

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 1, 2003, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL**

Present: Bob Guba, Gigi Hopkins, Peggy Liversidge, Linda McElroy, Nan Millett, Cyril Murphy, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Laurie Ullmann, Paul Wasserboehr

* Possible CPA funding for LSCom projects: Noting that we currently have no budget and have been relying on Tom to find sources of funding, Jim brought up the possibility that some of our future projects might be covered by Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. It is clear that routine maintenance projects cannot be covered, but beyond that we need to clarify what types of projects would be eligible, perhaps by speaking with someone who is on the town's Community Preservation Committee (CPC). Jim's hope was that, if feasible, we might proceed with an application for the coming year. However, because the deadline for 2004 projects is November 14 and the application appears to be fairly detailed, the general consensus was that we would not be able to move forward quickly enough to apply for funds for next year. (The basic procedure is that applications are submitted to the CPC in November; they decide which projects to recommend, and these are voted on at Town Meeting in the spring. Acton's CPA fund for 2004 will be approximately \$950,000.)

Several projects were mentioned as ones we might want to consider for CPA funding in 2005 or later (pending clarification of what kinds of projects are eligible): (1) the purchase of Peter Whitcomb's land and/or the expenses associated with creating the trail connection between Heath Hen Meadow and the Capt. Sargent land; (2) a bridge across Nashoba Brook at the pencil factory site, possibly tying in with the proposed Rail Trail; (3) an observation platform along Heath Hen's Overlook Trail (see separate item below). One or two volunteers are still needed to clarify what types of projects the CPA might cover.

Several related concerns and questions were also noted: (1) Bob said that projects funded by the CPA will have time limits within which the money must be spent, and he wondered if this would be a problem if all the work is being done by volunteers. He suggested that we might have to hire out some of the work if we need to have it done within a specified period. (2) Laurie wondered if any money could be set aside for property that comes onto the market unexpectedly and must be acted on quickly.

* Heath Hen observation platform and improvement of Overlook Trail: Linda raised the question of whether it would be a good time to start thinking again about constructing a wetlands observation platform and improving the Overlook Trail, perhaps as a CPA-funded project for 2005. She envisions the platform being larger than the one at Grassy Pond and a bit higher (perhaps several feet above the water) for improved viewing, and said that she and Tom have identified two possible sites. Bob agreed to think about a design, although he has reservations about whether this is a task that is beyond what a group of volunteers can do. There was some inconclusive discussion of the difficulties of improving the trail, including a suggestion by Laurie that we consider improving it from only one access point to the proposed platform rather than the full length of the trail.

* ConsCom involvement with boundary violation problems: As a result of Bob's presentation of boundary violation problems at the September ConsCom meeting, ConsCom member Susie Phoenix and associate member Matt Liebman have been assigned to work on drafting letters to encroaching property owners. Bob also noted that ConsCom's liaison from the Board of Selectman, Peter Ashton, appeared to be interested in this problem.

To assist in the letter-writing process, Matt Liebman and Bob went yesterday to look at what Bob considers to be the most pressing problem, the two encroachments at Wetherbee. (Here, Bob reported, he found that one of the Wetherbee abutters has removed several items—a ladder, railroad ties, and a pagoda—that had previously been on conservation land.) Matt and Bob have scheduled a second meeting for this Saturday to look at the Parker Street access to Pratt's Brook, which Bob considers to be the second highest priority. The problem here is two-fold: the adjacent property owner is encroaching on the conservation land access, and our kiosk is on someone else's (unidentified) private property and will therefore have to be moved.

* Trail work: (1) Paul has been doing a fair amount of work brushing out trails at Pratt's Brook and at Spring Hill (Jay Lane access trail). Along Jay Lane he has been encountering buckthorn, and Jim offered to lend him the

weed wrench. (2) The meadows at Guggins, Heath Hen, and Jenks are scheduled to be brush-hogged by the town crew. (3) Bob plans to buy lumber in order to repair the sluiceway over the bridge at the pencil factory; he and Laurie will do the work. Tom has approved the purchase of the lumber, and Bob will use a replacement beam he obtained from his cousin.

* Wills Hole kiosk: Bob reported that he and Tom have drawn up the plans for the kiosk frame, which he will build this fall with funds that Tom will provide. The panels are not finished yet but should be done in three or four weeks. Bob also stated that Dave plans to arrange a ceremony to which he will invite the students who worked on the project and someone from Tufts.

* Volunteer issues: (1) Following up on last month's discussion at which it was tentatively agreed that there would be no central volunteer coordinator, Jim indicated that he plans to send the information on his consolidated volunteer projects list to the respective stewards. (2) Several people indicated that they need a bit more information from Philip about how the Acton Trail Volunteers e-mail list will work.

* Labeling of maps: It was agreed that the maps kept on file in Tom's office for use as masters for map box copies should include the Natural Resources office phone number, our website URL, and the Acton Trail Volunteers e-mail address and/or the committee's e-mail address (both of the latter mentioned; decision uncertain). Rich has not yet responded to Bob's request to make these additions, so Jim will follow up with Rich.

* Property write-ups on website: Continuing with the question raised last month, Linda said that the initial thought when writing the guidebook was that the property information currently on the website would be replaced by the new versions once the guidebook was done; this was to ensure that the write-ups were as up-to-date as possible as well as to allow people to download the information from the website rather than requiring that everyone purchase a guidebook. Bob, however, indicated that he thinks some differences might be acceptable, such as possibly omitting information specifically about the trail routes and adding more about features (botanical, geological, historical, etc.) that were excluded from the booklet because of lack of space. Linda volunteered to work on an amended version of the write-ups specifically for the website by checking older versions (which she has on her computer) for omitted information as well as by considering the input of individual stewards. She requested only that she not be held to a deadline for finishing these.

* Other guidebook follow-up: (1) Nan reported that 80 copies have now been sold by the three retail outlets plus her own personal sales. (2) Bob has put guidebook ad posters up at all the kiosks. (3) Paul's Beacon article about the guidebook, with one or two pictures, will appear in tomorrow's issue.

* Website work list: Jim suggested that we update the list of completed projects posted on the website. He will send stewards a link to the information so that they can have easy access to what is currently posted on the website.

* Publicity: For a future Beacon article, Paul would like to receive a year-end round-up of what has been done on all the properties over the past year.

* Intertown connections: Ann reported that she and Laurie have scheduled a preliminary meeting with two people from Carlisle about intertown trail connections.

* Norway maple control project: Jim is finishing up tagging the maples and pulling out the smallest trees; the chainsawing and painting of the stumps with herbicide is scheduled for the second week of October.

* Elms and Bruce Carley: The status of the situation with Bruce Carley and his elm planting activities is a bit uncertain: Linda thinks that the last communication with him resulted in a verbal agreement that he not plant any more trees on conservation land without consulting with a steward or someone on the committee. Ann suggested that if he is still involved in this activity, a good place to plant the elms would be along Main Street, and she thought Dean Charter should be brought into the loop. There was a general consensus that this was a good idea, and Ann agreed to broach the subject with Dean.

* Town Forest parking sign: Gigi and Bob noted that there is a confusing "no parking" sign at the Quarry Road parking area near the kiosk. Bob will speak with Tom to see if this problem can be fixed.

* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 5.