

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 19, 2016, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe (Chair), Bob Farra, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant, Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Paula Goodwin, Joe Holmes, Jason Temple, John Watlington

Bettina called the meeting to order at 7:04 P.M.

Review and approval of December minutes

Change “KLM (mapping) file” to “KML (mapping) file. Bob G, not Joe H, raised the concern about a protruding piece of iron at the Canoe Launch item. The March meeting is on the 15th, not the 16th. Approval of the Minutes with these corrections was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously.

Blazing of the Trail Through Time (TTT)

Not all segments of the TTT are blazed yet. Linda McElroy would like to add more blazes and would like approvals. What the LSC agreed on:

- The only painted LSC blazes will be its yellow, blue, and red blazes.
- Unique TTT trails will show green painted blazes. There will be no green TTT blazes on an LSC trail.
- TTT blazes on LSC trails will be disks.
- Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) blazes on LSC trails will be disks (replacing the plastic blazes).
- An LSC-blazed tree will also show TTT and BCT blazes as appropriate. No other tree along an LSC trail will show any blaze.
- What happens at intersections, if anything? No answer.

Nashoba Brook Map discussion:

- The LSC map shows LSC yellow, red, and blue trails, but shows nothing of the TTT. It could show unique TTT trails in green. Whereas trail-blaze colors match map trail colors, map could use very small “BCT” and “TTT” letters on common trails.
- Right now, the LSC map is what is shown on the TTT panels.
- Is there really a TTT map? The LSC map should acknowledge the TTT. The TTT needs to be marked for people who are visiting. Also, the LSC should eventually inherit the TTT trails.
- If the TTT wants a map showing the whole TTT trail all green, it’s a TTT responsibility to make it. Linda should put a TTT trail map on the TTT website. It would be helpful to have a map to follow of the single TTT trail plus its side trails.
- There could be TTT maps in TTT map boxes at kiosks. TTT folks would be responsible for the TTT boxes and maps. TTT has money from the Town for map boxes and maps.
- Two map boxes on a kiosk would be confusing. However, TTT map boxes would be distinctive.
- Right now there is only one kiosk having to do with the TTT. The Native American kiosk describes the TTT and there is no provision on it for a map box. Also, it is not an entrance kiosk.
- We need to know from Linda what the true path of the TTT is; a start point, an end point, and the trail(s) in between. Right now, if you want to visit all the TTT sites, you can do so by taking the yellow trail. The yellow trail is adequately blazed, but not the TTT trails.

- We could have “You are here” maps at tricky places.
- We could use QR codes instead of map boxes.
- The LSC mapping is still in flux. The LSC and Linda should discuss.
- We can’t settle all this at this meeting. We can keep trails, trail markings, and maps on future agendas.

Changes to the Guggins Brook inner meadow plan — Jim

Jim reviewed the 12/15/15 email he sent to the LSC giving reasons why he feels the inner meadow should be allowed to return to woods. Comments:

- Just let it go. It’s not truly a meadow.
- We still will need to manage it re invasives. Jim says he will continue to remove invasives. But basically we’ll see what a tiny bit of succession looks like; what happens when a meadow reverts to forest.
- Some love that meadow. It has recreational, aesthetic, and wildlife values.
- It is high maintenance. We have a power brush cutter that could clear the meadow in an hour but we can’t take it into the space. Jim has to use a grass whip and weed wrench. If we had sheep and goats, we could use those.
- If someone else maintained it, would you (Jim) be in favor of keeping the meadow? Jim wouldn’t object, but benefits don’t really justify the cost.
- How about doing some intentional planting of low shrubs, e.g., blueberries, to keep the opening? Jim: If someone has a planting plan, there is no objection to that. But that could simply help with feeding the deer (one of the current meadow problems).

It was moved, seconded, and voted to let Jim (the Guggins Steward) move forward with his plan to let the meadow revert to forest while continuing to maintain the trails and controlling the invasives. The vote was unanimous, except for two abstentions.

Update: The Assabet River Blue and Green Trails Project

Bettina and Tom Tidman met with couple folks, Sue Flint and Mike Coates, who own properties near the proposed trails and are in favor of the OARS Trails Project. (Mike owns the Powdermill Dam.) Bettina and Sue will walk the Acton trails on Friday at noon. Anyone interested in joining them will be welcomed. Meet at the end of Old High Street. Dogs can come too, but bring a leash. No other news to report.

Update: Canoe Launch trail

Bettina visited with Tom about having a trail upriver from the Canoe Launch, and whether we could link such a trail with the new trails on the north side of the River. The Acton Hydro plant is being very cooperative with the various trails ideas. Joe H shared a map showing a way to extend the trail along the south side of the river. It stops at a building that goes down to the river’s edge and where the building owners (presumably) have made a picnic area for employees. Also there are old concrete abutments of a former bridge. Would it be possible to build a bridge across the Assabet at this point? The old midstream abutment is no good as its encasing cement has eroded away.

In any case, if the LSC can’t get a trail that connects with the OARS trails, Joe still would like a river’s edge trail for the anglers. The ground is above the normal high-water line, but right now there’s lots of trash. Joe has marked the proposed trail with light green ribbons, but it’s basically impassable and Joe would like LSC advice on how to proceed. The land is private, but the Acton Conservation Commission has a Conservation Restriction (CR) easement that Joe thinks would allow for the trail.

The easement goes with the Canoe Launch CR, which does allow for a trail over private land.

So, should Joe build a trail? Unfortunately, Tom, Bettina, and OARS can't focus on this right now because "the clock is ticking" on the Blue and Green Trails project.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that Joe has the authority to establish a trail, as he has described it, on the easement.

Update: Website

Jim and Bruce (J&B) projected the website, actontrails.org/wordpress, on a wall for LSC viewing. J&B have two topics:

1. What the website (-in-progress) looks like. Jim went over its elements and took suggestions as viewers referenced the various elements.
2. What the website looks like if the LSC is a contributor. Stewards can be given the ability to edit the descriptions of their parcels. At present, the descriptions are under one editor.

Comments:

The only access (accounts) granted will be to stewards. A modification to something on the site goes "live" by clicking on "update." Site administrators can see what has changed and make adjustments. We could force changes to go through a single editor. In any case, we can't let each steward write his/her own things regarding their parcels. There should be some structure to the parcel descriptions. There is need for a Style Guide for the parcel descriptions. Peggy Liversedge edited current descriptions a couple years ago.

The site needs a section for volunteers (none at present).

For each parcel entrance the site could have a link, "Directions, with link to Google Maps".

If a steward should see a WordPress template that's awesome, tell J&B to take a look. They can switch templates in seconds.

Update: Construction

Bruce: Kiosk roofs are all done with new roofs at Spring Hill, Grassy Pond (Newtown Road), and Wills Hole/Town Forest (Nagog Park). There are some shingles left over. Current kiosks will not last too long as the wood used is not rated for ground contact. Bruce will come up with a new design for the future.

Non-Stewarded Conservation Land (e.g., Monson)

There are "tons" of parcels all over town, but most are small or predominantly wetlands. Joe H pointed out that there is lots of trash on these unstewarded lands. A discussion ensued, including the observation that a boardwalk and bridge at Pacy would help open up its northern half (which has public access from Tuttle Drive).

Other parcel information

- Bulette: The hunting stand mentioned in a Police Log is reportedly right in the middle of this parcel, but Andy Gatesman can't find it. The Acton Police did contact the Massachusetts Environmental Police.
- Canoe Launch: Joe H reports that if you walk about 240 ft downstream you are at the Acton-Concord line, but the trail keeps going to a big campsite where there can be lots of trash. Both Joe and OARS

have cleaned it up in the past. Should Joe get permission from the landowners to do this? It's probably a good idea, but not an LSC issue. It's Joe's decision.

February agenda

Updates on website, Assabet River Trails Project
Editing of website pages (Stewards should have theirs done.)
Check with Linda McElroy on TTT
Concord Water Department Project
Update calendar with "work dates".

Evaluate meeting

Not as crisp as we've been in recent meetings. There was a lot of talking over. The Room (Room 9) is an improvement, but it needs a clock and Wi-Fi.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 16, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.

ADDENDUM

In the February 16, 2016 Minutes, it is noted "Linda (McElroy) submitted comments by e-mail responding to items in the January minutes regarding the TTT. These are not adjustments or corrections to the minutes, but the Committee felt them significant enough to recommend attaching them to the minutes." They follow:

All,

I have read the minutes from the last meeting regarding the TTT trails and blazing. Lots of good questions and suggestions. Most issues already have answers:

1. There is a completed TTT map, based on the LSC Nashoba Brook parcel map.
2. The main loop of the TTT follows the yellow Nashoba Brook trail.
 - 2a. The hub for the TTT will be at the end of Wheeler Lane
 - 2b. I have proposed a Main TTT KIOSK, for which I have a design in my head, to be integrated with the wildflower garden begun last summer.
3. One half of that loop has been posted with TTT square TTT logo plaques. All are on trees with yellow blazes.
4. The remaining half of the TTT needs to be so equipped.
5. I have plenty of the square plaques, so additional blazes may be put up where deemed necessary.

Indian Loop

1. Several short side paths, leading to the Indian Kiosk and those Indian sites not directly on the yellow trail, have been marked, here and there, with green arrows only. Bettina and I have plans to complete the green arrow signage this season if possible.
2. It is possible (desirable even if LSC is not opposed) to create an Indian loop superposed over, and in some places, wandering off, the yellow trail, such that a walker may do a shorter loop that will access all the Indian structures in the selected area. Now that those selections are complete, this possible loop can also be completed, with approval of the LSC.
3. I propose that the Indian loop be blazed only with the green arrows as has been started. For the actual sites, B. has carved the stone pile icon below the arrow. Very effective.

Maps:

1. I have completed a map of the entire TTT, showing all sites with icons, accurately placed where they occur, with names of sites lettered as well. This map appears on each info panel with You Are Here arrows. The basic map used to develop this TTT overlay is the LSC map of the Nashoba Brook parcel developed when I was Chair. We have added the proposed red trail into the Robbins Land as far as the Roof Slab Quarry site, for which we have a prepared info panel to be installed when/if the Boy Scout Land issue ever gets settled.
2. I have developed, from the above map, an enlarged, circular blowup of the part of the original map that contains all of the Indian sites. Paths in green already cut, plus the one flagged and awaiting cutting for Pipsissewa, are shown on this blowup. This map is the one that will appear on the remaining side of the Indian Kiosk.

Map boxes:

- 1 I do not have any plans for these.
- 2 I am willing to discuss such.
3. All panels have imprinted on them the QR codes to access the website.

Integration of TTT within LCS:

- 1 I have discussed this possibility with Jim twice during his tenure as chair of LSC.
2. Some kind of arrangement needs to be settled. I am no longer able to do the field work required for maintenance of the TTT. I have some ideas how this could be accomplished when LSC is ready to take up that topic.

I am very willing and ready to attend the next meeting at which you wish to discuss any or all of these topics.

Finally, the website:

- 1 it is still non-operative
- 2 I need help getting it up again and it should be integrated with the LSC website, I feel.
- 3 This winter I am reviewing and rewriting most material that would need to appear on such a website, initially (the rewriting) for another purpose. It should not be much effort to get the files updated for all topics that could then be uploaded into the website structure which also needs to be expanded a bit. The basics are there.

NOTE BENE:

I do not have money for map boxes, maps, printing, or maintenance. I do have money for panels, their stanchions, and, if I cannot get it done by volunteers, their installation. I probably can pay for the Main Kiosk, but need to get that expense approved by the CPC.

Looking forward to working all these matters out with you folks,

Linda