

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2009, 4:00 P.M.
Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Bob Guba, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Rich Rhode, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman
Guest: Terry Maitland, Conservation Commission chair

Meeting minutes: The October minutes were approved.

Upcoming Open Space and Recreation Plan: Tom noted that the next cycle of the five-year review of the Town's open space parcels, the Open Space and Recreation Plan, is coming up. Tom, with Terry Maitland and Janet Adachi of the Conservation Commission, have started working on it. Input may be needed from the LSCom for conservation parcel information.

Parcel updates: *Grassy Pond:* Bob, Laurie (Ullmann), Jim, and Rich have re-erected the toppled kiosk. It's a bit closer to the wall than it was before, and the supports are deeper, so it is quite sturdy now.

Heath Hen Meadow: In the upper meadow, Bob and Jim have cut back all but one side to the stone wall. Also, they dredged out much of the beaver debris at the foot bridge.

Nagog Hill: Bob and Jim mowed the meadow behind Jimmy Young's using Bob's field mower. In addition, in the same meadow, Bob and Rich smoothed out ruts made during the removal of brush piles last winter, started new piles from scattered debris, and repaired two short boardwalks over a wet area in the meadow.

Spring Hill: Philip checked with Tom whether he could remove the police flagging tape that was put up during the search for Richard Nethercut; Tom agreed that the tape could be removed.

Possible need for new stewards: Jim noted that Ann (Shubert) is currently covering both Grassy Pond and Nagog Hill, and a new steward is needed to take over the latter. It was suggested that a notice be put on the Nagog Hill kiosk about the need for a volunteer who regularly walks that parcel and who would be willing to patrol it and report problems; a notice could also be sent to the volunteer email list. Also, Great Hill may need more active stewarding than Paul Wasserboehr is able to give it; Jim said he will call Paul to see if we need to look for a new steward. Finally, it was noted that the Pacy Land needs a steward since Roy Dennington has moved from Acton. Chris and Elizabeth Hickey, residents of the area near the Pacy Land, were mentioned as possibilities.

Jim mentioned that Josh Haines is now trying out acting as the steward for Jenks. He and any other new stewards will be sworn in as associate members in June if they and the committee want to formalize the stewardship assignment unless someone has a particular interest in participating as an active member of the committee.

Geocaching update: Bettina reported on the geocaching sites on Acton conservation lands, which she, along with the cache originator, monitors for any signs of wear-and-tear or other problems. There are currently seven sites on seven different conservation lands, including the Arboretum (Arboretum, Great Hill, Heath Hen Meadow, Nagog Hill, Nashoba Brook, Pratt's Brook, and Wills Hole), and Bettina has found only minor evidence of wear at one site, which she eliminated. She also reported that two caches have been voluntarily removed by their originators after they became aware of problems with the locations.

Besides the physical monitoring, both Bettina and Jim receive email messages every time someone finds a cache. So far this year there have been 143 cache finds, from a high of 37 at the Arboretum to a low of 8 at Nashoba Brook.

Bettina also mentioned that a new multiple-site educational geocache is being planned for the Arboretum.

Although our policy at this time is to not publicize the geocaching sites, Philip wondered if we might consider easing this restriction in light of the responsibility shown by the geocachers (both cache originators and people looking for the caches) and the lack of any problems to date.

Eagle Scout projects: Two Eagle Scout projects have recently been assigned. One is to build a narrow boardwalk on the right side of the access trail to Nagog Hill from the parking lot, next to Hy-Bid Farm; the left side of the trail will be left as is, to be used by horses. The Scout for this project is Vincent Azzolino. The other project is to build boardwalk segments along Nashoba Brook, just upstream from the stone chamber. The Scout for this project, John Russell, plans to do the work next spring.

Bob suggested that we write a letter to Quail Ridge thanking them for the use of their golf carts for the recent Eagle Scout project at Nagog Hill, and he agreed to give the facts to Ann (Shubert) so that she can write the letter.

Access trail at Great Hill: Concerning the access trail from 380 Mass. Avenue (Concord Family and Youth Services) to the Great Hill loop trail, Bob reported that the old bridge over the stream that crosses the trail is in poor shape—off its footings and lying askew in the stream. Also, the culvert that the stream used to flow through has been blocked by rocks. Either a new bridge will need to be built or the culvert will need to be unblocked and the stream redirected. Bob and Tom will check this out.

Robbins Mill Pond platform: Tom noted that the trail to the platform site is almost complete, so we should approach the developer and request that they get started on building the platform. The platform design has already been approved, and winter would be a good time to get started on this work, he said.

Quail Ridge easement trail: After a brief discussion it was decided that Philip and Jim will review the proposed route of the Quail Ridge easement trail. After the trail has been reflagged, the committee will be notified so that a third person can review the trail before any cutting is done. Tom suggested that the cutting could be done before the boardwalk is built but with both ends of the trail left uncut until the boardwalk is done. Jim will also follow up with the people at Quail Ridge to be sure that they are clear that their agreement with the Town requires them to fund and build the boardwalk, and to do so before any work is started on the development.

Annual oversight presentation before the BoS: Jim made a presentation about our work before the Board of Selectmen at the annual committee oversight meeting on November 16. In addition to Jim, four stewards were in attendance. Based on feedback from Bob, Jim updated the presentation he had emailed to stewards to include mention of the need for parking lot improvements, a request that police check conservation land parking lots every evening, and a request for boundary surveying and clear, permanent marking of conservation land boundaries.

Charter update: The final version of the revised Board/Committee Handbook prepared

by the Board of Selectmen was issued on November 2, so we will now be able to finalize our charter document. The idea of LSCom becoming an independent, non-Town committee was briefly reviewed. However, the pros and cons seemed to indicate that this is not a favorable route for the committee to take, and Jim will not pursue it at this time.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 16, at 4:00 PM.