

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 1, 2004, 4:00 P.M.  
ACTON TOWN HALL**

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

\* Pratt's Brook blueberry barren: Linda reported that it would be useful to do more clearing work (especially gray birch) in the blueberry barren this year. Jim added that last year the volunteers doing the clearing, in consultation with Linda, decided to create small debris piles in the woods edging the barrens rather than burn the debris; they will continue this practice this year.

\* Spring Hill rock piles: Philip raised the issue of cutting a trail to one of the rock pile grids at Spring Hill. Linda clarified that a grid that was identified by Gigi and Nan has been approximately marked on the updated maps for the new guidebook printing, so that is the one we should be talking about. Gigi identified it as being a short distance from the entrance at the Spring Hill Road cul-de-sac and not far off the east side of the trail, and she said that it is a very clear grid. It was agreed that Philip and Gigi would walk the area and flag a trail that others could check. Gigi also suggested doing some clearing in the immediate vicinity of the grid to make it a bit more visible, and the idea seemed to be acceptable as long as the cutting is done judiciously.

\* Nagog Hill work day: Bob reported that those who came to last Saturday's work day (four stewards and two volunteers) finished raking and piling the meadow debris. There are now several very large piles to be burned this winter, and Bob stated that he plans to notify Hy-Bid Farm since it will be a large blaze. Jim wondered if we might sow some sort of native, or at least somewhat historically authentic, meadow mix to supplement whatever other grasses and perennials come up on their own, and he asked Tom if the Town had ever been involved in developing a meadow (it has not). Ann said she would contact Russell's and perhaps the New England Wild Flower Society to see if they have any seed mixes or relevant information.

\* Beavers at Nashoba Brook: Laurie reported that portions of the loop trail close to the brook on the Rte. 27 side continue to be flooded because of ongoing beaver activity, and he wondered about putting a beaver-control pipe through the dam as a first step toward addressing the problem. Bob said that another possibility is to cut an additional stretch of trail parallel to the existing one but a bit higher on the hillside, which Laurie added would entail cutting through some greenbriar. A third possibility is to replace three movable boardwalk segments in the area affected by the elevated water level with a fixed, continuous boardwalk. It was noted that some combination of these will probably be required but no specific plan was proposed.

\* Grassy Pond boardwalk: Laurie reported that he and Bob have done a bit more stringer and decking repair on the Newtown access trail boardwalk, so all the boards are reasonably sound, but he noted that it is slippery (with some sort of moss) in spots. Bob said he has put up signs at either end of the boardwalk warning of this condition. Ann suggested nailing down chickenwire, but Bob stated that that would make it difficult to do repairs.

\* Town Forest vandalism: Gigi reported that a vehicle had rammed the chain blocking the vehicle access road at the Quarry Road end, breaking the lock hasp; she also noted the chain has been broken a couple of times in earlier incidents. She went to the hardware store and bought the items needed to make the repair herself, but she thinks a much heavier barrier is needed to deter this kind of vandalism. Bob also reported that the Town Forest/Wills Hole sign at the Nagog Park entrance had been rammed and broken. Philip asked Tom if it would be possible to have heavier barriers (perhaps like those at Nashoba Brook [Davis Rd.] or Bulette, or the ones at the Highway Dept.) installed at both ends of the vehicle cut-across; Tom indicated this would probably be possible.

Bob said he doesn't expect to replace the sign until spring. He also stated that this sort of vandalism should be immediately reported to the police.

\* Acton chamber project: Linda reported that the NEARA board plans to contribute between \$1,000 and \$2,000 toward the chamber project, which she estimates might cost, at the very most, \$25,000. The NEARA money will come out of their FY 2005 budget. Linda would like to see this sum used to shore up the chamber walls as soon as possible, making the site safe until adequate money is available from the CPA committee (and/or other sources) to do the full

restoration. Given the possibility that the town might decide that the chamber should be razed to avoid possible liability problems, she is hoping that this action and a clear plan for further restoration will buy time for the project and give it some visibility prior to next year's CPA funding cycle. Shoring up would involve removing the stones from the sagging wall and using them temporarily to close the entrance to the chamber. Two dangerous roof slabs would also have to be removed and set aside for the later reconstruction.

Linda also reported that she has discussed our plans with the NEARA president, who is well acquainted with Curt Hoffman, the archaeologist Linda has in mind for the project. She was told that Dr. Hoffman might be interested if that part of the project is postponed till the summer of 2006 (as appears to be necessary) and he is offered a fee for his services. Linda speculates that this fee might be in the vicinity of several hundred dollars, as his graduate students would be doing most of the work of digging down to the hardpan on both sides of the wall.

Last, Linda noted that Laurie has offered to research the deed history for the site; knowing the history of the surrounding area is important to understanding the possible uses of such a structure. She hopes this can be traced back to colonial times.

\* Guidebook reprinting: Linda reported that changes to the text and maps have been given to Lynn Horsky and are ready to be proofed. Lynn is gathering quotes from printers and at the time of the meeting had given Linda one quote of \$5,253 for 750 copies; she expects to get one or two other quotes. Since no one was sure what the price had been for the first printing, Linda said she would check this with Lynn. Rich noted, however, that this quote equals \$7 per copy, and since we are selling them for \$10, we have been making, and will continue to make, a profit. Tom stated that we currently have over \$8,600 in two guidebook accounts (over \$7,000 in the current revolving account and \$1,600 in a second account that is designated for conservation land purposes but which he doesn't know the history of). Jim indicated that whatever printing price seems good to Linda and Tom would be acceptable.

\* Boundary encroachment letters: Jim reported that the remaining letters about boundary problems were sent out two weeks ago, signed by ConsCom chair Jeff Rogers. Tom stated that he has had some action on three of the problem areas: (1) At Capt. Handley Road, a plot plan showing the shed largely on conservation land will be sent to the owner. (2) At 2 Berry Lane, the owner has agreed to stop mowing the lawn that has been extended onto conservation land, has said he wants to reconstruct the wall himself (rather than have the Town do it), and has begun removing items that were on conservation land. He has also requested that the no-dumping signs be taken down. (3) At 28 Alcott Street Tom walked the area with the owner, who was somewhat upset and denied that he had been responsible for any of the dumping. Bob clarified that the report had been meant to indicate that dumping was happening in woods in the vicinity of 28 Alcott, and he hadn't meant to pin responsibility on that homeowner specifically.

\* Jenks parking lot boundary issue: Concerning another boundary issue (but one that hasn't yet involved a ConsCom letter), Jim mentioned that the house beside the Jenks parking lot is for sale, so this would be a good time to deal with the problem there. The boulders along the edge of the parking area are around 10 feet inside the boundary, so we need to move the boulders to that line and perhaps also plant some shrubs along it (as was suggested last spring). This would increase the parking area, and Bob said it could be increased a bit more if we removed some maple trees on the other side.

\* Dog control: Following up on Gigi's e-mail about recent dog-control problems, Philip suggested putting up signs at kiosks and said he favors using polite wording, such as "Please control your dog or use a leash." Laurie suggested a visual approach, such as a sign modeled on the no-smoking icon. Tom stated that dogs have become a serious problem, particularly at the Arboretum. Philip noted that Great Brook State Park in Carlisle has developed dog policies/guidelines and said he will get more information.

\* Future directions: Jim stated that, in considering the committee's future, he thinks it is important that we establish explicit systems and processes for making choices about what needs to be done and for carrying out those decisions. For instance, he would like to make better use of the existing list of projects and priorities for each property, perhaps in conjunction with doing another round of management plans. There was not enough time to cover this item, so Jim will put it on next month's agenda; he also plans to send out an e-mail about some of these ideas before that meeting.

\* Evening meetings: After receiving responses to his e-mail poll from most of those who are never or rarely able to attend late afternoon meetings, Jim has determined that Tuesday evenings would be the best time to hold occasional evening meetings. He is suggesting we try this three times next year, and he specifically suggested scheduling March 8, May 31 (for the June meeting), and October 4 as Tuesday evening meetings.

\* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 12, at 4:00.