

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 6, 2002, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL**

Present: Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Gigi Hopkins, Phil Keyes, Peggy Liversidge, Linda McElroy, Nan Millett, Cyril Murphy, Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert

- Ian's resignation: Linda read a letter of resignation from Ian MacPherson, who has been forced to cut back on certain activities following an accident and operation. Ann will write a letter expressing our appreciation for his work on the committee and best wishes concerning his recovery.
- Vernal pool presentation: As reported last month, Brian Butler's presentation is scheduled for Wednesday, February 13, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Acton Public Library conference room. Phil, who is now in the process of contacting again the people and organizations he has invited, doesn't know how many to expect, but he hopes it will be a good educational and networking opportunity. He will introduce Brian and will be bringing refreshments, name tags, and a sign-in sheet.

Although Phil does not intend to organize the certification of specific sites at this meeting, Linda said she is hoping that this spring we may be able to certify one or more pools on conservation land. Dave said that we should investigate the legal ramifications of vernal pool certification on private property before we attempt to interest property owners in this process.

- Grassy Pond pier/platform: Bob and a small crew recently extended the pier 16 feet, and Rich and his son cut down several dead trees overhanging it. Bob has now received the hardware for the 6' x 12' platform and plans to work on it this Saturday, February 9. Several people volunteered to help.
- Field guide: With the maps close to completion, the map subcommittee is transforming into the field guide subcommittee; members will be Cyril, Dave, Linda, Peggy, Rich, and Tom. A morning meeting is planned for February 7. Peggy, working with Linda, will take on the editing of parcel descriptions, using the OSRP report entries currently on the website as a starting point. Some information will be removed (e.g., parcel acquisition data), and it was suggested that Linda find the information that stewards gave her last year for the report, since some details that were not included in the report descriptions might be useful for the guide book. The subcommittee will also be making decisions about booklet production (number of copies, size of maps, paper, etc.).

The issue of how to fund the booklet remains unresolved. Although at last month's meeting there was a sense that we should perhaps do our own printing/publishing, Linda reported that Tom recommends that we contract out as much of the production and printing costs as we can garner funds to support. He already has a commitment from the Recreation Commission for \$2,000, and believes he can find another \$1,000. He also suggests that we might approach the Community Education organization, which sponsors his trail walks, and the ACT. Linda suggested that this might also be a good time to try fundraising from local businesses. Nan indicated she would still be willing to help and mentioned again the idea of approaching real estate brokers. In return for sponsorship, we would thank them in the book's acknowledgments; it seems to be generally agreed that we do not want to put ads in the guidebook. Phil brought up the question of how much we would charge for the booklet, noting that the current one was sold for \$5, and wondered who would receive this money and how this would affect how we do our fundraising. Suggestions for the price ranged from around \$7.50 to \$10.

- Website: Rich has added information about the proposed Assabet rail trail and a detailed list of work that has been completed at each conservation property, along with Beacon articles and photos as they become available.
- Publicity: Paul reported through Linda that his article for February will cover the Merriam School project, next month's will focus on vernal pools, and April's will be about the Grassy Pond pier/platform. In response to his request for ideas for future issues, several suggestions were made:
May: bird-watching, with emphasis on migrating birds (Gigi suggested he speak to Bill Kalms, a local birdwatcher); June: the campsites and improvements at Camp Acton; July: the BCT as it crosses through Acton's conservation properties, the proposed Assabet rail trail, and the possibility of trail connections with other

towns; September: the bluebird program (Gigi said this would be a good time because they would have a count of how many had fledged during 2002).

It was also suggested that Paul might work on property descriptions (including their history), that could be used as needed for months when there was no clear topic. Nan suggested that we might add to the website photos relevant to specific stories for which there wasn't room in the newspaper.

- Bay Circuit Trail: Cyril reported that he has received the BCT's plastic trail-marking strips from Dean Charter and has begun putting them up at Camp Acton. He has experienced some difficulty with using the aluminum nails provided with the strips, finding that they bend too easily, but he thinks the blazing strips themselves might be something we should consider for our trails (he is already seeing places where our painted blazes need to be repainted). Linda requested that he remind her of this so that it can be included as an agenda item at a later meeting.
- Merriam School program: Dave reported that this year's program, which will meet every two weeks between Feb. 13 and April 24 (six sessions), will involve building nesting boxes for raptors and wood ducks, gathering the data to certify a vernal pool in the Mt. Hope Cemetery woods (following a presentation by Brian Butler), planting a row of evergreens at the Robbins Street entrance to Heath Hen to serve as a barrier between the trail and a nearby house, and perhaps drawing pictures of bog plants that might be used for, or as a basis for, the Wills Hole educational kiosk. He also said that the kids really enjoy doing things outdoors, so any steward who has suitable work within this period at his or her parcel, such as brush-clearing, should let him know. Linda, who attended an introductory meeting with the students, said that eight had signed up, including two who were in the program last year; they shared with the others some things they'd learned and were looking forward to the program this year.
- Improvements at Pratt's Brook: Linda reported that our current Eagle Scout, who previously made improvements to the park for Audubon Drive residents and moved some stones to create a channel and stepping stones where a periodic stream crosses the main trail, has completed cutting a trail between the seniors' park and the barrens and has lined it with wood chips. It was agreed that the trail should be blazed blue. At the barrens end of the park there is a sizable animal hole at the edge of the trail that is a safety hazard; Linda has asked Tom to have the town place a boulder in front of it. Dean Charter's crew will also be cutting down gray birch and certain other trees in the barrens area, but leaving all of the scrub pine and most of the red oaks.

Peggy noted that the park area has a circular perennial garden that may be able to use some donations of hardy flowers from our gardens. In the spring, after seeing what is coming up and how much room there is, she will find out who could donate what. Bob indicated that the soil may be fairly poor, and the plants would need to be able to get along without much tending.

- OSRP report: Linda reported that she has submitted the portion of the OSRP report outlining our plans for the next five years.
- Letters to abutters: Ann has prepared letters to eight Acton residents concerning either boundary infringements or dumping on conservation property (Bulette, Jenks, Nashoba Brook, and Wetherbee). These are awaiting Tom's signature as he wanted to call some of these people personally.
- Signage: Bob reported that the signs he submitted a request for after last month's meeting have been completed. He will be needing an enthusiastic crew of post-hole diggers in the spring.
- Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 6, at 4:00.