

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

**Present:** Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Maura Herlihy, Gigi Hopkins, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Linda McElroy, Nan Millett, Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman

\* Meeting minutes: The April minutes were approved with no changes.

\* New guidebooks: Everyone who attended the meeting was given a copy of the new guidebook. Those not present can get their copies at next month's meeting or stop by Tom's office before then.

\* Dog-control signs: Gigi displayed copies of two designs she has drawn but noted that she would be willing to change the tone (it shows one or two dogs gleefully hurling themselves at a recoiling walker). Various opinions were expressed about that question as well as about whether more wording should be incorporated and, if so, what should be said. Tom indicated that the problem is becoming more serious and might result in a complete ban on dog-walking on conservation lands. Jim suggested that we post a few of Gigi's current signs to see if we can get a sense of their impact and revisit the issue at a future meeting.

\* FY2006 budget and remaining FY2005 funds: Tom stated that our funding was not removed from the FY2006 budget, and Jim noted that we have \$1,400 left in the FY2005 budget, to be used by July 1. Jim's understanding coming into the meeting was that all of the Grassy Pond boardwalk expenses had been taken into account in arriving at this figure, but Bob clarified that that was incorrect, although he did not have a figure to present at the meeting. He will have one by the end of May. Other suggestions for any remaining funds are a sign for the stone-pile grid at Spring Hill, work clothes, and additional tools, although Bob recommended that, because of how infrequently committee tools are used, we not purchase any more at this time.

\* Boundary encroachment issues: *Town Forest:* There has been no change in the status of the shed on Capt. Handley Rd. A second letter has been sent that included a map showing that the shed was illegally placed. Copies were sent to both the Town building inspector and the neighborhood's homeowners' association, but Tom reiterated that this problem would be a low priority for the building inspector. A third letter may be required. Jim also indicated that there is another shed in a nearby yard that may be encroaching on the boundary. *Wetherbee:* Concerning the dismantled stone wall along the boundary of conservation land behind 2 and 4 Berry Lane (done by previous owners), the owner of #2 told Tom last fall that he would rebuild the wall himself, but he has not yet done so; follow-up is needed. The other problem at 4 Berry Lane involved a dog cable on conservation land. This homeowner has not responded to our letter and Bob has subsequently removed the cable.

\* Project planning list: Jim reviewed the Stoneymeade task list items with Nan, and he will try to reach Paul to go over the Great Hill list.

\* Miscellaneous property notes: *Arboretum:* Jim stated that Tom and the Friends of the Acton Arboretum have indicated an interest in having a steward assigned to the unlandscaped portions of the Arboretum. *Nashoba Brook:* Jim stated that the Conservation Commission agenda for May 4 includes consideration of a water control permit for the two pipes through the beaver dam that Laurie has requested. Jim expects that this will be approved. *Pratt's Brook:* Bob reported that it has belatedly been found that early this past winter Eagle Scout Mark Travers completed a short stretch of boardwalk along the yellow trail spanning the wet area around Tenney Brook, between the end of the Parker Rd. access trail and the stone ford. Mark apparently did not report the completion to either Tom or Laurie. (This project was discussed last year, most recently at the March 2004 meeting.)

\* ABRHS senior service day: Bob reported that both he and Laurie had good help from their crews. At Nagog Hill, they renewed the wood chips on the yellow trail by Hy-Bid Farm, spread some on the blue trail at the entrance to the meadow, and consolidated unburned wood in the meadow into a single small pile and scattered ashes and other residue in the woods. Laurie's crew at Nashoba Brook created a stone path, bordered with tree trunk segments and with a small channel opening in the middle, across a wet stretch of the upper loop trail. Bob also reported that Charlie had a crew at Pratt's Brook; they hauled wood chips to a section of the yellow trail between the end of the Parker Rd. access trail and the stone ford that Charlie recently corduroyed, and the chips were spread over the corduroy.

\* Morrison Farm Reuse Committee update: Linda reported on the committee's May 3 meeting, at which Nancy McShea of the Recreation Commission presented that constituency's proposal for the use of the Morrison Farm land. After noting that the per-person acreage dedicated to "active recreation" in Acton (including the School Street fields and Leary Field) was well below a National Recreation and Park Association recommendation, Nancy stated that they would like to use the relatively flat upland area behind the house and barn for approximately two soccer fields (the configuration would be flexible) and that they need parking for 150 cars. Linda stated that she feels that the parking issue is the most vulnerable aspect of their proposal, especially since the Cemetery Commission has made clear that it does not want such a use directly across its boundary. The idea of working with Rte. 2A businesses to make use of their parking lots has been proposed and appears to be sparking interest on the committee, but the recreation group's take on the idea is not known.

The other presentation made at the meeting was Tom Michelman's update of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, which is compatible with our farm proposal. A primary area of discussion was the still-unresolved issue of traffic lights and pedestrian/bike crossings at various locations along Rte. 2A.

Dave recommended that we work on fiscal projections for our Morrison Farm proposal.

\* Next lecture: Gigi, pursuing the possibility of booking David Sibley a year or more from now, is waiting to hear back from his publicist. Ann, who is looking into the shorter-term possibility of finding someone to speak on the community farm idea, reported that she has reached Lynda Simkins of the Natick Community Organic Farm but found that she is unavailable until possibly November; Ann has also tried unsuccessfully to reach Brian Donahue, formerly of Lands Sake Community Farm in Weston. It was agreed that we should move forward with booking Lynda Simkins. Linda stated that she thought this would be good timing for such a presentation, given the relative slowness of the Morrison Farm committee's progress.

\* Invasives: Jim reported that he is continuing his walks of all of the conservation properties in order to map invasives, based on which he plans to prioritize the problems and develop a strategy. In the course of these walks he has been noting some maintenance issues, which he will e-mail to the relevant stewards. He also noted that he will be doing a second set of walks to scan the boundaries of each conservation land to understand what invasives may be nearby. Since checking the boundaries for encroachment is already an annual steward responsibility, it may make sense for Jim to coordinate these walks with stewards; he will contact people when he is ready.

\* New trail from Robbins Mill Pond development: Jim would like to arrange a time to scout out a possible trail route from the new development to Spring Hill or Nashoba Brook. He has contacted the developers and will be arranging some times when trail maintainers will be allowed to be on the part of the land that is scheduled to be given to the Town when the development is complete.

\* ACT conservation award plaque: Since Linda was unable to attend the March 6 meeting at which she and Bob were honored with the ACT's Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer Award, Jim gave her a photocopy of the plaque at today's meeting and noted that he plans to hang the plaque on the wall in Town Hall Room 121.

\* Legal status of Acton's Town-owned open space: Jim reported that, based on a review of the legal protection currently in place for Town-owned open space, the ACT has decided to target three properties—Town Forest, Bulette, and Wetherbee—for its first round of attempts to increase the level of protection. The zoning and protection status of these three properties in particular is ambiguous and might result in unwanted development.

\* Sculpture park update: Jim reported that he attended the second meeting of the Sculpture Park Proposal Advisory Committee, held the morning of May 4. He stated that Yin Peet has abandoned the idea of doing a land swap with the Town and has instead hired a lawyer to study the problem of the access easement and to advise her on her options as a private landowner. Jim noted that the process is moving along slowly due to Ms. Peet's various projects elsewhere that have kept her out of town.

\* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 31, at 7:30 p.m.**; Ann will be the minute-taker.