

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 18, 2015, Town Hall, Room 126, 7 P.M.

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bettina Abe (Chair), Bob Farra, Bob Guba, Bruce Rachman, Laurie Ullmann, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Paula Goodwin

Nonmembers:

Janet Adachi (LSC's Board of Selectmen liaison), Linda McElroy (Trail Through Time Project Manager)

Bettina called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M. Bob F brought chocolate pudding w/whipped cream.

Review and approval of July minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously.

Eagle Scout Projects

Bettina reviewed the list that she had shared with the LSC a couple weeks prior. There are five new names on the list. Bettina has three of them on her projects. The LSC discussed the kinds of projects that Scouts can do.

- Scouts can build, rebuild, and repair kiosks and boardwalks, cut and repair trails, do Arboretum projects such as its gardens, help with clearing invasive plants, build and repair handicapped facilities and facilitate handicapped accessibility, build and install birdhouses, bird boxes, and bat boxes. Project ideas are pretty much up to the individual Scouts, subject to approval by Scout officials. Projects require at least 100 hours of work.
- Can Eagle Scouts make signs we need? No, Bettina and Shawn O'Malley make our signs.
- Bettina asks that LSC members send her possible Scout projects as ideas come to mind.

Update: Link of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) with Bay Circuit Trail (BCT)

Bob G said that he had found another, possibly better, place to make the link. However, Jack Valentine, owner of the land over which there will be an easement for the trail, wants to stay with the current plan. Bob has kept contact with Steve Tobin of the Carlisle Conservation Foundation on this matter. The Planning Department recommends allowing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to finish the BFRT as designed, including an opening for this link. Once the Town owns the BFRT, it can give further consideration as to what to do with the link.

Bruce wondered about connecting the BFRT and the BCT by the Pencil Factory. Laurie suggested that the BCT would not like too much association with the BFRT. Regardless, some feel that there should be a link with the BFRT at the Pencil Factory.

Update: Trail Through Time (TTT)

Linda and Doug Halley (Acton Public Health Director) are making a presentation to the Acton Conservation Commission tomorrow night to update the Commission on the TTT. Based on her reading of the draft of the August LSC Meeting Minutes, Linda felt there was confusion about her

plans and so is attending this meeting to answer any LSC questions about the TTT. Points made:

- In terms of TTT planning, there is just one new idea: access to the Pipsissewa Stone Pile site. Linda did some initial flagging of a “lollipop” trail. Then Bob G and Phil Keyes did a “firmer” route because, as Bob pointed out, laying out and cutting trails is the responsibility of the LSC. But Bob’s and Phil’s trail is not one that Linda envisioned. In fact, Linda would have suggested a route different from both of the former routes if she had known that the LSC would cut the trail. (Reiteration: It will.) The LSC and Linda then rough-sketches a possible trail that seemed to satisfy both parties. Bruce said that the LSC will investigate it and Linda said that she would too. Bruce, to Linda’s delight, reiterated that the LSC will help with laying out and cutting the trail. In general, the LSC will work with Linda to help make the TTT better.
- Per Linda, there are no plans for any additional Native American stone pile sites beyond the four (Blueberry, Plantain, Princess Pine, and Pipsissewa) already implemented or planned.
- There are five information panels in production now: Two will go on the Native American kiosk. Two additional freestanding panels will be at the Blueberry and Princess Pine sites. A fifth new panel will be placed in the Robbins Mill CL at the Stone Chamber Roof Slab Quarry. That panel will be on the trail from Carlisle Road that has been flagged, but not yet cut because of the lack of access to the Scoutland portion.
- Bob G and Bruce: The kiosk is too high, which means that the information panels will be too high. We should wait and check this out when the panels are mounted. If then they are judged too high, Bob can make an adjustment.
- Bob G: Consider putting the information panels “closer to the action.” This is negotiable, but needs discussion.
- Bob G: Is there “backup” when present parties are no longer around? Doug Halley is submitting the TTT to the Massachusetts Historical Society. Perhaps we need a “Friends of the TTT.” There will be TTT information binders at Acton’s two libraries.
- Bruce and/or others on the LSC could help Linda get the TTT website up and running again (after Linda updates it).

Update: Field mower and trailer

Can you also change the second to last sentence to say, "...we will have people try it out."

The Finance Department has a check for Bettina to buy the Hosmer Street private-sale trailer, which Shawn O’Malley says is “great.” In addition to being used by the LSC, the trailer will have multiple uses by Natural Resources. After purchase, the Town will build up the trailer’s sides, fix any strap problems, and arrange to hook it up to vehicles. Right now, Bettina is unsure of the ball size. Also, it’s possible to get an adapter for electrical connection. When it’s ready, different stewards can use it. Steve Barrett, Town Finance Director, says liability is covered. As for the current mower (so far, no LSC member has tried it), we will have people try it out to determine satisfaction with it or if there is need for a new mower. A next step for the LSC is to get a list of stewards who are willing and able to mow, and to get them to try out the equipment.

Update: Construction projects (kiosks, bridges, etc.); preferred kiosk roof design

- Bridges

Bob G and Bettina ordered lumber for the Nashoba Brook pencil factory bridge. It has been delivered

to Bruce's driveway where all the pre-construction work has been done. It should take one big workday to get the bridge in place. We are targeting the last weekend in August to coincidentally celebrate Bruce's birthday and Laurie's 56th anniversary.

- Kiosk design

We are trying to decide how to roof 3 new kiosks and retrofit roofs on at least 8 others. There are 28 kiosks in all and Bruce has found that when you remove a roof it falls apart, so eventually we will have to retrofit every one. The LSC discussed three possible roof styles, and roofing materials. The price difference among the styles is minimal and the roofs can be built in one's driveway. Scouts could do this, but it would be a lot of work. We could try a design for, say, five years and then look back.

Motion: Bob G and Bruce design a two-sided drop-in roof compatible with the current kiosk design and using cedar shingles and shakes, an aluminum ridge cap and drip edge, and copper flashing; other details to be determined. (There would be no plywood and no exposed nails.)

Motion was seconded and voted unanimously.

- Other bridge construction project

At the end of Wheeler Lane, at the sluiceway that goes by the old mill site, there was a bridge to get out to the dam. One side wall of the sluiceway has eroded away. That wall would be under the new bridge. There are two good cement pads there that we would like to put the bridge on, but the bridge wouldn't be anchored and it would be moveable. We are still working on the design.

Bob F will help with the design of this bridge.

Other parcel information

- Grassy Pond

We have not heard from Gary Kilpatrick, Grassy Pond Steward and the LSC's newest regular member. The access trail from Newtown Road should be brushed out. Bettina will try to e-contact Gary. Bob G has yet to pull down a hanging tree in this parcel.

- Heath Hen Meadow

– Paula described the completely grown-over Prescott Street red access trail. Bob G helped describe the Prescott Street entrance and pointed out that we've abandoned what our Guide describes as the "Overlook Trail" because it needs a lot of boardwalks.

– The meadows could use a couple of bird boxes. Tom Tidman does bluebird boxes for the schools, so we could check with him about boxes for HHM.

– The sign needed at the Billings Road entrance to Heath Hen Meadow has been reported to Shawn O'Malley.

– Bob G: All our meadows get mowed in the fall. At HHM, the mowing is should be more selective. There the bittersweet vines are moving out into the meadow.

- Robbins Mill

Robbins Mill also needs a sign.

- Wetherbee

Bob has been mowing there.

- Great Hill

The invasive plant display has been up for two days now. We would welcome feedback.

- Pratt's Brook

We love Luna's Bench.

- General

- Bob would like to accompany every new steward around early on in his/her tenure around his/her parcel and share his stewarding expertise — a great idea.

- Joe observed that Acton's new Pay as You Throw trash policy might cause some problems with public trash disposal in public places, including Conservation Land. Bettina said that Tom Tidman would provide stewards with whatever Town trash bags we would want.

September agenda

- Follow-up on kiosks

- Mower-trailer update

- TTT discussion

- Meadow-management plans

Send email to Bettina with any other agenda items.

Not for the agenda, but we will try to have a party for the LSC at Bettina's or Bruce's house.

Evaluate meeting

Long and lovely, very informative.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 15, at 7 P.M., in Room 126.