

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 12, 2005, 4:00 P.M.  
ACTON TOWN HALL**

**Present:** Charlie Carlson, Gigi Hopkins, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge, Cyril Murphy, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman; guest: Tom Michelman (representing Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail)

\* Sweatshirts: Tom announced that he recently ordered land-steward sweatshirts, and he distributed one to everyone present at the meeting. They are light green and, on the back, show an egret in black and the words "LAND STEWARD / TOWN OF ACTON." (Stewards not at the meeting can stop by Tom's office or wait till next month's meeting to get theirs.)

\* Pratt's Brook blueberry barren: Charlie requested that someone take a walk with him to identify the trees that need to be cut down in the blueberry barrens, since he is ready to do that work. It was agreed that Tom or Dean will walk the area with him. Jim suggested that he make arrangements with Tom to have one of the Town's certified pesticide applicators paint Roundup on the stumps to minimize resprouting. Gigi mentioned that there is one autumn olive (an invasive species) near the Brewster Lane parking area and suggested that it also be cut down and treated.

\* Trail to rock-pile grid at Spring Hill: Philip reported that this has not yet been cut, but he will send out an e-mail when weather and conditions are suitable for the work to proceed.

\* Trail rerouting at Town Forest: Philip reported that he and Bob have rerouted the blue trail north of the quarries so that it is completely on Town land. It now ties in with the loop trail closer to the kiosk. Jim passed around a new map showing the change, and the group approved it.

\* Trail rerouting at Nagog Hill: Philip reported that he and Bob have taken a preliminary look at the area bordering the golf course but no work has been done. He would prefer to wait until the golf course is in use before considering whether and where to reroute the trail, so that any changes will be based on the impact of the actual conditions.

\* Bruce Freeman Rail Trail: Tom Michelman, representing the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (FBFRT), gave the Committee a brief update of the trail's progress and asked for our help with Acton's stretch of the 13-mile segment designated as Phase 2, which passes through Acton and continues to southern Sudbury. (The full trail continues to Framingham, where it connects with two other rail trails.) Now that the bids are in for Phase 1 (7.5 miles from the Cross-Point Towers [the old Wang building] in Lowell to the intersection of Routes 27 and 225 in Westford) and its construction is expected to begin this year, attention is turning to the trail through Acton. Tom M.'s primary need at this point is to have help with a rough clearing of a short segment of the trail before Town Meeting, both to facilitate a survey that will need to be done and to raise public awareness, involvement, and support. The latter is necessary since FBFRT plans to request around \$75,000 from Acton's Community Preservation Committee this year. Those present indicated our interest in helping with the trail clearing, and after some discussion the segment between Route 27 and Concord Road was chosen and the date selected was Saturday, March 12. The work will involve using loppers and small saws to cut down small brush and saplings; Philip indicated that he could arrange for the group to use tools from NEMBA. Tom M. noted that it will be necessary to apply for a permit from the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), which owns the rail right of way; abutters and Town boards will also need to be notified. Tom T. stated that the request to the EOT will have to be initiated by the Town, so Tom M. will draft a request for Tom T.'s review.

\* Future directions for the Committee: Jim reported that his conversations with Bob (who was not at the meeting) have indicated that, while Bob is very interested in continuing to be involved in the hands-on work of trail building and construction projects, plus some design work, he would prefer to pull back from some of his supervisory and organizing responsibilities. He will continue to be trails coordinator until further notice, but we will begin to shift to more group responsibility for overall task-list management, including priority setting. Bob will continue to identify tasks that need to be done and will be in charge of making sure the plans get executed.

Jim also stated that we need to consider eventually moving the LSCom tools that are presently at Bob's house to another location and passing along the responsibility of tool maintenance to someone else. Gigi said she knows how to maintain hand tools and would be willing to do this, but she would prefer that someone else take over care of the power tools. She also suggested storing the tools at the old rabbit hutch or a horse stall at Morrison Farm. Tom thought this was a good idea and said he will speak with Dean Charter about its feasibility.

Jim will send out a copy of the tool inventory that Bob has prepared.

\* Possible projects for the coming months: Jim passed around copies of the LSCom Tasks document and asked stewards to see what projects they think we should concentrate on in the coming months. The following were mentioned:

\* Grassy Pond: Ann noted the ongoing need to add chips to the trail and to maintain/repair the boardwalk.

\* Guggins: Jim is wondering whether some type of planking, laid down in lengthwise pairs, might provide a fairly quick solution to the the problem of spanning the frequent muddy areas of the trail. Philip said that he knows something about what might be required to do this.

\* Heath Hen: Ann suggested moving ahead with the Overlook Trail improvement and observation platform project, which, as has been noted previously, would involve some design challenges and require funding. Jim suggested that we organize a time to walk the trail to review the conditions there.

\* Jenks: Cyril noted that there is a good spot for bird viewing along the blue trail upstream of the culvert; he would like to clear it out a bit and install a bench.

\* Spring Hill: As a short-term task, Philip plans to cut the trail to the rock grid and put up a sign. Longer term he would like to work on replacement of the boardwalk near the center of the property, although the distance of the boardwalk from the trail entrance will make it a difficult project.

\* Wetherbee: Knotweed eradication needs to proceed.

Jim will update the tasks list, and we will continue with this process next month.

\* Next workshop?: Forest management (perhaps with the general focus of what environmentally responsible forest management entails and why it is necessary) quickly emerged as the main suggested topic for another workshop this spring. Gigi suggested someone from the Harvard Forest in Petersham who she said is a good presenter; she will try to find his name. Peggy mentioned Brian Donahue, a founder of the community farm Land's Sake in Weston who is now affiliated with Brandeis; he incorporated sustainable forest management into the farm's work and might be a potential speaker on the subject. The New England Forestry Foundation is another possible source of speakers. Philip and Gigi said they are willing to try to arrange something. (Grasslands management was another possible topic; Andrea Jones from Mass. Audubon was mentioned as a possibility.)

\* Publicity: Jim reported that Dave has written an article about the Wills Hole educational kiosk. After Paul has looked it over, they will submit it to the *Beacon*.

\* Dog control: Following up on Laurie's suggestion of a sign modeled on the red circle-slash symbol, Gigi has created a prototype showing two cartoonlike dogs (one large, one small) gleefully leaping at a recoiling human figure; it is accompanied by the words "DOGS MUST BE UNDER CONTROL" (primary text) and " 'It's OK, he's just being playful' DOESN'T CUT IT" (secondary text). Gigi will discuss this design with Tom before the next meeting.

\* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 2, at 4:00.