

**Acton**  
**Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, February 25, 2014, Town Hall, Room 121, 7 P.M.**

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Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe, Tom Arnold, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Jim Snyder-Grant (Chair), Laurie Ullmann

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Andy Gatesman, Theresa Portante-Lyle, Joe Will (Minutes)

Nonmembers: Sherman Smith (volunteer applicant)

Jim called the meeting to order at 7:04 P.M.

Review and approval of December 18 and January 22 minutes

Correction for December 18 minutes: The sign removed from the Camp Acton gate reads, "For authorized vehicle use only."

- December 18 minutes moved and voted unanimously.
- January 22 minutes moved and voted unanimously.

Trail Through Time (TTT) update

(next stone pile cluster trail to be laid out and cut this Spring?)

Jim shared a Trail Through Time update email from Linda McElroy (see "background" list at bottom of minutes). Comments regarding Linda's "additional stone pile cluster" along the Nashoba Brook TTT:

• Linda says the direction of the site is "... further west along the NB yellow trail . . ." Map suggests "west" should be "south."

• Jim will check to see if <http://www.actontrails.org>, the Acton trails website, has the link to <http://TrailThroughTime.info>. Also, it should be described and linked from the Nashoba Brook write-up, and the Robbins Mill write-up if and when the trail is extended from Carlisle Road through Scoutland.

- Bettina has seen the new information panels along the TTT. Has anyone else? Laurie has.
- Does Acton Historical Commission know about this new TTT presentation? Yes.

Discussion flowed into a "sidebar" on the Robbins Mill Pond.

- The Conservation Commission wants the LSC opinion on draining the Robbins Mill Pond.
- When masons started reconstructing the sluiceway they said that the dam is in really bad shape; it could wash away their work, and so they stopped working. The masons urged that the town deal with the dam.
- The Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety inspected the dam and said it is failing.
- Cases can be made for and against removing or repairing it. (Having no dam would be good for fish and canoeists. Keeping (and fixing) dam would be good for pond and fishing; also would save one of the oldest dams in Acton.) Linda would like the dam restored so that the sluiceway that goes through the old mill can be functional.
- Linda has been asked by the Conservation Commission to come up with a more detailed recommendation. She is working with Doug Halley, who is the town staff assigned to the TTT project.
- Anyone with opinions on this should get in touch with Linda and the Conservation Commission.
- Ultimately the town has to decide.
- Jim: We will come back to this when we have more information.

### Updating the Conservation Land narratives

- Jim shared his Guggins Brook write-up. This and other updated write-ups were prepared by Peggy Liversidge. She started with what's in the current guidebook, adjusted things that have changed, and included things that had been omitted.
- The current website write-ups are more verbose than the guidebook write-up, but the two are largely related. Both website and guidebook write-ups are out of date. The new write-ups from Peggy are intended to replace both.
- Updating the guidebook is a big task and perhaps too complicated to discuss now. But updating the website is easier. So each steward should review the write-up for his/her parcel. Peggy will help with integrating the proposed edits, and then we will get new write-ups onto the website. Jim has sent out links to the stewards. The work is in Google doc format in the Google docs cloud. Stewards can comment on the document. Otherwise, Jim can email Word files or pdf files. In fact, Jim will put them on the server. Jim asked whether people at this meeting were comfortable with getting back to him in the next month or so. Yeses all around.
- Bettina: Is there a Canoe Launch write-up? Right now, we don't know. Jim didn't bring one.
- Bruce would like to see "best use" in the write-ups, e.g., great for mountain biking.
- Tom suggests that we could also build in trail difficulty.
- We could build a matrix. Joe has done so for Recreation and Conservation lands that include "use" columns. We might be suggesting additional use columns for the matrix.
- Bruce: One could click on an activity and be taken to the best places in Acton for that activity.
- Sherman: Currently there are links to parcel maps. Can we move the link from the bottom to the top of a write-up? Jim: Yes.
- There could be a link at both the top and the bottom
- We have to be careful about suggesting that a feature applies to an entire parcel, e.g., mountain biking at Nashoba Brook works on the east side but not on west side.
- Theresa: We could highlight habitat types. Jim suggests that this could be done within the narrative.
- Has there been any feedback? People are happy to find the maps (which contain write-ups), but there has been not much feedback on the write-ups.
- Theresa suggests that we post write-ups on kiosks. A posted write-up might encourage people to take the next step beyond the kiosk.
- Other ideas for posting on a kiosk: "Trail Highlights" or trail information, e.g., "Loop trail 2.3 miles," bench locations and distances to them, "Points of Interest."
- Bettina is able to print maps for stewards.

**Action:** Jim and Joe will meet re the matrix. We'll reconvene next month with lots of data.

- About the Guide Book: Is anyone interested in being responsible for updating it?
- We could put a pdf on a website and people could download it.
- Andy: What are the issues? Issues include missing parcels, parcels with new trails, parcels with different shapes that would require redoing the maps.
- Bob: Where did Carlisle and the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) get their maps? We should look at the Carlisle Conservation Guidebook and the SVT book. Carlisle copied ours and improved it. Then SVT saw Carlisle's and did even better.
- There are (will be) new write-ups and new maps, so what do we do? If we produce pdfs, we can go to a book anytime.
- With spiral binding, we could print about 100 at a time. Having Staples do it would cost twice as much. Bettina: Tom Tidman could underwrite a less expensive book.

- Dave volunteered to lead a committee to develop new pdfs. Bruce volunteered to help Dave.

### Cemetery agreement

- Jim shared the February 4, 2004 agreement involving the LSC (Jim as Chair), the Conservation Commission (Andy Magee, Chair), and the Cemetery Commission (Brewster Conant Chair; also current Chair). It was good for two years; it's been 10 years now.
- Dave talked with Brewster and Cemetery Commissioner Bill Klauer and they don't have a problem with present practices. Bob wonders, "So why change anything?" Jim calls the agreement "dangerous" (because of the bridge removal clause and the expiration date) and wants it to be accurate.
- Joe is a Cemetery Commissioner now.
- Joe pointed out that there are similar situations at the Mt. Hope and Woodlawn cemeteries, albeit different "landowners." He suggests that we seek more responsibility for the Morrison Farm woods and then aim for an agreement that would apply to both cemetery situations. He also points out that at both cemeteries, dog owner practices with their dogs are a concern.
- Bob: The Cemetery Commissioners ought to realize that lots of people use their lands.
- People who park by the woods at Mt. Hope should go into the woods. Dog owners should leave their homes with poop bags in their pockets.
- Tom: What we could do would depend on how the lands are "dedicated."
- Don Johnson (former Town Manager) zoned the Morrison property to be "municipal" to keep options open. Steve Ledoux (current Town Manager) has been more open to conservation restrictions.
- You can't make an official parking lot at Mt. Hope, nor an official (dog) policy.
- Bruce: Do we cut the trees at Morrison? Do we maintain the trails?
- If we are interested in maintaining trails at Morrison, we could do so.
- Question: Do we have any authority to cut at Woodlawn?
- Bettina: Shawn O'Malley could do it. Bettina will ask Shawn to do some specific cutting.
- What about cleaning up Morrison? We should see Cathy about the metal stuff (near the bee hives). Nobody does anything about the woods.
- Tom: There are different rules for cemetery land, conservation land, etc. What I'm hearing is we could sit down with the Cemetery Commission and come up with a redraft of an agreement and get everyone to sign.
- We could start a conversation with Brewster.

**Action:** Jim will pursue a redraft, if Brewster is willing. Joe will ask Brewster if Jim could chat with him, or send a draft, or come to a Cemetery Commission meeting.

### Scoutland license update

- Jim talked with Bill Klauer today. Bill points out that he and Bob Wetherbee are the only trustees and that they discussed a trail easement last year. Bill said, "Yes." Bob said, "No." Why the "No"? Jim doesn't know. Bill would like to have one more trustee so that the vote would be one way or the other. He has talked to a couple people who are interested. He would like to get this resolved this spring.
- Bob wondered what the trustees' reasons are for keeping the land.
- Laurie wondered whether having no easement will hold up the Bay Circuit Trail change?

**Action:** Jim will talk to Bill again.

### Lost and Found procedure

Finder should use judgment re the value of found item. If valuable, then it should go to the Public Safety Building (which is open 24/7). If not valuable, then it can be left in a prominent place (but not in map/tick boxes). If still there after a few days, it can be removed and discarded.

**Action:** We will put a message on Facebook and on key kiosks about delivering lost valuables to the Public Safety Building. Bettina (after checking with Tom Tidman) will change the Arboretum sign that currently directs finders to use the Natural Resources Office.

#### Are evening meetings working out?

- Seven regular members are present at this February meeting. Attendance at the January meeting was not as good.
- Why not have our meetings on Tuesdays all the time? Tuesday nights are difficult for Tom Arnold, as are Wednesday nights for some other regular members. Philip is unavailable either night but Jim is chatting with Philip each day before a meeting. We don't get Tom Tidman for evening meetings, but Bettina takes his role.
- Bob feels strongly that our meetings should be the same day of the week, every month.
- Jim hopes that by June we can settle on one day.

#### Open Space and Recreation Plan

- Jim showed a draft of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and has sent out links to the text.
- We should send any suggestions to Jim or Fran Portante.
- Thursday night is Public Forum for the OSRP. There will be half hour presentation, followed by breakout sessions. Fran and Bettina will record the suggestions, and all suggestions will be folded in to the OSRP as appropriate.
- Having an OSRP will help with in acquiring future grants.

#### Facebook update

- Almost 100 people "like" the LSC Facebook page. There's information on its use online (e.g., numbers of folks using it).
- We have four content editors, Bob, Jim, Bettina, and Phil.
- If there's anything Facebook could/should have, Jim would like to know. Suggestions: More pictures, wildlife watch, Tom Tidman's walks, invasive species information/watch, gallery of blazes and arrows (red trail meaning, etc.), handicap accessibility.
- Handicap accessibility has priority for getting onto Facebook.

#### Parcel updates

- General observation

Bruce says that we need a better description of a blowdown (Is it a trunk, canopy, or both? What is the diameter of the obstructing wood? Can it be dragged off?) to help whoever removes it.

- Nagog Hill

Elan Riesman notes that a tree is down on the yellow trail. It's not blocking the trail and it's dangerous to remove. Bruce told Elan to ignore it, "If it's not blocking the trail, we won't do anything with it."

- Grassy Pond

A hockey net is still on the ice. People who put it there are likely to leave it there. It will be frozen in. Bob would not trust the ice right now. To remove it, someone might have to chip it out. Question: Is anyone inclined to retrieve it? Silence. Suggestion: We should tie it to a tree with a long rope to help remove it after ice is gone.

**Action:** Andy will check it out. He will see if he can remove it, possibly by hatchet, or he will tie a rope to it.

- Robbins Mill

Bob suggests that we relocate the yellow trail at one spot. At the northeast end, you hook around a

height of land and then neck back in towards the trail just traveled. Walkers will likely shortcut the trail at this point, and sure enough right now there is a bypass trail. Bob suggests that when you come around the height and before it necks back, there's an opening to go straight across.

**Action:** Jim will go out with Laurie to check this out.

Per Bob, we should also check out if we can cross the gas transmission line at the point where you go along the boundary line of private property. We should check in the spring whether this would be a drier passage. Jim says that we haven't talked with the gas company yet. Acton owns the land, but we have to stick to the terms of the agreement with the gas people. Bruce knows the width of the gas company trucks, which will be helpful when we have to know how to provide for their passage relative to any boardwalks.

Bettina has two Scouts wanting to do a Robbins Mill project. The parcel needs at least 4 boardwalks. Bob suggests that when Scouts are looking for a project, we ask them as part of their effort to "go out there and look around. The boys need to notice a need."

What about the white standpipes that abound in this parcel? They are too brittle to pull out; they break. Bob says cut them off 6 inches down and fill in the hole. We'll "have at this" again when Bob Farra is present.

- Heath Hen Meadow

The broken tree slanting down across the blue trail east of the meadow is high enough to walk under at present, so needs no attention.

- Camp Acton

We are not sure why the upper gate is unlocked. Bob thinks that Shawn O'Malley may have opened it to transfer the boardwalks. Bruce does not have a key to the lock.

**Action:** Bettina will get a key for Bruce so he can lock the gate. He can turn it in to the Highway Department in a few years.

- Nashoba Brook

At a future meeting, we will talk about the relationship of Nashoba Brook with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT), e.g., the pencil factory. Bob points out that signs on the BFRT are the government's job. Per Jim, we can contribute wording.

- Pratt's Brook

Tonight's guest, Sherman Smith, is aiming to join the LSC. He visits Pratt's Brook the most.

### Evaluate this meeting

Dave gives it a 95.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 P.M.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 26, at 7 P.M., in Room 126.

Items that serve as background for today's meeting are here: <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-6122>. They are titled as follows:

0 - Agenda for 2/25 meeting as posted

01 - LSC minutes 2013 12 18 draft

01 - LSC minutes 2014 01 22 draft

02 - Trail Through Time update email (new proposed stone cluster trail)

03 - Updated parcel write-ups ready for review & edit by stewards

- 03 - zip file of parcel write-ups in process**
- 04 - Mt. Hope Cemetery Agreement of 2004**
- 08 - email with links to OSRP chapters and info on public meeting**
- 09 - Facebook update**
- 10 - parcel updates**