

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 18, 2017, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

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

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Sherman Smith

Nonmembers: Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison), Kathryn (Kat) Kaminski (Nagog Hill abutter)

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

Review and approval of March minutes

March minutes were not ready by meeting time. Review and approval moved to the May meeting.

Hunting policies and posting

Hunting is not allowed on Acton Conservation Land (CL), or on any Town land, unless the Board of Selectmen (BoS) gives written permission. Per a query by Bettina, hunting is not allowed on Acton Water District land. Is it worth posting that hunting is not allowed? Per Bettina, if there is evidence that hunting is occurring, then talk to Tom Tidman on how to proceed.

One can hunt on private land with permission from the landowner. Liability is not an issue for the landowner per State law. The Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) is the private landowner of the Whitcomb land. Hunting that occurs on the Whitcomb land is illegal as ACT has not given permission.

Most hunting done in Acton is with bow and arrow. Bettina explained some of the other hunting laws. "No hunting" is included in the Rules and Regulations posted on all kiosks and on various websites (e.g., Town, Conservation Commission, Natural Resources). The rules are easy to find. We should be okay with the current status of hunting information, unless someone knows of something.

Using photos of young people (e.g., scouts, students) who participate on workdays

One must do due diligence before using young people's pictures. One must always ask permission from people in charge of the young people, e.g., the adult chaperones, the scout leader. High school seniors are generally 18 (i.e., adults). Bruce would defer to CORI guidelines. In general, one should never use someone's picture without permission.

Bay Circuit Trail's future in Acton; completion of the Acton gap, Scoutland and the Valentine easement.

Scoutland is owned by the Trustees of Scoutland, not by the Boy Scouts, and they pay no taxes for Scoutland per Chapter 59 of the General Laws of Massachusetts. The LSC is seeking an easement across Scoutland to connect the CL of Robbins Mill with other parts of Robbins Mill, making Robbins Mill even larger and more accessible than at present. This would allow for a red trail beside Nashoba Brook down to Wheeler Lane. Bettina has been talking with Bill Klauer, Scoutland Trustee, who will run easement language by "his people." The Trustees can give permission for an easement. Tom Tidman suggests that, after an easement is established, it might be possible to have a Conservation

Restriction on Scoutland.

Bob G has flagged (and re-flagged) a proposed trail. Bob would like Stewards to review it. Bettina will look at it with Bob. Bob F will look at it this weekend. Beth Gula (lives in Acton) of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) coordinates AMC work crews. Beth is willing to walk (she and Bettina walked it this morning) and help clean up the proposed trail, and the Stewards should try to walk it by Friday, 05/12, as the AMC can have a work crew in Acton on 05/12 or 05/13. A work crew could cut the trail, after approval, to the rocky outcropping (roof slab quarry), and could continue up to the Scoutland boundary. Bob F and Laurie can work out what to tell Beth (asap) to have the AMC crew do. Linda McElroy has staked where she would like Trail Through Time information panels. Joe H mapped the trail on OpenStreetMap and someone removed it.

Will the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) go through the above trail or on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)? Right now, it's both as the BCT has options. Per Laurie, it would be better for the BCT to get off the BFRT as quickly as possible as the BFRT route has to cross Route 27 twice. There would never be a ton of BCT people going through Scoutland should Bill Klauer have any concerns about that.

Right now, everything that made Scoutland inviting to the Scouts is gone. Per Bill Klauer, the Erickson family that gave the land to the Trustees asked that they be consulted if and when the land would change ownership. Any easement language should provide for whatever might result from this, and the BCT would have to decide if the easement would be adequate.

Development of the Valentine easement would be a project that could be done by an AMC work crew.

Update: Nagog Pond permit (if it passes the Board of Selectmen)

It passed 5-0 but includes conditions over which Concord is suing Acton. Janet gave an update. One issue is whether to have a row of trees (Acton's preference) or a fence (Concord's preference) along the red trail to Hazelnut Street.

Update: 176 Central Street/Mt. Hope/Heath Hen Meadow (blazing, unblazed trails, kiosk, map box, poster shelters, signs, showing "P" on map)

The Cemetery Commission approved the blazing, kiosk, map box, poster shelters, and "entering Cemetery land" signs as proposed by the LSC with the stipulation that Cemetery Superintendent Shawn O'Malley be involved with the placement of the kiosk as it would be close to an occasionally active cemetery work area. The proposals have not yet come before the Conservation Commission.

Update: Permission or not to use short section of Mill Corner trail next to Great Hill

Bettina emailed a query that would be presented to the Mill Corner Board of Governors, but "don't (anyone) hold your breath" on this. (Bettina will also be meeting tomorrow with someone from Mill Corner who would like to do battle with knotweed, presumably in the vicinity of, or on, the Mill Corner property.)

Update: Garlic mustard season — Jim

The picking is finally starting—the late start due to the snow cover. Jim and Bruce Carley (of Friends of the Acton Arboretum) are in full communication/coordination about the situation at the Arboretum. Jim is working on getting permissions from abutting property owners on whose properties most of the work would be. He would love some help with contacting them. Jim has shared with the LSC his summary list of parcels with infestations, and maps that highlight infestation locations. Jim needs more volunteers to help pick. If interested, give Jim a call. Suggestion: Email the 20 people on the new

Volunteer list.

Bettina talked briefly about the new Chinese trail at the Arboretum.

Update: Monitoring Conservation Restrictions

Joe H, also a member of Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), went to Susan Mitchell-Hardt's ACT meeting on training to monitor a Conservation Restriction (CR). Susan needs more help for initial report writing and subsequent annual CR monitoring. For the initial CR report, a representative of both the landowner (the Town) and the CR holder (ACT) have to tour the land. For some CRs, both "sides" want Joe to take over this role and Joe would like advice re whom he should help. Per Bettina, you can be "duplicative." There basically can be anyone doing annual CR reports for each of the six ACT CRs. Fran Portante, part-time worker for Acton's Natural Resources Department has been organizing the CRs. She helps Susan get initial reports written and filed with the state. Fran is facing some medical issues and is nervous about the CR monitoring. It was because of this that Susan reached out to the LSC about having Land Stewards do the monitoring and report writing. Joe thinks that now there are people lined up to monitor the six ACT CRs.

Other parcel information

A. Nagog Hill abutter's offer — Bettina

(Because of Kat, the abutter, being present, this item was moved to the top of the agenda.)

The Kaminskis are new owners of land abutting the Nagog Hill CL. Kat, who has signed up on the LSC website as a volunteer, brought two issues/concerns to the LSC.

- 1) Kat wants to organize a cleanup of multiflora rose, garlic mustard, and bittersweet on and near their property, and
- 2) she would like to continue a practice of the previous owner, namely mowing a field on CL that is basically a lawn in view of their house.

Regarding 1):

- It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously that Kat and family have free reign to use manual control to remove invasive species.

Related discussion points:

- Kat has talked about this with a Nagog Hill neighborhood group that may be able to help.
- This would include going after multiflora rose that's taking over some of the stone wall on CL; also going after honeysuckle, barberry, and bittersweet vines. It would be a good idea to expose both sides of the stone wall to control the woody invasives.
- It would be a good idea to keep Natural Resources (NR) informed of what Kat and the neighborhood group are doing and have NR's permission for work on CL beyond the stone walls.
- Jim would be happy to do some basic training on pulling and cutting invasives.

Regarding 2):

Because the land is CL, Kat is seeking permission to continue to mow it. How does the LSC feel about this?

- Tom Tidman is okay with it.
- The LSC maintains meadows, but not lawns, by cutting once a year. The LSC would like to see this land cut just once a year. However, the owner could also cut selected trails through it. There would be no problem from a biological point of view.
- Kat worries about mowing it just once a year and would prefer to mow it more often.
- By viewing the Jenks parcel, Kat could get a feel for what the land would look like with a once-a-

year cutting and with selected trails. If there were to be more frequent cutting, look at what happened to Hybrid Farm.

– The LSC policy is one cut a year in the fall. This results in more biodiversity.

– Kat would like to continue mowing as is.

– The LSC would like Kat to slow down the mowing. More frequent mowing this year might be okay.

In the future, slow down the mowing. This is a recommendation from the LSC to the Conservation Commission via Tom Tidman. (There was a motion that Kat continue the heavy mowing for at least a year to remove woody invasives and then reduce mowing to eventually once a year, but there was no second.)

– If you mow just the perimeter and a trail, you’ll control the invasives. Mow a path right next to the wall for a couple years to help clear the wall.

B. Buckthorn at Pratts Brook — Sherman

Sherman explained what he did w/small buckthorn saplings near where red trail goes to Parker Street. It proved that cutting them is okay as long as there’s a commitment to come back and finish off any sprouts that come up, which can be easily done with wet ground. If you cut them off and don’t follow up, they will develop bigger root structure, which is not good. Also discussed: Buckthorn baggies.

C. On merging 176 Central and Heath Hen Meadow

Paula wants to do this next month.

D. What to do about the private bridge over Heath Hen Meadow Brook between the Whitcomb Land, and town-owned land.

If CL were involved, the LSC would have a strong opinion on this. Right now, CL is not involved so the LSC offers no opinion.

LSC Website

A. Brainstorming WildAware stories

Suggestion: How foxes hunt while a field is being mowed.

B. Workdate calendar

Watch for an Assabet Trail bridge building event.

Is there a schedule for the bridge at Robbins Mill? Bob F has to do another drawing. He needs to put drawings in a CAD format. A CAD program would show any errors; also, Bob G wants a second opinion from Bob F. Right now, there is no workday scheduled.

Jim on Website: Jim showed a new feature in online maps. It’s possible to determine latitude and longitude and send the data to someone else who could then find the place on their map.

May 16 agenda

Include the merging of 176 Central Street and Heath Hen Meadow.

Evaluate meeting.

No comments.

The meeting adjourned around 8:45 P.M.

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