

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 21, 2016, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.

Attendance

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

Associate (nonvoting) members present: Paula Goodwin, Sherman Smith, John Watlington

Nonmembers:

Janet Adachi (LSC's Board of Selectmen liaison), Sue Flint (OARS staff scientist), Carolyn Kiely (Quail Ridge resident)

Bettina called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. A quorum of regular members was not present. Per Town Rules for Committees:

In the absence of a quorum . . . , the Chair may designate an alternate or associate member to sit for the duration of the meeting. If a quorum cannot be achieved, the meeting must disband and no board or committee business shall be discussed by the members present.

Bettina designated Paula, Sherman, and John to be voting members.

Review and approval of May minutes

Corrections and clarifications:

- Under "Assabet River Trails Project," change
 - Why are the trails called red and blue trails? Could there be new names?
 - to
 - Why are the trails called green and blue trails? Could there be new names?
- Under "LSC Website," change
 - (Jim) is still updating a database that's on a server somewhere.
 - to
 - (Jim) is still updating a database that's on a server provided and donated by Bruce Rachman.
- Under "Parcel Reports, Canoe Launch," add:
Clarification: the State does stock the Assabet River — in Northborough. In Acton the State stocks Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook.
- Under "Parcel Reports, Heath Hen Meadow," add:
Clarification: Bob G was referring to Municipal Properties and the Highway Department, which he had contacted for improved roadway-edge brush management, not the Heath Hen Meadows Steward.
- Under "Evaluate meeting," change
 - [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] hugged and the meeting adjourned at 8:39 P.M.
 - to
 - The meeting adjourned at 8:39 P.M.

There was also a discussion about the nature of meeting minutes.

A motion to approve the May minutes as amended and clarified was voted unanimously.

Assabet River Trails —Sue Flint (Organization for the Assabet, Sudbury, and Concord Rivers (OARS))

Sue spoke about the proposed blue and green trails along the Assabet River, their linking to Maynard trails, and their linking the river to Parker Street in South Acton. Points made:

- OARS has a couple of work weekends put together.
- First task is to cut the trails.
- The DPW is working on parking lots at either end (Old High Street and Parker Street)—4 parking spaces each. They are in a design phase now.
- There will be LSC-style informational kiosks at each end. Pine Hawk will be featured at one end, the historic Powder Mill Dam at the other. There will also be information panels about Pine Hawk and a riverine ecosystem.
- There is one Maynard holdout in the way of the trail link to Maynard between Maynard town land and the wastewater treatment plant.
- Funding comes from a Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Trails Grant.

Still need to figure out: How to do trail maintenance? Bettina mentioned some possibilities. OARS will put out volunteer information with its usual email blasts. There will be plenty of volunteer opportunities. Volunteer work possibly could involve 8th graders in the fall. There was general discussion of what could be done for the trails.

Sue left OARS' newly-published Sudbury River Recreation Guide with the LSC.

Minute Man Arc (MMA), a human service agency, investigating whether LSC's conservation work and MMA's efforts to provide support for people with disabilities would be a good match

We need more information about the range of disabilities with which MMA is involved. We should invite Darcie Heller of MMA to a future LSC meeting to clarify the ability levels. We already know about the potential liability to towns with respect to volunteers.

Wetherbee Field Management by Department of Corrections (DoC)

Bettina has seen the DoC planting and spraying plan, something we need to know so that the pathway to the Wetherbee land along the northern boundary of the field from Wetherbee Street can be appropriately flagged (needed for 24 h after spraying). Spraying should occur 30 ft out from the field boundary. Bob points out that there's a granite boundary marker at the edge of Wetherbee Street and an iron pipe further in that provide two points from which you can measure 30 ft out and determine the spraying boundary. There are little yellow signs about the herbicide used but should the LSC provide signage at both ends of the pathway? Bettina would be happy to make signs. The DoC is to notify Acton of its planting and spraying plans as part of its lease agreement for use of the land. It's too late this year, but Bettina will keep everyone informed next year about the planting and spraying.

Mowing

Bettina reminded the LSC that she went through lots of hoops to get a trailer for the mower. The trailer has a plate and stewards can borrow it. Bruce has a hitch. As for the Giant-Vac mower, Bettina and Paula have tried it with seemingly reasonable success. Shawn O'Malley of Natural Resources (NR) loves it, but stewards need to try it. If everyone tries it and we hate it, Bettina can be talked into asking the Town to spend \$2500 for a new mower. Bettina will find out from Shawn where both the trailer and mower are stored. Then she will figure out how to get YOU a date with the mower. She will give you Shawn's phone number so you can let him know.

What needs mowing? The Grassy Pond meadow trails. Bob says that we have to mow this, as NR may not be doing it as much as needed.

Voting for new LSC Chair and Officers

Bettina is leaving the LSC, but will be a dedicated NR staff member at our beck and call at all times. She will attend the LSC meetings and facilitate everything she can as best she can.

A motion that Bruce will be Chair, Bob Farra Vice Chair, and Joe W Clerk from June 2016 to June 2017 was voted unanimously.

Updates:

a. 8th Grade Project List

Bettina doesn't have a list, but we've noted a whole bunch of things and the 8th graders will not work their projects until September or October.

b. Nagog Pond and Concord

Next Acton Board of Selectmen (BoS) meeting is July 18 and will include a hearing on the Concord-Nagog Pond water issue. So far, there has been no revised proposal from Concord. (Note: Since the LSC meeting, the Concord meeting with the Acton BoS has been moved to September 12.)

c. LSC website: OpenStreetMap (see www.openstreetmap.org)

Sherman, Joe Holmes, and Jim Snyder-Grant met on this. Jim had the computer hooked up to a large screen. They used Bob's and GPS maps and spent two hours redrawing the boundaries of a parcel (couldn't remember which parcel). Sherman was going to try the process during the summer with the Wetherbee parcel and would be in touch with Joe, Jim and possibly Phil Keyes.

Bruce's maps are made using Delorme Topo USA 9.0. This software allows the LSC to use gpx tracks, import them into the software, and edit the tracks adding LSC standard trail coloring and legends. In addition, Bruce has been able to layer stonewall data into the maps, and add local roads and points of interest. Bruce's maps are printable for pdf output but are not designed to integrate with active maps where a dot follows you around the trail.

OpenStreetMap.org allows the direct import of gpx tracks. A member of OpenStreetMap.org can edit the tracks, adding color and other points of interest. OpenStreetMap.org allows the hiker to find her/his current location on a trail and actively track her/his progress in our trail system. It's a labor-intensive process to edit and post tracks. Currently, Jim Snyder-Grant and Joe Holmes are working on moving all of Bob's GPS tracks to the site.

Per Bruce, the LSC has to publicize that if you want to use our maps, go to OpenStreetMap.org. Note that one has to register to work with OpenStreetMap.org.

d. Workdate calendar

An "Upcoming Events" calendar is live on the actontrails website. If you have any workdates or date-related information you want to advertise, send information to Bruce or Jim Snyder-Grant and it will show up on the calendar.

The actontrails "Volunteer" link is also working. Bettina gave an example. She has the interested party fill out the list on the site. Bettina then gets the volunteer information on a Googledocs spreadsheet. Any steward can go to Googledocs to get the spreadsheet to get volunteers. You need a login ID. But how to login? How to get the ID? Bettina will check this out.

Parcel(s) specific:

a. Parcel Projects — Natural Resources spreadsheet, poster

Send email to Bettina if you have a task that NR needs to address. Bettina will maintain the list, archiving the completed ones (at the bottom of the list). Example: Paula has a running list of Heath Hen Meadow projects. If any of them are “to do’s” for NR, let Bettina know.

Bettina showed a volunteer poster that she has available for kiosks.

b. Grassy Pond

The new bench near the Nagog Hill Road parking is beautiful.

c. Heath Hen Meadow

If the decision is to not maintain the “Overlook Trail” and try to reuse its boardwalks, Bob recommends taking out the furthest one first, and work toward the street (Prescott Road). Bob estimates boardwalk weights at about 250 lb, so moving them would require a few people or a machine. A path would have to be cleared; so the easiest time would be the spring, or after the first frost as “it’s a jungle now.” Bob suggests that this could be a volunteer project rather than a NR project. Bettina suggests that we make a workdate on the website and see what we get. Whose land is the Overlook Trail? Bob says that there’s a 10-ft easement straight in. The rest of the land is private. A reason to reclaim the boardwalks is to drop them in the hollows that fill in with water on the HHM trails.

What is wanted at HHM for beaver deceiver? Should the pipe under the bridge be 100 ft long? A discussion ensued.

d. Pratt’s Brook — Repair of boardwalk bridge near Parker St parking

The boardwalk spans a seasonal brook of varying width; currently it’s mud. Bob G spotted the boards needing replacement, sent Sherman an email about how many and how to replace them, and subsequently discussed the problem with Sherman. There are 8 or 10 with serious rot. They are all nailed, but the LSC should use screws when replacing. The boardwalk 4x4s are okay. Sherman will be out of town for a while (Jim Demeritt will be keeping an eye on things in Sherm’s absence), so John will take a look at this, meet with Bruce on it, and let Bettina know of lumber that needs to be ordered.

The paths in the blueberry barrens are growing together. They are about a foot in width, but someone clears them out every year. John trims the paths when he’s there, but the widths of these paths don’t have to be 4 ft.

What to do with ferns? John says to grasswhip them or cut them off at the base.

e. Camp Acton

Per Bruce, we are considering a handicapped trail. Bruce will be looking at the possibility with Tom Tidman this week. A trail may require a firmer base for wheelchair accessibility than naturally available, so Bruce and Tom will measure a possible trail and figure out the cost. Bettina suggested that they might want to look at reclaimed road surface for a firmer base, as at the NARA upper parking. There will be a handicapped-accessible portajohn at the trailhead.

Brainstorming stories for the LSC website

We’re going to store WildAware articles; maybe feature them as stories. The stories could also appear on Facebook. Jim has given Paula some beaver deceiver stories.

July agenda

It was moved, seconded and voted nearly unanimously (one abstention) to cancel the July meeting.

Evaluate meeting

Productive. Changing the Chair made a difference.

The LSC enthusiastically thanked Bettina for her Chairpersonship.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 16, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.