

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 20, 2018, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

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

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Jezanna Gruber

Nonmembers: Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Assistant), Janet Adachi (Acton Board of Selectmen LSC liaison), Joe Cooney (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) Board), Terra Friedrichs (Candidate for Acton Board of Selectmen), Linda McElroy (ACT Vice-President, Trail Through Time (TTT) Project Manager), Don McIver (Littleton Conservation Trust President), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (ACT President)

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Review and approval of February minutes

February minutes were not yet completed. Approval moved to April 18 meeting.

Linking Sarah Doublet Conservation Land (CL) in Littleton with the TTT

Linda and Don shared their idea, including a map, of a “virtual” trail from the Sarah Doublet CL in Littleton to the TTT, possibly sponsored by both the Littleton and Acton Conservation Trusts. The “lion’s share” of work to be done would be in Acton — the reason for this visit with the LSC. Their proposal is just a “first cut” and this visit is just an attempt to give the LSC the gist of the idea. An objective would be to move as much of the trail as possible out of residential areas.

- What Linda would like to know is whether the Land Stewards think this is a good idea or a bad idea and, if the former, whether the LSC would support it when support is needed. Linda would keep the LSC informed on developments and check for LSC approvals. She would coordinate with the LSC on the parts of the trail that would go across Acton CL
- This is a chance for Acton and Littleton to work together, something that seems to get more difficult over time. The participation of the two Conservation Trusts would give the project a nice, balanced-looking leadership. Linda would be the liaison with ACT.
- A trail name need not include an association with the TTT. One possibility could be “Nashoba Trail” if there is no existing trail by that name.
- The trail could be created right now. There could be a) a logo, b) a patch “I hiked <Name of> Trail”, and c) information on relevant kiosks.
- This is still at the concept stage. There is no final route yet. Variations from the trail shown on the map were discussed.
- Linda doesn’t visualize lots of signage for this trail; maybe a logo here and there.
- Acton’s Department of Natural Resources seems to view the trail favorably — Linda.
- Carlisle has lots of Native American “stuff”, but Carlisle has not picked up the ball to do something like the TTT.
- As for making the trail accurate on a map, two or three people could be assigned to a reasonable segment, walk it with a gps, and make observations.

“Acton Trail Map” — latest features

Jim and Joe H provided an update. They are trying to get their mapping efforts to go live on the Acton Trails website. Tonight’s suggestions included making sure that their map features work on a cell phone. Right now, the map will show a phone’s initial position, but the map won’t “live-track” the position. It would also be nice to be able to mark one’s position on the map and send it to people.

Kiosk postings

Joe H surveyed the kiosks and shared a chart showing what is posted on them plus other information. There seems to be no standardization of postings. The LSC did something similar in 2015, but now there is “more stuff.” Joe suggests that the LSC have certain things on every kiosk as well as flexibility on what gets posted. Question for the LSC: Do we need a “minimum list” of postings? Joe proposes that the items shown in the first five columns of his chart be on every kiosk. These include map, regulations, parcel information, and tick poster. The fifth item, “Marker”, interprets the coloring used for trails. This may not be necessary as the coloring is pretty obvious in map Legends.

- We have 29 kiosks. Bruce has photos of them all.
- There are three more kiosks coming — Bettina.
- A blank cell in the chart means that Joe didn’t document the item at the particular kiosk.
- There are many tick posters, some really big. About 1/3 of them are okay.
- Bruce appreciates the rotting roof information.
- If Joe can work on “the ideal kiosk,” he should “go for it.”

LSC Membership

Joe W shared two pages listing LSC membership and other information and asked that members help with updating it. Points made:

- Nagog Hill is not being stewarded now.
- Nagog Hill should be a shared parcel.
- Bruce will reach out to Nan Millett as to whether she is still comfortable being the Stoneymeade Steward.
- Perhaps the LSC could reach out to a few new people for help with stewarding. It could email the volunteer list. It could post something on the website. It could advertise on kiosks, using flyers promoting stewardship opportunities.

There was also discussion about Chair and Vice-Chair transition. (Clerk’s note: In general, the Town “committee year” appears to be in sync with the Town’s Fiscal Year, July 1-June 30. This suggests that LSC officer transition be on the LSC June agenda.)

Parcel Business: Heath Hen Meadow (HHM) bridge (& other significant storm results)

- HHM: The tree that fell on the bridge needs to be removed. It interferes with repairing the bridge. Bob G cites a nearby dead tree that is still standing. He advises that it should be taken down.
- Guggins Brook: There is still a bunch of storm damage.
- Camp Acton: It took Bruce 2 h to walk 2 mi.
- Nashoba Brook: The Wheeler Lane parking is full of trees. Laurie cited another huge blowdown.

What to do with broken (tree) limbs that hang by the bark high up? Taking down the whole tree is safer than trying to remove a broken limb. Also, wait until the snow is gone. A discussion of chain saws and pole saws ensued.

Parcel Business: Wright Hill-Guggins Brook easement trail

Nothing new.

Parcel Business: Other parcels

- Has the Town done any brush-pile burning this winter? Only at the Arboretum. Brush piles can be burned as long as there is snow on the ground. What's bad about not burning existing piles this year? Delay makes it harder to burn; there's rotting for example. If someone thinks that something should be done about this, email the Department of Natural Resources.
- At the Canoe Launch, the business next door (new owner) now allows its parking to be used only by its patrons; no overflow parking there for Canoe Launch users.

Blazing at Morrison Farm Update

Per Joe H, blazing is okay with Andrea Ristine, Acton's Municipal Properties Superintendent. The LSC should provide her with a proposal. Jim, Joe H, and Joe W will work on this.

Equipment Storage Shed, Location, Funding Update

- Perhaps the buildings on the Town's River Street property along Fort Pond Brook where the dam used to be could be used.
- Tom Tidman has a handout on affordable sheds. These have worked out great at the Arboretum.
- The Town doesn't find out about any \$ that could be available until the end of the Fiscal Year, so this can be taken off the agenda until that time.

New Business

- Terra shared information about a "water quantity problem" in Acton. In a few years, water withdrawal in Acton will be above the State withdrawal limit, and a full build-out in Acton will eventually place the Town withdrawal at over twice the limit.
- Terra also pointed out that 50+ trees at Kelleys Corner are threatened with removal, something that could be mitigated if new sidewalks could follow meandering paths. This will be addressed at an upcoming hearing on Kelleys Corner, and local input to help save the trees could be critical.
- Re the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT): Laurie talked with Steve Tobin of the Carlisle Conservation Foundation and proposed that the easement on the Valentine land be changed to join with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) to the north at the Acton-Carlisle line — a nicer "join" than the current easement allows. Tobin said to wait until Carlisle Lots 4 and 5 are sold and then deal with the landowners of that development, as the easement goes closer to those house lots. Jim suggested that it would seem better to have the easement changed before the lots are sold. In the ensuing discussion, it seemed clear that there is confusion about this link to the BFRT, and it needs to be explored further.

Brainstorming WildAware stories

- The *Beacon* wants WildAware articles reduced to 500 words, which is not sufficient for their purpose.
- Bettina edited the WildAware woodpecker article adequately and the *Beacon* printed it, as did *Action Unlimited*, and the article was placed on the WildAware Facebook page. Question: Is there a way to find out if people are reading the WildAware articles?
- Linda has a WildAware article on moose. She has been reluctant to edit it to 500 words, but with some editing help, it should be the next article to be submitted.
- Following that, there should be an article on daddy longlegs spiders.
- Suggestions for future articles: History of Snowstorms in Acton, The Work of the ACT, The Eastern and New England Cottontail Rabbits.

– Submit any other ideas to Paula.

April agenda

– How the LSC uses the Volunteer list.

– Organized workdays for meadow revitalization, such as at HHM, to include working on meadow edges, including taking down trees. To this end, Terra suggested that the Town create a calendar of projects for which folks could simply show up.

Evaluate meeting

On a scale between “well organized” and “too chaotic,” it tended toward the latter.

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 17, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.