

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2004, 4:00 P.M.  
ACTON TOWN HALL**

**Present:** Charlie Carlson, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Maura Herlihy, Gigi Hopkins, Peggy Liversidge, Nan Millett, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman, Paul Wasserboehr; guest: Allen Warner

\* Holes at Pratt's Brook Brewster Lane entrance: Charlie Carlson, the new Pratt's Brook steward, reported that in the process of doing some weed clearing at the Brewster Lane senior park, he found some large and deep holes that presumably have been dug by animals. He is concerned about the safety hazard posed by these and suggested they either be filled in or fenced off. Bob stated that the holes had been filled in once with wood chips but had been dug out again, and he wondered if a nearby pile of stones could be used. Gigi noted that red foxes had dens in the area several years ago. Bob and Tom agreed to check out the situation and come to an agreement with Charlie about how to proceed.

\* Possible use of herbicides at Wetherbee: Over the past two and a half years Gigi has repeatedly cut down the Japanese knotweed at the old house site near Route 2, and although this has weakened the growth, the plant still hasn't been eradicated. In looking for alternatives, she has found that Roundup Pro is not persistent and is recommended by several organizations dealing with the knotweed problem, and she therefore suggests that it be applied by the Town's certified applicators. Jim requested that she make this information available to the group and also said that we would need to check with the Conservation Commission and Tom Tidman before proceeding.

\* Blazing: (1) Jim reported that Cyril finished blazing the secondary trail at Wetherbee this summer and has begun reblazing trails in other areas; this time the paint he is using is a bit brighter and more visible. (2) Gigi said that she had received feedback that it would be helpful to have blazes closer to the trail junction at several places in the Town Forest; Peggy said she had also noticed this at various trail junctions throughout the conservation areas. (3) Jim also reported that he has been in touch with the Friends of the Arboretum about blazing the Arboretum trails. A volunteer, Joan Cirillo, has offered to begin this project. After she and Cathy Hatfield have tagged trees along the main loop, they would like us to check them.

\* Naming of new trail at Arboretum: Early in the summer Bob and Jim cut a new trail into the Arboretum from Concord Road to the end of the Wood Lane. Bob reported that the Friends of the Arboretum have recently said they would like to name this trail (plus the access trail from Wood Lane to the bog loop trail and a portion of the loop trail to Minot Avenue) the Billings Trail, after one of their donors. This would involve putting up signs and arrows in three locations, and the Friends would pay for it. There were no objections.

\* Miscellaneous other summer activities: (1) Jim and Bob have just installed a beaver device at the culvert in *Guggins* where the Central Street access joins the loop trail, resulting in a lowering of the water level, at least for the time being. (2) Bob and volunteer Allen Warner cleared the meadow area along the loop trail at *Nagog Hill* of bittersweet vines, roses, and other shrubs. (3) At *Pratt's Brook* Bob and a number of volunteers (including Allen Warner and a second non-steward) rerouted the beginning of the Parker Street access trail so that it is now on Town property, extended both ends of the short boardwalk in the same area, and moved the kiosk from the woods to the parking lot. (4) Bob scattered a fire ring at the *Town Forest*.

\* Junior high community service day: Allen Warner, a science teacher at the R. J. Grey Junior High who helped Bob with several projects this summer, attended today's meeting to discuss a community service day proposed for Wednesday, Sept. 22 (rain date Sept. 24). He hopes this may become an annual event and is especially interested in getting kids involved in projects on conservation land. This year he needs to find projects for around 120 students. Based on the work he did this summer with Bob, he suggested some could do further work on meadow clearing and bittersweet pulling at Nagog Hill (and possibly be involved with burning the large debris piles over the winter) and others could help with transporting and spreading wood chips at Grassy Pond (perhaps using trash-can backpacks modeled on Bob's design). The students would be chaperoned by parents but would need task direction from us.

There was no objection to the students' involvement in these projects, and Allen asked whether there were additional project ideas. Nan suggested weeding flower beds around the library (Dean Charter's province) and said she could help with this; Tom suggested putting down wood chips at NARA. If anyone has further suggestions, please e-mail Allen at [awarner@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:awarner@mail.ab.mec.edu).

\* Acton chamber: Linda was unable to attend today's meeting, but she provided an update in an e-mail to Maura Haberman (with copies to stewards) dated Aug. 19 concerning the Community Preservation Act public hearing that is scheduled for Sept. 23. In brief, this indicated that the project's first phase, the architect's survey, has been completed, outlined the other proposed phases and the significance of the work, and stated that we plan to present a proposal to the CPC for funding. At today's meeting, Bob said he was present when the architect's survey was being done and that the walls are bulging and stabilization is needed. Jim asked for volunteers to help with writing the CPC proposal but no one stepped up; he will send an e-mail to the full committee about this.

\* Quarry land swap update: Bob reported that he expressed concern about the proposed Town Forest land swap between sculptor Yin Peet and the Town at an August meeting of the Board of Selectmen and that he was directed to meet subsequently with Town Manager Don Johnson about his concerns. Bob said that Ms. Peet bought the quarry parcel after the North Acton Granite Co. refused to sell to the Town because of the owner's general anti-government bias. The Town is now in the process of working out an agreement with Ms. Peet that would allow her to build a studio, display her sculpture, and swap a portion of the land in the interior of her property for a parcel along Quarry Road that would provide access and an area for a septic system; in return, the Town would get the quarry's water rights, a no-liability agreement concerning the quarry, and the artistic and educational benefits of the sculpture studio and sculpture park. This has to be approved by a special town meeting, however. The meeting is scheduled for mid-October, and at this point the land swap is the only item on the agenda.

The general sense of those present at today's meeting was strongly against the swap. The primary concern was the precedent it would set for redesignating ARC (agricultural, recreation, conservation)-zoned conservation land for other uses, but interruption of the existing loop trail and the possibility of noise from granite sculpting were also mentioned. It was agreed that Bob and Dave will work on a statement to oppose the plan and that Jim, who will be meeting with Board of Selectmen chair Walter Foster to present some concerns and gather information, will send out additional information as it becomes available.

\* ConsCom and boundary encroachment letters: Jim stated that he has spoken with the new chair of the Conservation Commission, Jeff Rogers, and that he plans to attend ConsCom meetings this year (perhaps every other month). Jim's primary concern at this point is to emphasize to ConsCom that enforcement letters to landowners about boundary encroachment issues need to be sent out in a timely manner. Most of the letters that needed to be sent last spring still have not been written and sent.

\* Beacon articles: Paul said that he has been too busy to do much writing for the past year, but he hopes to be able to do at least a few articles this fall. Two suggestions were the Wills Hole educational panels (which Dave would like to see written so that he will have something to send to the Tufts people who provided funding) and something about Jim's Norway maple removal project at the Arboretum. It was decided that the Wills Hole article should be done first.

\* Guidebook reprinting: Nan stated that there are only about 30 guidebook copies left. We will need to update the Arboretum map to show the new trail from Concord Road to the end of Wood Lane and also decide how many copies we want this time. Ann suggested that we might do less this time since many of those who want copies now have them, but Nan recommended that we get price quotes before we decide on the quantity. Jim will work on moving these items forward between now and the next meeting.

\* Morrison Farm: Over the summer the Board of Selectmen began the process of setting up a committee to consider the options for the Morrison Farm land (named the Morrison Farm Reuse Committee). The committee will have nine members: two Selectmen, who will be co-chairs of the committee; one member from each of the following five commissions or committees: the Recreation Commission, the Cemetery Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Land Stewardship Committee, and the East Acton Village Committee; one member from the surrounding neighborhood (the "abutter" representative); and one at-large representative. Linda agreed at the June meeting to serve as our representative, and the BoS put a notice in the August 12 *Beacon* to advertise the abutter and at-large positions. That notice also indicated that CPA money had been appropriated by Town meeting to hire a consultant to assist the committee.

Although the possibilities that have been publicly mentioned thus far are playing fields and passive conservation land, Ann, Gigi, and Peggy decided to explore the idea of using the non-wooded portion of the property for some sort of community farm, following discussion of this at the July potluck at Nan's house. During August the three visited a few inspiring local examples of this idea: Codman Farm in Lincoln, Land's Sake in Weston, the Natick Community Organic Farm, and Gaining Ground in Concord. There was not much time at the end of the meeting to discuss this, but those who were still there expressed interest in the idea. A preliminary report about these farms is in the attached document. *Please do not mention this to people outside the committee until we have had internal discussion of the idea.*

\* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 6.