

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

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

* Possible sale of quarry property in Town Forest: Following a question from Maura about the status of some orange arrows painted on trees and blue flagging tape she has noticed along the yellow trail in the vicinity of Quarry Road, Bob noted that there is orange flagging tape marking the boundary between the Town Forest and the quarry, which is privately owned. Jim then reported that, through his participation as a member of ACT's board, he is aware that the quarry owner is proposing to sell the property to a sculptor who would like to build a studio on the site and make use of the granite for her art work. Because there is presently no road access to the property, ACT has been brought into the discussion to help consider a possible land swap, where some private land adjacent to the Town Forest would be given to the town with a conservation restriction, in exchange for the town giving the land owner a smaller piece of land that would provide access to Quarry Road. Jim said he will either bring more information to the next meeting or e-mail it in advance so that we can decide whether to take a public position on the sale proposal. He noted that the issue is controversial, with many of the neighbors opposing the transfer and sale.

(Maura confirmed after the meeting that she and Bob were apparently not talking about the same flagging tape. Although the discussion proved to be useful, she is still wondering about the status of the other flagging tape and painted arrows.)

* Morrison property: Relative to the letter from Maya Spies to various town departments and committees about how the Morrison property will be used (playing fields? teen center? natural area?), Jim raised the question of whether we should take an official position. It was agreed that we first need to know more about the background of any agreements or decisions that have been made about the property. Gigi and Nan, who know Maya Spies, agreed to speak to her as well as to Tom and/or Dean Charter. Philip also suggested that we ask Tom if he can be present at next month's meeting, and Jim agreed to check with him.

* Trail work: (1) Bob and Laurie have repaired the bridge over the sluiceway at the pencil factory, adding a new beam and decking. (2) Several stewards reported blowdowns following the most recent wind storm; Bob cleared around ten.

* Possible Pratt's Brook Scout project: Jim reported that he, Bob, and Linda walked around Pratt's Brook yesterday to identify a possible project for an Eagle Scout who has indicated an interest in doing a project there. Out of several possibilities, they agreed to suggest a boardwalk that would span all or part of an approximately 80-foot section of stony, frequently wet trail just downstream from the footbridge near the Broadview Road cul-de-sac. If the Scout doesn't feel he can do the full 80-foot length, he could, at a minimum, choose to do the 55-foot section from the bridge to the stone wall, which is most in need of improvement, leaving 25 feet to be completed as a separate project. Laurie was suggested as a possible supervisor if the project goes forward, and he agreed to do so if Bob reviews the plans.

* Intertown connections: (1) Ann reported that she and Laurie have held an initial meeting with two people from Carlisle about an intertown trail connection with Carlisle. The discussion centered on the possibility of connecting Nashoba Brook and perhaps Camp Acton into a loop with several small parcels in the southwestern corner of Carlisle. Access to the Carlisle lands would be possible by cutting through the Robbins Mill Pond development, using some paths between houses and some of the neighborhood streets, or possibly via the gas line. Ann noted that some of the Carlisle parcels in this potential loop don't yet have trails. (2) Linda reported that the next step in the Stow connection is for Tom to speak with Peter Whitcomb, owner of the Acton parcel that would provide the link between Heath Hen Meadow and the Acton boundary with Stow on the way toward Stow's Capt. Sargent land.

* Boundary violation update: Bob reported that he hasn't had any update from ConsCom about boundary violation issues; he will give Matt Liebman a call. Bob also said that he removed some plywood and metal along the Berry Lane boundary of Wetherbee and that he will be on the lookout for Christmas tree dumping after the holidays.

* Guidebook sales: Nan reported that guidebook sales through our retail outlets have netted \$1,350 so far, but she doesn't know how many have been sold through the Natural Resources office. It was agreed that we need to check

with Tom about how sales are being tracked. All receipts are to go into a dedicated fund for the next printing.

* Norway maple control project: Jim reported that he, Tom, and Dick Tavernier spent a morning cutting down about 20% of the Norway maples in the project area, and the following day town workers applied herbicide to the stumps. The remaining Norway maples will be taken down in the next few weeks. Jim also noted that he has begun reading various invasives management plans (a project he hopes to continue over the winter) and that Susan Mitchell-Hardt has brought to his attention a project in Concord to identify bittersweet infestations.

* Bluebird update: Gigi reported on this year's statistics for the 115 boxes monitored by the Acton Bluebird Recovery Program. In just over five months, from the first bluebird egg found (April 1) to the last one that fledged (Sept. 5), 113 bluebirds fledged out of a total of 187 eggs counted. This represented a decrease from the higher levels of 2001 and 2002, when 159 and 156 bluebirds fledged. Although the program's main focus of interest is on bluebirds, the monitored boxes also become home to other cavity-nesting songbirds, and her statistics included the numbers of fledgling tree swallows (113), chickadees (66), titmice (16), and nuthatches (8) raised in the boxes this year. She also noted that over the six years that they have been keeping records, 511 house sparrows (mostly eggs) have been destroyed since they are an invasive alien species and predators of these other songbirds.

* Yahoo! trail volunteer subscriber group: Philip reported that about ten people have subscribed so far to the volunteer e-mail list (ActonTrailVolunteers@yahoo.com), and he encouraged all stewards to go to the website to sign up as well as to urge other potential volunteers to do so. He indicated that it may be a long process to develop the list and suggested that it might be publicized in a *Beacon* article. The list has been activated, although no projects have been posted yet. Currently Philip, Bob, and Jim are able to post announcements.

* Labeling of map masters: In a continuation of last month's discussion, it was agreed that only the Natural Resources phone number and the website need to be put on the map masters. Bob clarified that the existing URL for the town's website will work even after the town switches to a dot-gov domain, so we can proceed with the labeling using the existing URL. Rich indicated that it would be easier to glue strips of paper with the information to the masters than to add it electronically, and he agreed to prepare these.

* Project list update: Jim is in the process of consolidating various project lists, which will then be divided into completed projects and future projects. The completed projects list will be used to update the website's Detailed Work List (under the Projects heading), while potential future projects will become our new working list. He will bring information to the next meeting.

* Steward responsibilities memo: Jim stated that he would like to update the memo concerning steward responsibilities that was drawn up some time ago, but he doesn't have a copy of it. Linda said that she has the original.

* Responses to outside e-mail inquiries: Linda raised the question of whether we should have a more orderly system for deciding who should respond to outside e-mail inquiries. Jim agreed to return to his previous practice of providing a bit more direction by assigning or suggesting who should respond if it is unclear who the appropriate person is. Whoever responds should cc the whole committee, and Bob added the reminder that we should all use the official LSCOM e-mail address (lsc@town.acton.ma.us) when doing this. Using this one address will ensure distribution to all stewards, Tom, and the ConsCom liaison but maintain privacy by not printing out the individual names and e-mail addresses.

* Separate section for LSCOM in town's Annual Report?: Noting that the LSCOM is presently mentioned in the Annual Report under the Department of Natural Resources heading, Bob wondered if it would be possible for our name to appear under a separate heading. Even though the information following the heading would be brief, this format would give our name more visibility than if it remains buried under another heading. Philip agreed to check with Tom about this.

* Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 3.