

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 5, 2003, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL**

Present: Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Gigi Hopkins, Phil Keyes, Peggy Liversidge, Nan Millett, Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant, Tom Tidman, Paul Wasserboehr

* Guidebook: The first proof of the guidebook arrived at Tom's office at the end of last week, almost a month later than expected because of delays caused by a computer crash at Lynn Horskey's office. Linda has asked Peggy to try to move the project along while she is away (February 4-27). A quick review has indicated that there are some problems with both the design and the text, but Peggy has not yet had a chance to look at it more carefully. Stewards can look at a black-and-white copy in Tom's office but should be aware of this possible problem.

The hope now is that the book will be ready for Acton's Earth Day in late April.

* Guidebook fundraising: Nan has raised \$2,400 from local businesses and individuals and will be continuing to work on this. We currently have a total of around \$7,500 and hope to raise an additional \$2,500-\$3,000. Nan brought copies of the letter she has been using, as well as the latest list of donors, and requested that stewards who were willing take a copy or two and speak directly with friends or with local business people they know or whose businesses they frequent. Her experience is that the personal approach is most likely to be successful.

* Sophomore community service project: The students have completed another kiosk, which will be stored at Bob's house until it can be installed.

* Arrow signs: Bob brought in the arrow signs, painted with the appropriate trail color, that had been requested by three stewards.

* Remaining money from this year's budget: Because of uncertainty about funds for next year, Bob wants to be sure that we use the money that remains in this year's budget. He reported that we have \$1,766. Projects on which the money will or might be spent include at least four more kiosks, the mounting structure for the Wills Hole educational kiosk, six or more new picnic tables for Camp Acton, stringers for the Grassy Pond boardwalk, Acton Conservation Land logos for map boxes, large laminating sheets that he thinks will better protect the printed materials posted on the kiosks, and perhaps a few more hand pruning saws.

Tom stated that, although he does not expect to receive a \$2,500 line item for the committee as has been the case in previous years, he has other sources he can draw on to continue funding our maintenance and building needs.

* Wills Hole educational kiosk: Scott Hancock continues to work on the two panels, although he has been slowed down by a computer crash that necessitated reformatting the work he had already done. Dave hopes it will be ready for installation by late spring or early summer.

* Invasives plan: Jim and Gigi have met with Tom and Dean Charter to begin to identify places on town land that have particularly bad invasives problems, as a first step to formulating a plan for public education and an eradication strategy. Dean has a pesticide applicator's license, which would be useful if we decide to use this approach for certain species. Jim noted that Chris Mattrick, who led the invasives workshop in October, stated that careful painting of stumps with herbicides that break down fairly quickly (e.g., Roundup) has been found to be the most effective approach for some problem species.

* Vernal pools: Gigi reported that, with the current state budget cuts, staffing has already been reduced at the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and morale is very low. She has confirmed that state law (the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act) is more lax than Acton's bylaws in the treatment of vernal pools, so trying to get more pools state-certified may not be worth much at this point. Consequently, she thinks that the four vernal pools remaining to be certified on conservation land (two at Jenks and one each at Stoneymeade and Grassy Pond) are probably all we should plan to accomplish this year. Nonetheless, she will continue adding

possible sites in town, whether on public or private land, to the map she is keeping for this purpose.

* New steward for Wills Hole: Linda finally met with Maura Herlihy, whom Gigi proposed last fall as a possible steward for Wills Hole, and she is now officially the new steward. Maura had planned to be at today's meeting but, due to a fall the other day, was unable to attend. Besides being active in the Acton Bluebird Recovery Program, she is participating in a Cornell bird study. We welcome her to the committee.

* Moritz land update: The East Acton Village Planning Committee has been considering the possibility of rezoning some areas of East Acton. Of particular concern to LSCoM is the Moritz land, a 28-acre wooded area adjacent to Wetherbee that was discussed in the OSRP as an important piece of undeveloped land. If rezoned, it might be developed as an industrial park and/or as low-income or elderly housing. Gigi reports that the EAVPC, which is fairly evenly split over this issue, will be making a decision on it soon. The OSRP Committee met this morning to consider how to express their concern about the possible zoning change, and it was the sense of our committee that we should do the same. Dave volunteered to help draft a letter, which he will e-mail to the committee for input. Susan Mitchell-Hardt, who is a member of EAVPC, would be able to help us determine the best timing for submitting this letter.

* Morrison property update: Tom reported that Betty Morrison has moved out of her house, but a few people who had been living there while helping her out are refusing to leave, so the town's attorneys are getting involved. The intent is to preserve at least the barn, but plans for the house are uncertain, as is the fate of the farm field behind it, which may be turned into playing fields. As the situation develops, LSCoM might want to take a public position on how the land is used. Tom thinks we may at some point take over maintenance of the trails in the woods behind the house.

* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 5, at 4:00.