a third You Are Here map kiosk on the hill, so there is now one at all three blue trail junctions, and she has put the new Great Hill map in the kiosks.

Heath Hen: Bob has been out to the winter island and found a blowdown that is blocking a trail. Jim offered to help him remove it.

Jenks: Bob noted that the brush piles need to be burned soon. Bettina will pass this message along to Tom.

Spring Hill: Philip reported that he has found no blowdowns despite the recent blizzard. But he has found that some of the flags marking the possible trail route between Spring Hill and the Robbins Mill Pond land have been removed and will need to be replaced. This led to a question about the Scout Land crossing issue, and Jim said that he plans to send a letter to Bill Klauer to try to get this resolved.

Also at Spring Hill, Bettina said that she has replaced the plastic covering on the You Are Here sign that was damaged by a pellet gun. She is hoping to find a new source for this plastic since she thinks the current source is too expensive.

Meeting evaluation: Comments included being pleased that the meeting was over fairly early, that it had been a "fun" and "loose" meeting, and that Jim's slides had been useful during the discussion about mapping.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held at 4 PM on Wednesday, March 20.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20.

Documents that serve as background for these discussions can be found at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-5218>. They are titled:

- 1 – Draft LSCom minutes 2013 01 23
- 2.1 – ‘gmap4’ update from Bob Guba
- 2.2 – Routing of an Acton walking trail using OpenStreetMap data
- 2.3 – updated Great Hill map
- 4 – Invasives planning for 2013
- 7 – parcel updates