

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 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, Jim Snyder-Grant, Tom Tidman, Paul Wasserboehr

- Vernal pool presentation follow-up: Phil was pleased by the success of this first outreach and education effort and said he would like to help organize more such presentations. He suggested aiming for four per year. There was some discussion about having one about intercommunity trails in June, and Wednesday, June 19, was chosen as a tentative date. Phil would like to invite Al French, the executive director of the Bay Circuit Alliance. If this works out, Phil thinks we will need a larger space than the library meeting room (where the early closing time is also a problem). A second possible topic, suggested for September, is invasive plants. It was suggested that this might be a hands-on presentation, scheduled for a weekend. Jim offered to help with this one.

Phil also reported that Brian Butler was paid an honorarium, and there was an additional small expense for refreshments.

- Vernal pool certification: Linda hopes that at least one pool can be certified this year, but it appears that this will happen only if the Merriam School group is able to do it. Unfortunately, they are locked into a specific schedule that, with this year's warm winter, may prove to be too late. Brian Butler is scheduled to speak to the students on March 27, and they will be going to the pool (at either Heath Hen or the Mt. Hope Cemetery woods) on April 10. Dave is looking for wader boots (any size).

Nan and Gigi said they would be interested in coming along on April 10 to learn what is involved. Gigi and Nan may try to do some observing for obligate species at the main Pratt's Brook vernal pool and take pictures for documentation. They do not want to do the paperwork, but Linda suggested that the certification of this pool might become a small-group effort.

- Grassy Pond pier/platform: The pier and platform are complete except for railings and benches.
- SuAsCo and Nature Conservancy connections: Linda recently met Nancy Bryant, the Executive Director of the SuAsCo Watershed Community Council, and has accepted an invitation to attend their next steering committee meeting on March 14. Nancy thought that Linda might like to become Acton's LSCom representative to the Council. It was suggested that we add a website link to this group.

Dave mentioned that, while on the trails, he had met the Executive Director of the Nature Conservancy, who lives in Acton. The group felt that we should try to find his name and contact him about possible involvement in some of our programs.

- Potential steward for Pratt's Brook: Linda has met a Pratt's Brook-area resident and walker, Al Zachor, who has offered to help by removing trail debris, reporting anything too big to move himself, and keeping the map box filled. Linda hopes he (or someone) will eventually be able to replace her as the parcel's steward.
- Publicity: The February Beacon article, about the Merriam School project, was printed on the obituary page so some may have missed it, but it is on the website. Paul has begun working on or thinking about the next few article topics that were on the list compiled at the last meeting. Phil offered to be a resource for the May article on birdwatching/migrating birds, and Nan suggested that Jenks be featured as a good birding site.
- Website: Rich has added the Bulette map and many Beacon articles to the website.
- Earth Day: This year's Earth Day will be held on Saturday, April 27, at the Conant School. Gigi and Nan will again be staffing the Bluebird Recovery Program's table and could watch over the LSCom display if we want to put something up again this year. This should be on the agenda for next month's meeting.

- Blazing strips vs. paint: There was some discussion of Cyril's suggestion at last month's meeting that we consider using plastic blazing strips, such as those used on the BCT, instead of painted blazes. His main concern is that the painted ones are beginning to need touching up and that we won't be able to keep up with this. Several people voiced a strong preference for painted blazes. It was decided that we will begin to keep track of how much repainting appears to be needed. Ann suggested that individual stewards might be able to do this touch-up work.
- Signage and boundary markers: As reported last month, the signs completed this winter by the Town crew will need to be installed this spring—meaning postholes will have to be dug. In addition, stewards who haven't yet done so should let Cyril know where boundary markers are needed on their parcels so that these can be put up soon. Markers are needed wherever a trail enters a parcel from private land with use from more than one home.
- Bluebird count update: Gigi reported that the Acton Bluebird Recovery Program, which is affiliated with the Massachusetts Bluebird Association, had the largest number of fledgings (159) in the state last year. She, Nan, and two others are the core group that monitors over 100 boxes in and around Acton.
- Community Preservation Act (CPA) update: Susan Mitchell-Hardt, from the ACT, attended the meeting to give an update about the CPA, which will be considered at Town Meeting in April. The CPA allows Massachusetts cities and towns to impose a surcharge of up to 3% on property taxes to establish a fund for open-space acquisition, historic preservation, and affordable housing, with matching funds provided by the state (funded by real estate transaction fees). An advisory board appointed by the Town last summer has recommended adoption of a 1.5% surcharge with two exemptions. If passed at Town Meeting, it will be on the ballot in November. Prior to Town Meeting, a forum will be held on Tuesday, March 19, at 7:30 at the library, with a panel that will include representatives from a few nearby towns that have passed the act and Jamie Hellen of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Susan is looking for volunteers to help with this effort.
- Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 3, at 4:00. Linda will be out of town, so Dave will chair the meeting.