

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 15, 2015, Town Hall, Room 126, 7 P.M.

Attendance

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

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Paula Goodwin (to be sworn in the last week in September), Joe Holmes, Sherman Smith, John Watlington

Nonmembers: Sue Kennedy (Vice-President, Acton Conservation Trust), Allen Warner (Coordinator, RJ Grey JHS Community Service Day)

Bettina called the meeting to order at 7:07 P.M. The Committee honored Bob G with a birthday cake and a song.

Review and approval of August minutes

With five corrections, approval was moved and voted unanimously.

RJ Grey Junior High Community Service Day

Allen changed the date to Tuesday, October 27. Students would be available from 9 to “1-ish” as their participation must fit into the school day. Buses must deliver the second wave of elementary school children before being available for special events like this. Right now, Allen is collecting jobs for the students. For each project, there will be at least one chaperone from the school.

Bettina has asked for 10 students for the Arboretum.

Bruce could use some at Camp Acton to paint picnic tables and do some other tasks. Bruce could be there by 10 a.m. to supervise. He will generate a “to-do” list and could provide work for a half-dozen students.

Jim will supervise a group of students at Grassy Pond where the wood chips on the Willis Holden entrance need refreshing. Jim has no work for students at Guggins Brook. Grassy Pond question for Jim: Could the access trail from Route 111 take more wood chips? Answer: Eagle Scouts are coming in to extend the bog bridges, so no wood chips are needed at this time.

Per a 09/14 email from Linda McElroy, she has work for 12-15 students at the Wheeler Farmstead site at the end of Wheeler Lane. Work will include cleaning weeds and rocks out the foundation cellar.

That’s four projects. Allen: we’ll take as many jobs as you can give us.

Where are the backpacks? Allen’s house, but he will drop off backpacks at sites where needed.

If anyone else wants a team from RJ Grey, email Bettina.

The LSC will keep in touch with Allen. Allen will send out an information email in a couple weeks.

Proposed parcel trail changes

John shared his map of two possible re-routes at Great Hill and described both, essentially to avoid a “straight-up” trail in each case. The alternative routes are flagged with green tape every 20-30 ft. John

is in no rush for these to happen and suggests that folks walk his proposed trails over the next 3 months and give feedback. Bob G advised some changes for each of the alternative trails. He also pointed out that it's very difficult to change hiker's habits. If you block off a familiar trail, it's got to be with "heavy stuff."

Because of its size, more stewards are needed for Great Hill. Jim noted that we need enough openings in the new LSC charter to accommodate new associates.

Meadow management plans

Bettina handed out plans relevant to us at this time, except for the Morrison land. The handout included "guidelines for Mowing and Cutting" along with "Action Items" for Grassy Pond, Heath Hen Meadow, Jenks, and Stoneymeade. The plans are mostly educational to get us on the same page while we juggle the action items.

The plans emphasize mowing to the fullest extent. Meadows at the above sites, and others (Great Hill, Pratt's Brook, Nagog Hill), were discussed. Recommendations for Heath Hen Meadow include removing some trees on the margins, and increasing plant diversity. The more-shaded portion of the meadow should be mowed repeatedly (two or three times) until the buckthorn is killed.

Bob G and Bettina agreed that who will be doing the work is the bottom line.

Jim pointed out another task: Having Tom Tidman to walk with, for example, Josh Haines at Jenks, to identify what vegetation could be cut down.

Can town employees follow meanings of color coding and flagging? Bettina: First, someone who flags would need yellow and orange flagging tape (see Bettina). Second: They would flag according to the Guidelines. Third: The flagger would send Bettina a list of what was flagged and where. Fourth: Bettina would forward the list to Shawn O'Malley.

At present, Shawn is extremely busy with Arboretum parking lot. Will the Town have Highway Department help for Natural Resources? Both Natural Resources and Highway are now union, and Bettina doesn't know if there can be overlap of work.

Update: Field mower and trailer

The mower is ready. Elan Riesman tried it and is psyched to use it. Per Bettina, others have to try it out. If you need Shawn O'Malley to show you how, he will. Otherwise, take it out and try it. As for the trailer, we are waiting for parts. The hitch has been ordered. Shawn will probably have to figure out how to attach it. Bettina has ordered, and is waiting on, "cool" ramps. She also has to get the trailer registered.

Update: kiosks

Bruce has not had a chance to do any new design; every kiosk is different. Retrofitting roofs will have to be custom work. The new roofs should be made as light as possible as we have to lift them. Roof sheathing will be decking wood (no plywood). Other kiosk details were discussed, e.g., why you put in strappings—to allow things to dry out. Planning is underway for a new kiosk for Robbins Mill. Kiosk at the pencil factory is almost completely done.

Update from Natural Resources (Other construction projects, "No Dumping" signs)

Bettina has no update from NR.

The fine is changed to \$100 on “No Dumping” signs. We don’t collect fines, but the fine notice has deterrent value.

Bob G talked about dumping on Milldam Rd. He suggests that a big rock be brought in to block access. Did Tom Tidman do anything about the dumping on Milldam Rd.? No.

Philip Keyes has pointed out that Jay Lane has a defined corridor with granite blocks. Cuttings are being dumped there. Can we put a “No Dumping” sign there? Yes.

Paula: For Heath Hen Meadow, we also need a “No Dumping” sign at Prescott Road, on municipal property near the red trail entrance.

Bettina has a list of signs needed and will get them to people, or jam them in herself.

Trail Through Time discussion

There is nothing new.

LSC T-shirts and hats

Bettina has a list of what people want. If you have not already done so, let Bettina know if you want a T-shirt and hat.

Other parcel information

• Wright Hill

Jim: Six of us walked around it, including Sue Kennedy and Susan Mitchell-Hardt, both of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), and two homeowners, 1) Cathy and Leo Fochtman and (2) Jim Salem, possible Steward for Wright Hill. ACT will be the holder of the Wright Hill Conservation Restrictions, so ACT can insist that the Town provide boundaries with concrete monuments. The group found all of the new monuments and most of the old monuments. It’s a complicated Conservation Land, so it’s good to see that all easements re in place. They clarified with Cathy and Leo that Cathy and Leo’s mowing into Conservation Land has been good for keeping the trails exposed. There will be other issues to discuss in the future when Jim Salem is with us. Is there a map of the parcel? Not a map with trails.

• Nashoba Brook

Bob G led a discussion re the two bridges at Wheeler Lane. Regarding the removed bridge over the Robbins Mill site sluice, Tom has talked with Doug Halley and has approval to replace the bridge. Bob has been working on plans. The new bridge will be handicapped accessible (the old bridge had a 1 ft. step-up). It will be a Pratt’s Truss bridge, 18 feet long and 4 ft wide. Bob talked about truss bridges, showed diagrams, and mentioned a YouTube video of college students discussing truss bridges. The other bridge, the one currently crossing Nashoba Brook, has several decaying planks and the bridge must be re-planked real soon. Do we replace the current deck boards with 2-by-6s or 4-by-6s? A bridge-construction subcommittee will continue the discussion of both bridges offline.

• Great Hill

Joe H finished replacing boards on the permanent picnic table by the pond. John said that teens have been hanging out and leaving trash on the edge of the boardwalk that goes from the parking lot to the little playing field. Bettina pointed out that we could mention something like this at the Public Safety Building. There is a particular officer who deals with such problems. We could ask that he take a stroll by a particular place at a given time of day.

• Canoe Launch

Joe H met with Tom and Bettina about fencing off cars from the field, i.e., a parking lot. Tom felt that

we could place a couple of big rocks and a chain across to block the cars. There would be no lock so that emergency vehicles could drive through. There are also plans for trees on the boundary between Moscariello's and us, but first we need to know the property line. Moscariello is an abutter, but has nothing to do with the Canoe Launch. He has mowed along his **line** to push back invasives. He is also trying to sell the business, but, regardless, our easement will remain.

- Heath Hen Meadow

Tree cutting for meadow management would be ideal for chainsaw training. What are the dates for the chainsaw course? 10/26. Those who took the brief course given by Dean Charter should take this one. Bettina thinks there are four who want to take this course.

– Bob shared information on the Overlook Trail, unused now, but where there are good boardwalk sections.

- Camp Acton

Bruce has four trees that need to be cut down.

- General

We continue to have trouble with dog owners and dog droppings.

October agenda

- Discuss volunteers on volunteer list.
- Rules that govern cut wood—who can take what and how far in?
- The little meadow at Guggins Brook – Jim
- Graffiti removal—Bettina, Bob

Send email to Bettina with any other agenda items.

Evaluate meeting

Very good, fun, a moderate amount of “cross talk”; excellent cake.

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, October 20, at 7 P.M., in Room 126.

Paula volunteers responsibility for a snack.