

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2011, 4:00 PM
Acton Town Hall

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Dave Cochrane, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair)

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Tom Arnold, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Heidi Sikina

Nonmembers present: Tom Tidman (Director of Natural Resources and LSCom's Town staff liaison)

Guests: Walter Malchodi (Eagle Scout), Mrs. Malchodi

July 11 meeting minutes: The minutes of the short meeting to finalize a letter from the Committee to the Planning Board about Quail Ridge was approved as amended to correct list of attendees.

July 20 meeting minutes: The minutes of the regular July meeting were discussed and two changes made. About the "Bench" item, Joan noted that the last sentence in that item, stating that feedback about benches should be sent to her, should have referred instead to feedback about the draft bench policy; it was decided to make this a short item about "Bench policy." About the "Great Hill blazing" item, Peggy noted that there had also been discussion of the hilltop blazes (within the yellow loop) and that it had been agreed that these would all have blue blazes (removing the one red trail) and that the shape(s) of those blazes could be left up to the blazers. With those changes the minutes were approved.

Election of Committee positions: Jim noted that Town committees are required to hold elections annually to fill the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Clerk. One person agreed to stand for each of these positions and all were elected unanimously by the regular members present to serve until the next election: Jim Snyder-Grant will continue as Chair; Dave Cochrane will serve as Vice Chair (chairing meetings that Jim cannot attend and acting as someone Jim can discuss ideas with); and Peggy Liversidge will continue as Clerk (secretary).

Eagle Scout project at Guggins Brook: Walter Malchodi attended the meeting and presented his plan to build a 52-foot boardwalk on a frequently wet portion of the blue loop trail in the northern part of Guggins. He suggested this project himself after noting the need for a boardwalk while walking at Guggins. He brought along a seven-page summary, which included design specifications, a materials list, a cost breakdown, and detailed plans for how the construction will proceed over four days. Bob stated that it was a very good proposal and asked Walter to contact him to go over some construction details. The Committee agreed to accept the project in principle. Following Bob's approval of the design, Tom T. will sign off on the project.

8 Green Community Service Day: This service day for approximately 100 eighth-graders, arranged by teacher Allen Warner, will take place on Friday, October 7. Charlie Carlson has indicated that he could supervise a crew in the blueberry barrens at Pratt's Brook (taking wood that he has previously cut into the woods), and Jim could use a crew to spread wood chips at Guggins (using wheelbarrows). Ann Shubert should be asked whether she wants to supervise a crew spreading wood chips at Grassy Pond (using backpacks). In addition to these, Bettina will supervise a crew at the Arboretum, and Linda McElroy will have a crew at Wheeler Lane for the Trail Through Time project.

Joan suggested that a good possible project for responsible and careful members of this age group is

cutting bittersweet vines, although it was noted that we would need to check with Allen Warner about this. Jim said he will do this, and if Warner approves of students' (or some students') use of pruners, Jim will try to pick an area or two, perhaps at Guggins, Pratt's Brook, or Nagog Hill, where a crew that ends early might be able to finish up.

Bench policy: Joan began the discussion of her draft memorial bench policy for Town conservation lands by noting that she started her process by creating two charts from a survey she did of bench policies of other Massachusetts towns and organizations. She included eight towns/organizations in her chart, categorizing various aspects of the policies and highlighting elements that she thought would be particularly useful for Acton, and then circulated these charts to the Committee in July. She also tried to cover areas of concern indicated by questions posed by Conservation Commission members when they considered the Jenks bench policy, and addressed those concerns in the cover email that accompanied the draft policy when she circulated the draft to the Committee in July.

The draft policy was then discussed section by section; some parts of that discussion are noted below.

Joan asked whether people agreed with her wording in the Purpose section: "To provide a consistent and appropriate process that enables individuals and organizations to honor or memorialize members of the Acton community who have had a special connection to Acton's conservation lands in a manner that also supports the open space needs of the Town of Acton." After some discussion a straw poll indicated that the Committee agreed with the wording of that section.

In several places the draft called for the anticipated life of a bench and/or time span of the Town's obligations relative to a bench to be defined, and Joan suggested that in all such instances the bracketed text "[7-8]" be changed to "5" years. There was no objection.

Concerning the recognition plaque, it was agreed that since a bench might be made of stone, and thus require engraving rather than a plaque, the section should be headed "Recognition" and mention the engraving option, and the details of plaque size, number of lines, and material should be moved to the application form.

In the cost section, it was agreed that the \$25 application fee was a reasonable amount. However, Tom A. expressed reservations about including the option of an additional donation to the Natural Resources Department budget, above the fixed and stated costs. He wondered if this might prejudice the Town or the Committee in favor of such a donor or lead to the acceptance of more benches than might otherwise be allowed. As to the first point, Joan noted that the option would appear on the order form rather than application form, and therefore would not influence whether a particular person's application was accepted. As to the second point, Joan noted that the draft included safeguards that would prevent the proliferation of benches. After some discussion a straw poll indicated that most members agreed with Tom and wanted this element removed. Joan argued for bracketing this section, noting the disagreement in the cover letter to the Conservation Commission, and letting them decide.

Other changes were discussed. Joan will revise the current draft to reflect the changes.

Boundary encroachment enforcement: A report of a boundary encroachment along the Capt. Handley access trail, made by Theresa Portante, the Wills Hole/Town Forest steward, has refocused Jim's attention on these problems. He noted that several years ago we put into place a system for the steward to document an encroachment (including description of the problem and the location, and possibly photos and a map), followed by having Tom T. review the evidence, take it ConsCom, and work with a

ConsCom member to draft a letter to the homeowner; following ConsCom approval of the letter, it was sent out under the signature of the ConsCom Chair. For some time, however, boundary problems have not often been reported or followed up. Jim said that one thing that needs to be done at this time is to move the responsibility for writing the letter from Tom T. to the Committee, and he said that he and Tom A. are willing to do this, using past letters as models. The intent is to take the work flow away from Tom T., who is too busy. Bob suggested that letters might include the information that the transfer station accepts yard waste.

The discussion included a question about exactly what an “encroachment” refers to; Jim said we have been using it to cover a number of problems at the boundaries between private property and conservation land, including dumping yard debris beyond a property boundary onto conservation land, extending a yard over a property line, or building a structure on the wrong side of a property line; “trespassing” or “dumping” could also be used to describe these problems. It was noted that we need to be sure of a boundary line before sending a letter, but getting definite information about this can be difficult.

“You Are Here” notice boards: Bettina said she had not yet been able to get information about the cost of the board that is installed at Great Hill, but she will try to do this by next meeting so we can consider whether to get additional ones for installation at Great Hill (and at Spring Hill). However, Bruce suggested that Eagle Scouts might be able to make them and said he would look at the one at Great Hill with this in mind.

Scout land and Robbins Mill Pond: Jim stated that he has not yet succeeded in reaching Bill Klauer, one of the trustees of the privately owned Scout land, to discuss a possible trail easement across their land to connect two parts of the Robbins Mill Pond land.

Trash at Wetherbee: Joan reported that over 20 trash bags filled with asphalt shingles had been dumped recently at Wetherbee and asked Tom T. about this. He stated that the Town will be removing the bags.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 19, at 4:00 P.M.

Documents that serve as background for these discussions can be found at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-4441>. These documents are titled:

- 00 - LSCom Agenda 2011 09 21
- 01.1 - LSCom minutes 2011 07 11
- 01.2 - LSCom minutes 2011 07 20
- 02 - Email about elections
- 03 - Walter Malchodi Eagle Proposal draft 2
- 04 - 8 Green Community Service Day
- 05 - Bench Policy for LSCom - 7-18-11 DRAFT
- 07 - Email excerpts re Great Hill trail re-route
- 08.1 - 2004 Dumping and Encroachment letters and tracking sheet
- 08.2 - Emails re: new dumping/encroachment strategy
- 09 - LSC and Quail Ridge, Summer 2011
- 11 - Parcel Updates