

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2009, 5:00 PM
Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman

Guests: Roy Dennington (organizer of Pacy Land trail cutting), Charlie Aronson (a Morrison Farm community gardener)

Minutes: The March minutes were approved with one change (in the list of responsibilities, Trail Projects Ideas should be changed to Project Ideas). The February minutes were approved except for two items referring to quorum issues; these will be resolved by Jim, Peggy, and Joan.

Trail beside Mt. Hope Cemetery: Bettina questioned whether the informal trail from Central Street that roughly parallels the north side of the cemetery might be marked at Central Street; this had been mentioned at a sidewalk committee meeting in connection with concerns about the large number of dogs that are walked in the cemetery. Bob clarified that a portion of that trail, including where it meets Central Street, is on private property, so we cannot mark it. However, it was suggested that the landowner might be approached to see whether an easement might be a possibility. Both Dave and Bob said they know the landowner, and Dave said he would be willing to speak to him.

Pacy Land trail: Roy Dennington, a resident of Prospect Street who was present at the meeting, was instrumental in organizing a group of neighbors to cut a loop trail on the east side of the Pacy parcel in late March. Since then Bob has done a bit more clearing, and Bettina and Peggy have begun the blazing. Roy stated that he hopes that they can cut a second loop trail in the larger, western portion of the parcel and that a boardwalk can be built at some point over the swampy area separating the two sections of the parcel.

Concerning a possible second loop trail, the resistance to the idea on the part of some Tuttle Drive residents was noted, but it was also pointed out both that we have a right to make use of the property in this way and that local residents who are supportive of the idea might be able to bring around those who presently are opposed to it. Bob noted that the entrance corridor from Tuttle traverses a wet, rocky area but that once you get past this, a nice loop trail could be cut. It was proposed and agreed that Bob and Philip flag a trail.

Concerning a boardwalk connecting the two trails, Bob estimated that the shortest point for crossing the wetland area might require a boardwalk of around 200 ft., but he pointed out that we already have one boardwalk project in process and two others identified as needing repair or, ideally, rebuilding. However, this could possibly be a project for perhaps two Eagle Scouts.

Blazing: Peggy reported that she and Bettina have started this season's blazing. In addition to beginning work on the new Pacy Land loop trail, they have done some reblazing at Guggins (continuing work begun last fall); work there is still incomplete.

Morrison Farm update: Dave reported on his efforts to get elementary school students involved at Morrison Farm. Working with Eileen Sullivan, the science curriculum head for the elementary schools, he has arranged for three classes of first-graders and one class of fifth-graders, all at Merriam School, to plant land adjacent to last year's community garden plots, which Tom confirmed has been plowed and fenced. They are starting a variety of vegetables and flower seeds indoors and will plant them outside before the school year ends. He has also started making arrangements with some high school students and the Acton Garden Club to keep the plot watered and weeded through the summer, with some help, perhaps, from some of the elementary students. When school resumes they will harvest their crops and plan a harvest meal. Dave stated that the teachers are enthusiastic about the project.

Tom mentioned the issue of trails on the MF property, both the existing ones in the woods (which are currently minimally maintained by walkers) and the new trail proposed by the Morrison Farm Reuse Committee (around Icehouse Pond, with a connection to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail). He raised the question of who might help work on creating the new trail, and Nan suggested that we might be able to enlist some of the community gardeners.

Tom also reported that an architectural consultant has been hired to look at the MF house and barn and offer recommendations about their possible use for office space, caretaker housing, and classroom/activity space.

Wetherbee agricultural land: Jim reported that residents had voted at Town Meeting to put an agricultural easement on the Wetherbee field, thereby adding a new level of protection for that land.

Senior Service Day: Jim, Ann, and Linda have submitted forms requesting help on the Senior Service Day (May 1).

Great Hill signs: Nan reported that the two "Not a Through Trail" signs (for the trail leaving the playing field in the direction of Piper Road) should be ready soon.

Request for Scout project: Bettina offered to follow up with Joanne Bisetta, the Boy Scout leader who recently contacted us about possible projects.

Tarp at canoe launch: Following Bob's suggestion that the tarp that has been covering (and hopefully killing) a portion of the Japanese knotweed be moved to a new location, Bettina said that she has a memo written last fall about this question. She will locate it and report.

Committee charter: Jim reported that Bob had made some helpful editing suggestions to the charter document and it is now down to one page and is entirely in the third person. He will email it to the committee and we will discuss it at next month's meeting.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 20, at 4:00 PM.