

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 6, 2005, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL**

Present: Bob Guba, Gigi Hopkins, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman

* Meeting minutes: The March minutes were approved with no changes. Jim repeated a request made several months ago that someone besides Peggy occasionally take the minutes, to allow her to participate more easily in the meetings. Ann volunteered to take minutes at the June meeting.

In the course of another discussion, Philip wondered if it might be possible to send out meeting minutes to those on the volunteer list. Posting to the website was also suggested. Jim said he will try to find out if there are any obstacles to disseminating the minutes more widely.

* ACT award to Bob and Linda: For Linda's founding of the LSCom and for Bob and Linda's joint efforts sustaining the committee and its work through its first decade, Bob and Linda were given the ACT's Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer Award at the ACT Annual Meeting on March 6. Carol Holley was the first recipient, and this is only the second year the award has been given. Jim displayed the plaque to which all three names have been added and suggested that it might be possible to hang it on the wall in our usual meeting room at Town Hall (Room 121).

* Extra property maps: Tom brought to the meeting the extra property maps that were printed in 2002 on the excess paper from the first printing of the current guidebook. Four packets were printed at that time for six properties (i.e., 24 packets total)—the Arboretum, Grassy Pond, Great Hill, Nagog Hill, Spring Hill/Nashoba Brook/Camp Acton, and Wills Hole/Town Forest—with a map on one side and the property description on the other (for SH/NB/CA, both the map and the description are consolidated versions). It was decided that, for now at least, one packet will be given to the steward of each of those properties (with SH/NB/CA divided among three stewards) for use in map boxes or however else the steward sees fit, and the rest (again, for now) will be kept in Tom's office and used at events or special occasions. Stewards of the above parcels who weren't present at the meeting can pick up their packet at Tom's office between meetings or at a subsequent meeting.

Rich noted that he reduces his Camp Acton maps to half-page size (i.e, the same size as these extra maps and the guidebook) and that he is willing to do the same for other property maps.

* Idea re map display: Philip suggested creating a display of conservation land maps that might be hung in the library.

* Nagog Hill trail rerouting: Tom reported that the Conservation Commission has issued a three-year extension on the Quail Ridge golf course, with the result that the green near the Nagog Hill loop trail should be open by sometime this summer. Bob stated that he has several ideas for a possible rerouting in the areas closest to the edge of the green, one of which would eliminate crossing a wet area.

* Boundary encroachment issue at Town Forest: Tom reported that the shed on Captain Handley Road still hasn't been removed from Town Forest land, and Jim added that a second letter might be required. Bob suggested that the Town's building inspector be asked to pursue the problem, but Tom noted that this would be a very low-priority item for the building inspector. He was sent a copy of the current letter, however, in case he needs to become involved.

* Project planning list: Jim distributed a subset of the project list, headed "LSCom Tasks - Approved for 2005," and noted that it does not include a few properties that have not yet been reviewed. Rich, Ann, and Philip, whose parcels were on the list, agreed that they intend to move forward with the items listed; stewards for the other properties on the list were not present.

* Miscellaneous property notes: *Grassy Pond:* Bob reported that the left corner of the viewing platform has subsided slightly, so the pipe will need to be reset this summer. Also, the boardwalk from Newtown Road is currently largely under water.

Nagog Hill: Bob reported that a Town crew attempted to burn the debris piles in the meadow but that not all of it was consumed, so he may check to see if they can complete it this month, while burning is still permitted. He also stated

that after the last snowfall he was able to cut out a large section of bittersweet near the meadow that was weighted down by the snow.

Nashoba Brook: Bob noted that the short trail segment created by walkers to avoid the flooded-out trail near the brook is permitting passage along this section of trail. In addition, a short trail was cut to make use of the rocks as stepping stones where the three boardwalks are floating.

Spring Hill: Trail cutting to the rock pile grid site near the Spring Hill Road entrance is scheduled for April 10.

* ABRHS senior service day: Ann has submitted requests for help for Bob (woodchip spreading at Nagog Hill along the usual stretch of trail by Hy-Bid Farm and perhaps cleanup of residual debris of the wood piles in the meadow, which have been partially burned), Laurie (rock moving on the upper portion of the loop trail at Nashoba Brook), and Nan (weeding of beds at the library and Arboretum). Charlie may also be requesting help with wood chip spreading at Pratt's Brook, but he will arrange this with the program director himself. Rich noted that he has a wheelbarrow that could be used if needed.

* Next lecture: Gigi reported that David Sibley is a good speaker and would be a big draw, but she has found that he needs to be booked at least a year in advance. It was agreed that Gigi would get a number for contacting Sibley and that Philip would try to set up a date for next year. Jim said he would ask the ACT if they would like to co-sponsor this lecture, and it was noted that we would need to arrange for a larger space, perhaps at the high school.

Since a Sibley lecture is not an immediate possibility, Ann agreed to see whether she could make arrangements with either Brian Donahue (a prior director of the Lands Sake Community Farm in Weston and author of *Reclaiming the Commons*) or Lynda Simkins (longtime director of Natick Community Organic Farm); she will keep Philip informed of her progress. Another possibility, if neither of these works out, is a lecture about New England stone walls (Robert Thorson?).

* Bay Circuit Trail: Jim reported that in February he and Dean Charter attended the second meeting of a BCT trail maintainers group, at which eight people were present. The BCT was reported to be around three-quarters complete, and Jim obtained a copy of a trail maintainers manual that the group has developed. Dean reported to the group that Acton is getting a 300-foot-wide access strip through the Robbins Mill Pond development that will allow a portion of the BCT that previously went along a road to be off-road. Jim stated that through the BCT organization we might be able to get some grant money for specific projects on portions of our trails that are shared with the BCT. Bob commented that he thinks our BCT blazes need to be checked, and Rich stated that he is not sure that the wording on our website about the BCT is correct.

* Invasives: Jim reported that he has been walking all of our conservation properties and mapping the invasives he finds. On April 13 he will be attending an invasives workshop sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

* Vernal pools: Gigi has indicated that because bluebird and vernal pool activities overlap and are both very time-intensive, she needs help with vernal pool certification. We have recently received an e-mail from a town resident who has indicated an interest in working on vernal pool certification, and Gigi will contact her.

* Legal status of Acton's Town-owned open space: Jim reported that he is leading the ACT's effort to investigate the levels of legal protection currently in place for Town-owned open space, and that he has placed this issue on the agenda for the April 12 ACT meeting. He stated that land bought with state self-help grants have Article 97 designation, which can be reversed, and that land bought with town money is protected only by zoning, which can also be changed. The level of protection can be increased by having an independent nonprofit organization (such as the ACT) hold and monitor conservation restrictions on these properties. Jim would like the ACT to continue its research on the levels of protection of undeveloped properties throughout town, discuss the situation with Open Space Committee members and selectmen, and set priorities for increasing the level of protection. He will keep us informed of progress on this front.

* Town clean-up day: This year's town clean-up day, sponsored by the ACT, will be held on April 30.

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