

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

Regular (voting) members present: Dave Cochrane, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Laurie Ullmann

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

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

November meeting minutes: The November meeting minutes were approved.

Eagle Scout project at Great Hill: Bob has walked the new trail down the east side of Great Hill with Eagle Scout Tom Russell and discussed with him the hillside cutting that will be needed to create a flat bed for the trail. The Scout is interested in the project, and Bob said he thinks Tom will do a good job.

Dumping and encroachment: Tom T. said there are currently two sites where dumping needs to be stopped. On Tupelo Way, where the main problem is the dumping of grass clippings near the wetlands, Jim has taken photographs and Tom has contacted the homeowner, though there is nothing more to report at this time. On Capt. Handley Rd., where there has been dumping of fill from a work project as well as some old Christmas trees, Tom has spoken with the homeowner and reports that he was friendly and cooperative and has promised to remove the materials. No timetable was set, but it was stated that the Natural Resources Dept. should check in at some point to see if the work has been done. The homeowner also noted that there is an old pile of debris that predated his residence there, and it was agreed that he will not be responsible for removing this.

ConsCom meeting re Hybrid Farm, bench policy: Tom A. reported on the December 7 ConsCom meeting, which was largely focused on the Hybrid license situation. Letters of support were submitted by various groups associated with Hybrid, and a group of perhaps 40-50 supporters attended. The presentation, put together by Bettina Abe, outlined the problems with the current situation: the original license drawn up in the 1980s specified a limit of 8 horses, no structures, and no commercial activity, but lack of Town oversight has led to the current situation in which there are around 30 horses, several structures, and commercial activity; in addition, the McConnors would like to put up a new riding stable. This meeting was the beginning of the process of reconsidering what the conditions for the license of this land should be. As the next step, Jim Coleman (a new ConsCom member) and Tom A. have agreed to work with the McConnors. Tom said they first want to create an accurate map, using GPS coordinates, to clarify where various Hybrid activities take place. Bob said he could help with this.

Another item on the meeting's agenda was our bench policy, which Joan Cirillo presented to the ConsCom. Tom A. stated that Commissioners had quite a few questions about it, and because time was short, the issue was tabled and will be considered at the ConsCom meeting on January 18. Tom A. suggested that the policy be sent to ConsCom members before the meeting with the request that they send any questions to Joan so that she will be prepared to answer their questions at the meeting.

End-of-year report: Jim noted that he writes up this report every year for the Town. It includes a short committee description plus notes on any personnel changes and a report of our activities. Jim asked Dave, as vice chair, whether he would review the report, and Dave said he would.

Parcels: Camp Acton: Bruce reported that he plans to have his Boy Scouts split wood and fill the new wood boxes.

Great Hill: Tom T. reported that the Town has accepted a buyer's offer for the house on Piper Lane.

Guggins: Jim reported that he is considering the possibility of a new trail along the west side of the Guggins Brook property, bordering the New View property; it would go southwest and exit onto Gregory Lane, which leads to Rt. 111 just west of West Acton center. A trail easement would be required, but Jim knows the homeowners along Gregory Lane and thinks this could be arranged.

Nagog Hill: Meadow cleanup is needed behind the Young's house. Also, Bob and Laurie have added an 8-foot segment to the end of the boardwalk in that same location, and Bob has sloped the ends of the boardwalk beside Hybrid. Third, Jim reported that Pulte now owns the golf course land and has put out a request for bids to construct the trail and boardwalk along the Quail Ridge easement.

Pratt's Brook: Bob sloped the ends of one boardwalk.

Robbins Mill Pond land: Jim reported that he walked from the Robbins Mill Pond land to Camp Acton with five Carlisle conservation people to consider trail access between the two towns. Acton and Carlisle conservation lands meet at a point, separated on one side by a large piece of private property in Carlisle and on the opposite side by a similar property in Acton. To get from our conservation land to Carlisle's will require a small easement across one of those private lands. It appears that the Carlisle landowner may be more amenable, so the plan is to approach this landowner. Second, Tom T. was asked about the status of the viewing platform at the Robbins Mill Pond. Tom said that he will need to contact the developer to see if he can get things moving on this project.

Spring Hill: The question of the problematic boardwalk in the center of this conservation area was raised again. Laurie wondered if a possible construction technique might be to use small H frames rather than sills. Concerning the problem of how to haul in construction materials, suggestions included ATVs and plastic sleds.

Stoneymeade: Nan reported that the field has been mowed. She also stated that bluebirds nested there again this year.

Scoutland easement question: Laurie said that he has communicated with Bill Klauer via email about a possible easement across Scoutland to connect Nashoba Brook with the Robbins Mill Pond land. Mr. Klauer said he has no objection to this idea and will speak to the Scoutland's other trustees about it.

Request about reporting of blowdowns: During the parcel discussion, the request was made that stewards reporting blowdowns that they need others' help with include an approximate diameter so that responders can bring appropriate tools.

Bob's suggestions for boardwalks: Also during the parcel discussion, Bob recommended that the specifications for all of our boardwalks include (1) end segments that slope at a moderate angle from the ground to the boardwalk and (2) use of hardware that allows boardwalk segments to be easily disassembled for future maintenance (i.e., bolts rather than nails for connecting segments).

Suggestion for future discussion re conservation land trail placement: Tom A. wondered if we might locate some trails on some conservation lands closer to roads to accommodate potential walkers who don't feel completely comfortable in a woods setting. He would like to have this discussed at a future meeting. It was noted that another, possibly easier, way to attract such people would be to increase the number of walks with leaders.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 18, at 4:00 P.M