

LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 5, 2006, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL

Present: Bettina Abe (new Arboretum liaison), Bob Guba, Maura Herlihy, Gigi Hopkins, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Linda McElroy, Nan Millett, Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman

Minutes approval: The minutes of the March 1 meeting were approved.

Parcel updates: *Assabet River canoe launch:* Jim, Bob, Linda, Laurie, Rich, Nan, and Hart helped cover the area infested with Japanese knotweed with the large tarp removed from Camp Acton in the hope that this will eventually smother the plant. They also installed a new standard parcel sign at the roadside.

Community garden: Gigi reported that a new sign is being made to replace the old one, which was hit by a car. (She has also shown Dave Lee the proper placement of the triangular conservation land logo for all future signs.)

Grassy Pond: Bob, Rich, and Bill Shubert repainted and reinstalled the kiosk, and Bob and Bill brushed out the bittersweet near it.

Great Hill: Bob, Laurie, Rich, and Bill Shubert repainted and reinstalled the kiosk at the edge of the woods by the playing fields.

Wetherbee: Several boulders have been placed in front of the kiosk to protect it from vehicular assault.

Arboretum: Jim, Bob, and Tom have walked around the Arboretum with Cathy Fochtman, Bettina Abe, and Dick Tavenier. It was agreed that, since Bob wants to focus on the Grassy Pond boardwalk, only necessary repairs (replacing stringers, adding new decking, and leveling) will be made this season to the Arboretum's bog boardwalk. The FAA will provide around \$500 for lumber, and if more money is needed, Tom will provide it from a source other than the LSCom budget. Three other projects needing Land Stewardship help are (1) doing more blazing and putting up arrow signs, (2) installing several signs in the vicinity of Concord Rd./Wood Lane, and (3) repainting the Arboretum sign at the main entrance, which Gigi is planning to do. It was also agreed that Bettina will act as the liaison between the FAA and the LSCom and attend our monthly meetings as necessary.

Robbins Mill development: Jim stated that three groups of stewards have walked around the conservation land surrounding the new development. The location of the viewing platform that is to be built by the developer was discussed, and it was decided that the site proposed by Jim, Bob, and Tom, and agreed to by Linda, on a small point at the parking lot end of the pond is the best choice. It is fairly close to the parking lot, and the access path could be made with the residents of the nearby senior housing in mind. Philip noted that the terrain, though essentially flat, is hummocky and suggested that some sort of fill, perhaps stone dust, will be needed to even it out. He offered to tag a possible trail route. Later in the meeting Tom suggested that construction of this trail could be a possible Eagle Scout project. Another issue is whether we can cut a trail across the Scout land at the other end of the pond; Bob said he plans to contact someone about this.

ABRHS Senior Service Day: Jim stated that the high school's Senior Service Day is scheduled for Friday, April 28. Tasks for which volunteers were requested were picking up trash near the vernal pool at Wetherbee (Gigi); picking up trash and removing dirt that was plowed over shrubs at the canoe launch (Linda); putting down wood chips on the path from the Rt. 111 parking lot at Guggins (Jim); putting down wood chips on the access trail beside Hy-Bid Farm at Nagog Hill (Bob suggested this but wondered if Joan could oversee the work); and weeding in the plant beds around the library (Nan). All who requested volunteers, except Bob, said they would be available to oversee their projects, and Jim said he would contact Joan to see if she is available for the wood chipping at Nagog Hill. Ann and Jim agreed to be the contacts with the high school.

Possible Eagle Scout projects: Tom mentioned that three possible Eagle Scout projects are boardwalk

building along Nashoba Brook behind the Northbriar neighborhood; constructing the access trail to the observation platform at Robbins Mill Pond; and extending the existing boardwalk across the wet area behind Jimmy Young's land at Nagog Hill.

Bluebird boxes for the Arboretum: Gigi reported that some 11-year-old Girl Scouts are building bluebird boxes that will be placed in the Arboretum.

League of Women Voters' Riverway Award: Jim reported that he has signed an application nominating the Land Stewards for this award.

Japanese knotweed: Jim reported that he has met with Dean Charter to review plans for herbicide application to the Japanese knotweed at Wetherbee, and he told Gigi that she should contact Dean when the plants are around one foot high and have several leaves. Jim also said that he is planning to take a course later in April about the mechanical and chemical options for trying to control knotweed.

Acton-Stow connection: Jim said that he has found that it is now possible to walk from Stow's Flagg Hill parking lot on Acton Rd. to the Captain Sargent land by entering on the old farm road on the side of the road opposite the parking lot. Linda said she tried some time ago to contact the owner of the narrow land parcel between the Whitcomb land and the boundary with Stow but never received a reply to her letter. She would like the Acton-Stow connection to be actively pursued, but she hopes someone else can take the lead, including follow-up on the intervening parcel. Jim noted that Dave has indicated his continuing interest in this possibility; he also mentioned that ACT and the Stow Conservation Trust might get involved. Bob suggested the Sudbury Valley Trustees.

Stone chamber: Linda reported that the mason will be coming next week, but progress has been somewhat slowed down by procedural issues for obtaining funding and by regulatory issues with the Historic Commission. She noted that stewards will be able to help during the excavation and reconstruction phase mainly as notetakers and photographers, as well as with deed and other historical research. There might be some opportunities for us to join in on the actual excavation tasks, but this will be done primarily by volunteers from NEARA and the Massachusetts Archaeological Society. Our main involvement will come in the final phase, when the panels will need to be written, fabricated, and installed and the access trail and surrounding site will need to be fixed up.

Morrison Farm: Ann reported that at the most recent MFRC meeting, representatives from the Historical Commission reported on the historical survey that has recently been undertaken and is almost completed. They were supportive of the idea of some agricultural use and are also interested in a historically accurate reconstruction of the bridge over the abutment. It was also mentioned that a short presentation on the committee's progress was made at Town Meeting, and the upcoming MFRC meeting dates (April 12 and 26 and May 4) were announced. At today's meeting, however, it was realized that the April 26 date conflicts with our Peter Waksman lecture, and Linda said she will try to get that MFRC meeting date changed.

Lectures: Peter Waksman's lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, April 26, at 7:30 at the library. Philip distributed a flyer for people to hand out or post, and he will contact the Beacon. He will also check with Tom about an honorarium. Linda agreed to introduce Peter.

Two ideas for future lectures were mentioned: Bob suggested a possible topic, ecological lawn care, and Gig suggested a possible presenter, Lydia Rogers, director of Walden Keeping Track (the local chapter of Keeping Track, Inc.), although Gigi isn't certain that she gives presentations. In connection with this idea, Gigi mentioned that the Rt. 2 construction in Concord has included the installation of four wildlife underpasses and that Ron MacAdow, director of Sudbury Valley Trustees, has used an infrared camera to photograph some wildlife using the tunnels.

Geocaching: Jim reported that he presented the geocaching idea and proposal at the most recent Conservation Commission meeting. They indicated that they would like to see more information about the policies of other areas/towns concerning this activity, need to have the exact rule change stated

clearly, and are concerned that the submission process for potential cache sites involve as little of Andrea's time as possible. Concerning the latter, Jim said he would like to create a Web-based submission process. He will also contact Don Johnson to see if he wants to have any input about a possible rule change.

Website: Several issues were raised: (1) Rich said he plans to add various recent photos soon, but he added that it would be helpful to receive photographs specifically chosen for website inclusion and with captions provided. (2) Philip suggested that the home page include an events listing and that the photograph sometimes be changed. (3) Rich said he will add geocaching information when that is decided on, and it was also suggested that Morrison Farm information be added. (4) It was noted that the text about Wetherbee needs to be updated since some information is inaccurate, and Gigi said she will look it over. Linda wondered if we should substitute the current guidebook descriptions for those now on the website, but Bob stated that he doesn't think the two need to be the same as long as both are accurate. It was noted that, except for Wetherbee's, the website's descriptions are accurate, but Linda said she will send the latest guidebook descriptions to stewards for comparison.

Earth Day: Linda mentioned that she had been contacted about an Earth Day event that is being planned for Saturday, April 29, at St. Matthews Methodist Church on Central Street. They will have display tables for groups and organizations and wondered if we have anything to put out. Nan suggested the flyers that were distributed at Town Meeting, and this was agreed to. It was noted that this is the same day as the townwide trash cleanup.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 3, at 4:00.