

**Acton**  
**Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, November 15, 2016, Town Hall, Room 9, 7 P.M.**

Attendance

Regular (voting) members present: Bob Farra (Vice Chair), Paula Goodwin, Bob Guba, Joe Holmes, Bruce Rachman (Chair), Jim Snyder-Grant, Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington, Joe Will (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) member present: Sherman Smith

Nonmembers: Jezanna Gruber (176 Central Street observer), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) President)

Bruce called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

Review and approval of October minutes

Approval was moved and voted unanimously. Jim clarified for the LSC that the “cutting of wood on cemetery land” means the cutting that the LSC does to maintain trails.

Sustainable Stewardship — Susan Mitchell-Hardt

Susan explained that a Conservation Restriction (CR) is one tool used to “protect” a land parcel purchased with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. One function of the ACT is to “hold” CRs, which is a big responsibility and time commitment. The ACT currently holds six CRs and there could be as many as six more “in the pipeline,” including the 176 Central Street parcel (abutting Mt. Hope Cemetery). Each CR needs “baseline documentation” and regular monitoring (that could use the baseline report to check for changes in the parcel). A fixed expense for the ACT is \$2-3K for someone to draft a baseline documentation report. Another fixed expense is the cost of monitoring, \$300-\$400/yr/CR. A prerequisite for holding a CR is a stewardship budget for the CR. Susan shared examples of a stewardship budget and a baseline documentation report.

Susan has discussed sustainability of CR maintenance with the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) because ACT is short of volunteers. An SVT idea: Use AmeriCorps volunteers that SVT gets every year. Susan is inviting the LSC to get involved if it is interested in doing some CR monitoring. There has to be actual training involved for CR monitoring, with good records kept, as there could be legal repercussions to such monitoring. Susan pointed out that Lisa Long of AmeriCorps is volunteering to train anyone interested in doing CR monitoring. ACT and Lisa are meeting next Tuesday.

LSC observations:

- How is CR monitoring not the same as what LSC stewards do (rhetorical)?
- Many of the LSC parcels were acquired before the CPA, so the LSC hasn’t interacted with CRs before. That is changing as there are or will be CRs on LSC parcels, for example the Canoe Launch and Wright Hill.
- If new parcels get trails, LSC work will quite likely be overlapping with ACT work. The LSC could do CR monitoring in its bailiwicks. The LSC would have to update the documentation every year.
- Could Susan send a monitoring document to the LSC in some form for distribution to stewards, and possibly have them do the filling out on a once-a-year basis? Susan will forward the latest CR monitoring report to the LSC.
- The LSC will include CR monitoring on a future agenda.

- To what extent would the discipline and skills of annual monitoring serve LSC’s Conservation Land (CL)? This could have some additional values for the non-CR LSC lands; this might be a chance for the LSC to learn skills to use on non-CR parcels.
- Could Susan email the LSC when Lisa is providing training? Yes.
- Susan should tell the LSC what training entails and what parcels are involved (Fran Portante has put every CR on the Town website.) and the LSC will identify stewards who have an interest.

Susan took the names of several in attendance who showed interest by a show of hands. She will let the Committee know when the ACT is looking for more CR volunteers.

### Maps — Jim S-G, Joe H

Jim and Joe have been working on these for last couple of months and want to share what they’ve learned and done:

The reasons for LSC interest in electronic maps:

- a) We don’t have the skills and time in-house to re-create or change the maps we have.
- b) People consume their map data in different ways: paper, electronics, etc.

Systems that Jim described:

GIS (Geographic Information System), ArcGIS, OpenStreetMap, Mapbox

Jim explained the features of each, what he and Joe H have done, and provided examples of same. An important task yet is to figure out the best way to update Google Maps data, e.g., how to get data into the system. Some towns have GIS departments that could help, but Acton’s GIS person has departed. In general, Joe and Jim are accumulating things they want to fix. They eventually will want LSC review-help with this. Hopefully they will be sending out a request for help very soon.

Observations/questions:

- It looks great.
- Can you do printed maps from what you are showing? Yes, but there still are resolution issues. It’s an annoyance for the font to be so small when you zoom in.
- The maps should include points of interest. Jim and Joe would like to know what points of interest are of interest to the LSC. The maps can include graphic arts, including a clickable icon that would show a photo of the icon’s location.

Issue: Jim and Joe have questions about CL names and shared a handout of the various names used for Acton’s parcels. Does the LSC want “Conservation Land” on its CL parcels (e.g., “Pratt’s Brook Conservation Land” vs. Pratt’s Brook)? Right now, it’s “hit or miss.” Jim and Joe suggest that the maps not use “Conservation Land” in the parcel names. They wonder how the rest of the LSC feels?

Observations:

- “Land” is used in parcels named after people, e.g., Jenks Land.
- Bulette/Town Forest has the Anderson parcel next to it. Could these be combined under one name? The LSC could add the Anderson Land to its maps, but the LSC doesn’t have the Anderson back land yet. It would be nice to add that part.
- The LSC should explore connecting the Bulette/TF/Anderson trails; perhaps the Committee should walk them some time?
- At Wills Hole/Town Forest, the Captain Handley entrance goes into Wills Hole, which abuts the Town Forest on another side. Its sign references only “Wills Hole”. Should the LSC put both labels on such signs, or what?
- Great Hill is a good example of sign variation.

– Acton Canoe Launch is not even Town property. The Town just has a CR there.

Action item: Follow up on this (Can the LSC mess with parcel names?) with someone in Town Hall. Tom Tidman would be a good starting point. Check with Tom on the naming of parcels.

#### Use of Town Conservation Land as a nursery (e.g., for sassafras or blueberry plants)

John: There are times when we clear out invasives and leave a bare patch. It might help to replace the plants. Joe H had asked to use sassafras from other parcels. The LSC was told “No” on this. So, if a steward wants to do this, is there an available source? We can take from municipal land, but every such case for taking from CL has to go to Tom Tidman who has given some general approvals.

#### Things to do in the fall to reduce invasives

The fall is a great time to identify Norway maple and glossy buckthorn. They just stick out.

After the leaves drop in the fall is a great time to remove garlic mustard. This is because it is a biannual plant, which stays green all winter, so it really stands out. Also in the spring when it is flowering you have to bag it and haul it out because the flowers will turn to seed even if pulled out. In the fall, as long as the ground is not frozen, you can just pull out the plants below the root balls and put them on top of a rock, and they will die on their own. Jim keeps a map of all the garlic mustard infestations in town CL, so ask him where to find some, and report to him any new infestations you find.

Fall is also the season for multi-flora rose because you need double sleeves to eliminate it.

There is a lot of buckthorn at Heath Hen Meadow. Jim, John, and Joe H advised the Committee on eliminating buckthorn. A root wrench provides the most effective way. Jim is trying buckthorn baggies at Guggins Brook. So far he has tried only a dozen and will know more in the spring if it works. You can get buckthorn baggies online, e.g., [www.buckthornbaggies.com](http://www.buckthornbaggies.com),

Do we (Joe H) want to schedule a workday to attack illegal plant aliens? We could plan a workday and then choose which invasive to attack according to the weather that day. Jim will work with John and Joe to pick out some dates.

#### Non-Parcel Updates:

##### • 176 Central Street

LSC response to the following bulleted items approved for consideration by the Cemetery Commission at its 10/19/16 meeting:

- posting, at two trail entrances to Mt. Hope Cemetery, information about the cemetery land onto which a trail user would be entering
  - Where would the entrance to cemetery land be on the trail in from Central Street?
- allowing blazing of certain trails on cemetery land
  - The usual LSC process would be to prepare a mapped proposal, present it at a future LSC meeting, and decide then what the LSC would want to present to the Cemetery Commission.
- mounting a poster shelter (w/laminated map showing "You are here") at one or more sites on cemetery land
  - This would follow with the blazing proposal.
- mounting a map box in the woods at the south end of the cemetery, near the fire trail entrance to the woods
  - a good idea.

Also to be considered would be a sign with a name (not necessarily on Cemetery land), and a kiosk (not

on Cemetery land).

It would be wise to include the Conservation Commission on this, so the LSC process should be to first develop its recommendations, present same to the Conservation Commission, and then to the Cemetery Commission.

- Nagog Pond and Concord

Jim reviewed the recent Board of Selectmen (BoS) hearing on this, noting that the hearing has been extended again, this time to 12/05. It was noted that Concord has removed gas generators from the proposal. There still is an issue related to wildlife. Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan shows a wildlife corridor on the property. Acton is hiring someone to do a wildlife study and will bill Concord for it.

- The 40B development on Martin Street

Bettina had sent out information on this.

- Dog Park info

Joe W pointed out that a Dog Park discussion is on the 12/05 BoS agenda.

- Scoutland

Jim reviewed the trail situation involving Scoutland and its adjacent CL parcels. He had reminded the LSC that one Scoutland trustee is in favor of what the LSC would like to have happen with Scoutland, one trustee is not in favor, and one trustee position remains open. Observation: Scoutland's owner (not the Boy Scouts) is not a tax-exempt organization so why can't this parcel be taxed? The LSC could get Appalachian Mountain Club help with pursuing access to this parcel, as the trail over Scoutland would be part of the Bay Circuit Trail.

Parcel(s) specific:

- Great Hill & 11/01 Planning Board Hearing

John attended this meeting (on future development of the private plot east of the CVS store on Route 111 and bordering the north side of Great Hill Conservation and Recreation Land). The Planning Board heard John, but the company representative was from its engineering firm and he could claim complete ignorance of anything that the LSC would be interested in. The LSC will have to keep watching this. There was a brief discussion on whether a trail into Great Hill from this private land would be too wet.

LSC Website

- Brainstorming WildAware stories

There has been a Beacon article on bee colony collapse disorder. The next article will be on effects of the drought. Per Paula, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has stated that water could be brought into agricultural areas. Does anyone know of any farms that have taken advantage of this? Does anyone have any local drought tidbits?

– Next to the Arboretum, the farm pond dried up, as did the dug pond below it, as did Mary's Brook that flows from the ponds.

– The Assabet River was very low, but never stopped flowing.

– Frogs are going to the Assabet River from inland.

– The Fort Pond Brook has continued to flow near Martin Street, but was dried up at Jenks.

Any ideas for future topics? It was pointed out that last spring's frost meant no cherries or apples at the

Arboretum and no apples at Jenks. At the Pratt's Brook blueberry barrens, some wildlife has to be eating the berries. There have been bear sightings at Great Hill and near the schools off of Hayward Road. There are deer "interstates" at Great Hill. How will deer get through the winter at CLs?

Paula would welcome anyone interested in doing future WildAware article about their parcel. In general, folks should share any ideas with Paula.

• Workdate calendar

Paula had a workday on 11/12 to move piles of accumulated sticks and branches into the woods away from the bridge. One volunteer helped out, having seen the announcement on the WildAware Facebook page. The work was completed within 2 h. Paula will postpone workdate planning until early spring.

Joe H will share some strategies on workdays, including advertising them, and their timing. Joe wants to post workday information at different places and get it to other constituencies.

• 2017 confirmed meeting

Bettina had the Town approve these dates and reserve Room 9 for the meetings:

01/17, 02/21, 03/21, 04/18, 05/16, 06/20, 07/18, 08/15, 09/19, 10/17, 11/21, 12/19.

December 20 agenda

Jim and Joe H will have more map stuff to cover, including an overlay showing the Bay Circuit Trail. It was noted that the Bay Circuit Trail has a map committee and one can see a Bay Circuit Trail map in OpenStreetMap.

Evaluate meeting.

Productive. Should have a projector at every meeting, one that will show a bright picture, at least to look at maps. Bettina should be able to bring one from the Planning Department.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 20, at 7 P.M., in Room 9.