

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 14, 2004, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL**

Present: Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Maura Herlihy, Gigi Hopkins, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge, Linda McElroy, Nan Millett, Cyril Murphy, Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman; guest: Hart Millett

- * New list of steward duties: The list reported in last month's minutes, to which Jim added three items concerning communications, was discussed and a few suggestions for additions or changes made. Jim will bring the revised list to the next meeting.
- * Wills Hole educational panels: Bob reported that the two panels have arrived and he has mounted them on their pedestals. In addition, Dave has obtained the plaque noting the contributions of the Merriam School students and the Tufts grant; this will be mounted on a separate pedestal.
- * Nagog Hill trail reroute: Bob reported that he and Tom have walked at Nagog Hill to begin considering how best to reroute the yellow trail away from the new golf course; they will compare notes with Philip, who has also walked the trail with that in mind.
- * Eagle Scout project at Pratt's Brook: Linda reported that Mark Travers, the Eagle Scout interested in doing a project at Pratt's Brook, has decided that the boardwalk project he had been considering (near the end of Broadview Avenue) is too difficult due to the rockiness of the terrain. He has instead proposed a similar project along a muddy but less rocky portion of the yellow trail on both sides of the bridge across the Tenney Circle stream, in the stretch between the Parker Street access trail and the stone ford. Bob indicated that he doesn't think the construction here would need to include sills. Both he and Linda think the reduced difficulty should be offset by an increase in the length of the boardwalk (maybe up to 80 feet).
- * Trail signs at Nashoba Brook/Spring Hill: Ann suggested that the two red trails connecting Nashoba Brook and Spring Hill should have signs in both directions indicating that the walker is entering the adjacent conservation property. Linda recommended attaching the signs to trees, but Bob thinks that posts with a sign on either side, similar to the ones at the Camp Acton-Spring Hill boundaries, would be better.
- * Trail under water at Nashoba Brook: Gigi noted that a portion of the yellow trail on the Route 27 side of the brook near the Wheeler Lane entrance is under water. Philip indicated that this will be the case as long as the beaver dam is there.
- * Recreational trails program grant possibilities: Following up on last month's suggestion to identify projects that might be bundled together into a grant proposal to the state's recreational trails program, Jim reported that he thinks only a few projects on our ongoing list are possibilities (trail around Great Hill pond, benches at Great Hill summit, privies at Camp Acton, trail improvements at Guggins), but he doesn't think they add up to a good proposal. Others agreed with this and with Philip's assessment that we should focus on more substantial intertown projects.

Linda noted that there has been a further meeting with Peter Whitcomb, owner of the parcel of land separating Heath Hen Meadow from the Stow boundary, and it appears to be his wish to sell his property to the town for open-space preservation. The committee that has been meeting with Whitcomb hopes to have a finalized proposal to present to the CPA committee before its November deadline. If the acquisition is approved, we could then submit a grant application to the recreational trails program at this time next year for work on the Acton-Stow intertown trail connection; the application might also include the proposed wildlife viewing platform along Heath Hen's Overlook Trail as well as improvements to that trail.

In the discussion of the smaller projects that Jim suggested for a possible bundled grant proposal, Nan questioned whether we should be thinking of building a trail around the Great Hill pond. Noting the large number of dogs that are exercised in the adjacent field, she said she thought that a trail that would offer greater access to the pond would diminish the pond's wildlife value.

- * Possible chamber stabilization project: Jim suggested that a project to stabilize the chamber located at Nashoba Brook might be a good candidate for a grant proposal. After noting that he doesn't know if there are regulations relating to restoring structures with archaeological significance, Linda said that NEARA (the New England Antiquities

Research Association, of whose board she is a member) has experience with such projects. She offered to find out how NEARA has functioned on similar chamber restoration projects and determine what regulations or other municipal requirements need to be met. She will also determine whether NEARA has the expertise within its membership to perform the work, which would need to be done by professionals. Tom suggested the CPA as a possible funding source and recommended that we have our application ready for the next CPA funding cycle in November if we decide to proceed with the project.

* Crosswalks at conservation land access points: An e-mail from Bob in early January noted that a resident had requested that the town paint a crosswalk across Central Street to the Jenks parking lot, and they agreed to do so in the spring. Based on this, Bob proposed three other conservation land access points where we might request that the town paint crosswalks. Various opinions were expressed (*pro*: increased safety for pedestrians; legal protection; *con*: false sense of security; limited traffic on roads proposed except for Route 27, which is a state route over which the town might not have jurisdiction; there are better uses for tax money). Based on the lack of consensus, Jim suggested we not take action as a committee on this issue, but let individual residents contact the town if they feel the need for crosswalks.

* New printing of guidebook: Nan reported that we now have only 249 copies left out of 750 printed, and she hopes there will be enough for Earth Day. There was an inconclusive discussion about what minimum number should trigger a new printing (Philip suggested 75) and how many we should order next time (should we order more to get a better price per copy, or should we order less on the assumption that demand will be slowing down?). Linda volunteered to check with Lynn Horsky about how long a reprinting will take.

* Volunteer list information: Jim noted that the Yahoo volunteer e-mail list asks only for name and e-mail address, but he wonders if we should also add street address, phone number, and interests. On the other hand, adding more information raises again the questions of how to manage the list and who will maintain it. Philip said he will give it some thought but suggested we not put too much time into this until we have an occasion to use the list and see what is needed.

* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 4.