

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2010, 4:00 PM
Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Tom Arnold, Joan Cirillo, Bob Guba, Josh Haines, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge, Nan Towle Millett, Ann Shubert (minute taker), Jim Snyder-Grant, Tom Tidman, Laurie Ullmann

Guest: Patrick Clark, editor of acton.patch.com (a website that covers Acton news)

Meeting minutes: The October minutes were approved.

November minutes: A discussion about approving the draft November minutes and in what form centered on whether to characterize as a formal vote of the Committee the approval most members expressed when polled during the November meeting about the idea of locking the Camp Acton gate 24/7 to see if that would reduce episodes of unlawful teen behavior. The initial draft minutes circulated on 12/8/10 did not mention a vote, whereas the revised draft circulated on 12/13/10 did. Joan was uncomfortable with that characterization, stating, among other reasons, her view that the content and specific wording of the vote in the 12/13 draft minutes was not consistent with LSCom's authority. Other questions raised during this discussion were whether Tom T. had the authority on his own to take the action contemplated by the vote, in which case LSCom's vote, as described in the draft minutes, was unnecessary, and whether LSCom could—or should—assign individuals as acting stewards prior to formal appointment to LSCom by the BOS. After considerable discussion, the Committee approved the November minutes in the form circulated on 12/13/10.

Proposed rescission of November vote: Joan then moved that last month's vote be rescinded. No one seconded. Tom A. moved that the discussion be closed; seconded; passed.

Camp Acton matters: During the foregoing discussions, it was acknowledged that Tom T. and Bruce Rachman will give further consideration as to whether a 24-hour lock is needed at Camp Acton before taking such action. They will also study the feasibility of moving the gate back far enough so that cars can park. The Conservation Commission might be involved if they decide the gate could be moved, in which case Tom T. will take a few of the Conservation commissioners to the site to look at the situation. Tom A. volunteered to ask Town Counsel whether or not LSCom has the authority contemplated by the November vote.

Chainsaw use: Dean Charter said, and it is in the OSHA rules, that when one is using a chainsaw someone else should be within audio or visual distance of the chainsaw user.

Safety tip brainstorm: There was a discussion of the risks faced by volunteers when they go out into the woods. The Committee came up with the following: Ticks, poison ivy, tripping, bees and wasps, hypothermia, getting lost, dehydration, falling trees, wild animals, especially rabid ones, dogs, mosquitoes, branches poking one in the eye, thorns, broken glass, and so forth. Joan is going to refine this list. She added that volunteers should have health and liability insurance above and beyond the Town insurance.

Potential Camp Acton steward: Tom A. recommended that Bruce Rachman be appointed an associate member of the LSCom by the Board of Selectmen and be the steward of Camp Acton. The LSCom voted and approved this recommendation. Given all the concerns about Camp Acton, we will try to

expedite his vetting by the Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC) and appointment by the Board of Selectmen.

Robbins Mill: Linda McElroy will come to the January meeting to discuss the Robbins Mill area and Trails Through Time plans.

Gift benches: Prompting this discussion was the death of a Jenks conservation area birder. His/her family/friends would like to donate a bench to be put at Jenks in his/her memory. There are specific and policy questions concerning the giving of benches to be placed on conservation lands. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of such gifts. Are benches allowed on conservation lands? Should there be name plaques on the benches? Joan and Tom A. are investigating what other towns do in this regard. Arlington charges \$3,000 for such a bench, which covers installation and maintenance, and Sudbury charges \$1,400 and has a manual on what is allowed. Some people felt a few carefully placed benches would be fine; some thought a small plaque on the bench would be permissible; at least one person does not like the idea of such benches and suggested a donation could be made to a conservation fund. And at least one person felt a well-placed bench here or there is beneficial for those not as fit who want to visit the conservation areas.

Quail Ridge: Bob said that tall stakes are needed in laying out the Quail Ridge trail. Jim will get the proper stakes to do this.

“You Are Here” signs: Philip and Laurie placed “You Are Here” maps in various spots at Spring Hill. Committee members are pleased with the placement. This is an experiment and after a few months it will be decided whether or not to put them in permanently.

Photo contest: Forty to forty-five pictures were submitted. There were three categories: Flora and fauna, landscapes, and people using the lands. Tom A. is going to submit the Best of Show to the Acton paper and put it on the Acton Trails website.

Parcel news: At the Piper Road entrance to *Great Hill*, Bob will install a parcel name sign.

Committee roles: Jim has been the Chair for many years. He appreciates that people have stepped up to take some of the responsibilities. He will be especially busy on the 2020 Committee this next year, so if anyone would like to take over the chairmanship that would be good. We will review the various roles people have taken on at a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 19, at 4:00 PM.

List of documents used: Documents that served as background for these discussions can be found at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-4004>. These documents are titled:

- Agenda for 12/15
- Benches
- Chainsaw use policy clarification
- Draft minutes for November
- Great Hill access point (Piper Road)
- Parcel Reports – for December
- Project List