

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 15, 2017, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Paula Goodwin (Vice Chair), Bob Guba, Joe Holmes, Bruce Rachman (Chair), John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: None

Nonmembers: Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison),

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M.

Review and approval of July minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously.

Spring Hill development, Planning Board result

The Planning Board disallowed the development, however it will be on a future Planning Board agenda.

Conservation Commission discussion on installing beaver control on Heath Hen Meadow Brook

The Conservation Commission was not in favor at this time of a proposal to revamp piping through the dam, suggesting that there would need to be more depth about such a project for the Cons Comm to move on it. Points of Cons Comm concerns, including issues with a fence upstream from the bridge and safety of such a project, can be found in the Cons Comm minutes. The Cons Comm needs more information, including possibly hearing from Mike Callahan of Beaver Solutions who helped in preparing the proposed solution. Neither he nor Tom Tidman was at the Cons Comm meeting. Paula thinks that the Cons Comm would be open to a second go-round on this. A next step would be for Mike to talk with Tom and Bettina on how to address the Cons Comm issues and provide more depth to a proposal.

There followed discussion on:

– Another option that could help save the bridge from deterioration due to cyclical immersion in water backed up from beaver damming. That would be to raise the bridge higher. It is now built on cribs; it could instead be put it on pipes. The bog boardwalk at the Arboretum is built on pipes, as are the first 100 ft of the long boardwalk at Grassy Pond (pipes that go down 18 ft).

– “Messing” legally with beaver dams. One needs a permit through the Health Department based on there being a proven threat to human health.

In the meantime, Bettina is working on getting Tom and Mike to talk on this and share their suggestions with the LSC and the Cons Comm, hopefully with a target of getting Tom and the Cons Comm to make a recommendation on what to do with the dam/bridge problem. This should be on a future LSC agenda to help the LSC keep abreast of the situation.

Consider Jezanna Gruber as steward for Heath Hen Meadow North

Paula (current Heath Hen Meadow steward) and Jezanna work well together. Already they have helped identify future blazing spots for the trails on the North portion of Heath Hen Meadows/Mt. Hope Cemetery. Jezanna is excited about being a steward. To be a steward, one has to be a member of the LSC. The LSC has room for more Associate members. Bettina will get the ball rolling on having two Heath Hen Meadow stewards.

Massachusetts Trails Conference, November 2-4

Bettina explained some of the previous conferences, having already provided the LSC with information on this year's conference. The courses offered at the conference fill up quickly.

Great Hill/Mill Corner signs

Bettina had shared with the LSC a photo of the sign that the Town has placed next to the Mill Corner trail entrance near the Little Great Hill playing field and reviewed some of the reasons for the need for the signage. Joe H suggested that perhaps there still could be some compromise with the Mill Corner folks. Kathie Watt of the Discovery Museums obtained permission from Mill Corner for use of the trail for Discovery Museum orienteering activities.

Guggins Brook, moving Central St easement

Joe W described the problem caused by the steep embankment that has resulted from the new sidewalk along Central Street. Jim Snyder-Grant is working on the easement revision for New View, but was not present at this meeting, so there was no update from him.

Nashoba Brook bridge

Bob explained the building of the trestle bridge, which will be done in his backyard, and the ordering of wood and equipment that he has done through the Town. The Town has a trailer that can transport an 18-ft long truss from his backyard to the bridge site.

Robbins Mill/Scoutland

Corrine Losch, Natural Resources intern, and Bettina blazed the trail that Bob had flagged from Carlisle Road, past the rocky outcropping, to about the pond. They stopped because of being unsure of where the Scoutland border is. On another visit to the area, Bob and Bettina found the Scoutland portion of the possible trail to be 210 ft long. Bettina reported that there was a 2013 draft "license agreement" between the Town and the Scoutland Trustees to let people walk that 210 ft of trail across Scoutland. Bettina is still trying to settle things with Scoutland Trustees through Trustee Bill Klauer. A check with Town Assessors shows that no taxes are owed on Scoutland.

Wright Hill

Suggestion: Rather than install the Wright Hill sign (in Jim Salem's possession) on Central Street by digging in the ground (which is proving impossible), just post the sign on a tree. However, the trail entrance would have to be opened up so that people could see the sign.

Other parcels

– Heath Hen Meadow

Paula and students from a program of the New England Aquarium have done some work around the meadows and Paula would like to plan a needed mowing. Per Bob, the Town mows both meadows once a year. At this time, help for mowing is unavailable, so the LSC will wait for the Town again this year.

– Nagog Hill

Bob gave an update on his Nagog Hill stonewall clearing project. The wall is uncovered but the ferns and multiflora rose are already making a comeback.

Bob then asked for LSC opinions: Are you willing to keep perimeters of fields clear? This led to a discussion on meadow mowing, and Bettina reminded the LSC of the mowing spreadsheet she has begun. Bettina needs everybody to look at the spreadsheet and help fill it in. A Google Doc link is <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1osrOXRm760eHg2tGdt7A1gWRoPGK2DMKtrsAAcT8QAI>

Right now, only Bettina, Joe H, and Jim Snyder-Grant can edit it; so send input to one of them

There was also a brief discussion on what's happening with the field mower. The mower is under the chapel at Woodlawn Cemetery. The trailer is at Morrison Farm. With a week's notice, the Town will deliver the mower to whatever Town land you want to mow.

Assabet River Trail work

No update; Bettina has been putting out workdates, but has not gotten many volunteers.

Brainstorming WildAware stories

The next two stories may be on ticks and on black bears. Mentioned: The large number of coyote births this year; there is no hunting season on Conservation Land.

September 19 agenda

Keep "Meadow Mowing" on the agenda. Bettina shared some of her strategy for doing a meadow mowing spreadsheet, mainly so that resources be made available for needed mowings.

Joe W pointed out some Morrison Farm issues, but "Morrison Farm is not Conservation Land, so it's not our jurisdiction." John will send Joe a note on his Morrison Farm concerns that Joe can share with the Morrison Farm Committee.

Bob would like to see what is spent by Natural Resources on Conservation Land vs. what is spent for other entities.

Evaluate meeting

No comments.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 19, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.