

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
August 19, 2009, 4:00 P.M.
Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe (chair), Joan Cirillo, Bob Guba, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Rich Rhode, Laurie Ullmann
Guest: Maureen Ryan-Friend

July minutes: The July minutes were approved.

Parcels: Great Hill: Bettina reported that someone has removed one of the two "No Through Trail" signs she put up earlier this summer on the former red trail leading out of the playing field. She had put them up fairly high (about six feet) but this didn't serve as a deterrent. The one that is now missing was on the east side of the private land that that trail crosses.

Jenks: A Jenks neighbor, Joshua Haines, has begun helping out with maintenance there.

Stoneymeade: Bob reported that Nan (Towle Millett) has contacted the owner of Stoneymeade Farm, the horse farm adjacent to Stoneymeade Conservation Area, and has been told that he will try to mow the trail twice each summer as a favor to the town, probably in June and August.

Wetherbee: Bob reported that there has been some damage to the Wetherbee sign on Wetherbee Street. Also, he has cut off the lower branches on some of the trees along the field access trail, which will help to make mowing easier.

Blazing: Peggy reported that she has blazed a previously unblazed portion of the blue trail (north of the pedestrian walkway) at the Town Forest.

Mowing: Concerning the suggestion made last month that Scout troops might adopt a conservation area and perhaps do mowing throughout the growing season, Bettina noted that this probably is not feasible because Scouts do not conduct meetings in July or August, families travel, and Scouts attend camp. Bob is working on a mowing chart.

Invasives removal: Apropos of a discussion about invasives at Wetherbee, Joan asked about the status of a policy report and recommendations about invasives that Jim (Snyder-Grant) drew up and submitted to the Conservation Commission some time ago (around the same time that the new trail maintenance guidelines were adopted without any reference to use of chemicals or other guidance about invasives). She wants to be sure that whatever we do relative to invasives is within our actual authority, as determined by appropriate Town (or possibly State) authorities.

Possible new access trail at Spring Hill: Bob questioned whether we should indicate on the trail map the existing very short access trail to Spring Hill from the end of Briar Hill Road, off Davis Road (beyond the current parking lot and access to Nashoba Brook). Philip suggested we should first check with the Planning Board if the parking spot and trail are part of the site plan for the development. Bob said he would look into this.

Need for regular parcel reports from stewards: Bob expressed concern that certain stewards may not be meeting the minimum requirement of inspecting their parcels at least once a month. He also reiterated his concern that he and the committee are

not getting reports from all stewards about the status of their properties, particularly those who do not attend meetings regularly or at all. Joan echoed Bob's concern and noted that it was difficult for the committee to fulfill its mission of identifying problems, setting priorities, and devising appropriate policies and procedures that factor in common issues at various (or all) parcels in the absence of current information from all stewards about their parcels, whether provided at the monthly meetings or via email prior to meetings. It is requested that those who are not coming to meetings send out reports every month to the full LSCOM email list, even if only to say that they have been out on their property at least once in the last month and that nothing needs to be reported.

Use of volunteer list for projects: Given the very low response rate to emails sent out to the Yahoo volunteer list, Bob wondered whether it makes sense to continue using the list. The general consensus in the discussion that followed was that, while this poor response is frustrating, it makes sense to send requests out to as large a potential pool as possible. At the least, it keeps people who are interested in the conservation lands informed about some of the work that is being done to maintain the land. Philip suggested that a slightly different approach might be to send information about the work that needs to be done without specifying a time and, if someone does respond, try to find a mutually workable schedule, or simply to ask for volunteers to do certain work themselves on their own schedule. It was also suggested that the email inquiry Jim (Snyder-Grant) sent (in July 2007) to subscribers to the volunteer list to ascertain ways to encourage participation be repeated, with or without modification.

Discussion with non-Committee-member attendee: Maureen Ryan-Friend, of 40 Tuttle Drive, came to the meeting with concerns about a four-unit 40B development that is being proposed off Central Street near her home. Although it was quickly clear that this issue was not within LSCOM's mission or authority, several suggestions were offered, including that she contact the Town's Planning Board and/or the Acton Conservation Trust (and specifically Susan Mitchell-Hardt) to learn more about 40B and various efforts to improve or abandon it when it comes up for reconsideration in a few months.

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