

**LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 11, 2002, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL**

Present: Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Gigi Hopkins, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge, Linda McElroy, Nan Millett, Rich Rhode, Jim Snyder-Grant, Laurie Ullmann, Paul Wasserboehr

- Organizational changes: Linda spoke about her proposal for restructuring the committee (e-mailed to stewards on 9/10). Following completion of the guidebook, she will be turning her focus to facilitating intertown conservation connections, and Bob, Dave, and Jim have agreed to increase their oversight of the "trails team" (Bob) and the "town team" (Dave and Jim). While Linda intends to stay well informed about what is going on, she will be less involved in decision-making about and direction and coordination of the infrastructural and townwide activities.

At least for the time being, Linda will continue to lead the meetings, although Bob, Dave, and/or Jim might lead the portions of the meetings that pertain to their activities. See the Proposal for Restructuring of Committee for further explanation and details. Phil had a number of questions, but the ensuing discussion apparently clarified the changes. Linda pointed out that day-to-day functioning will not change much; only the leadership responsibilities will shift.

- Volunteer team: Jim has offered to take over the long-neglected task of actively recruiting and organizing volunteers and coordinating and facilitating their activities. He envisions having an organized group of volunteers working on some larger and ongoing projects on parcels, such as tackling invasives or certifying vernal pools, after receiving suitable training. Volunteers might also work individually with specific stewards or on specific parcels, on such things as periodically brushing out trails or providing coverage for the steward as needed. Other ideas were to fix up the Overlook Trail, build up to four kiosks, and eventually work on trail tie-ins with other towns. Jim is compiling a list of suitable projects and welcomes any input.

Phil said that he has a lot of relevant materials concerning training, tools, and techniques that Jim could use. He also suggested that we might consider setting up a way for the public to report trail maintenance needs (and perhaps other conservation land-related issues) online.

- Schedule and fundraising for guidebook: Linda reported that, while the guidebook is moving along, it is going more slowly than she had hoped. However, with input from Peggy she now has seven descriptions almost ready to turn over to Lynn Horsky, the graphic designer who is working with us. Linda showed the group one two-page spread of a sample parcel entry and another with two maps. The guidebook subcommittee will be meeting with Lynn on Friday to go over some of the graphics. Linda now expects that the book will be finished before the end of 2002.

After considering the funding issue over the summer, Tom and Linda have agreed that our aim should be to make the guidebook as good as possible on the assumption that we will be able to raise the needed funds. Tom has suggested shooting for \$10,000. He thinks we will receive \$2,000 grants from both the Recreation Department and ACT and perhaps \$1,500 from Acton-Boxborough Community Education, which would leave \$4,500 for us to raise ourselves. Tom suggested that we might consider sponsoring a fundraising concert at NARA in addition to pursuing our earlier idea of approaching businesses and individuals for donations that would be acknowledged on a sponsors page. Nan is ready to start the latter once she has a mock-up to show people and finds out from Tom who checks should be made out to (it was suggested that some people might object to making out checks to the Town of Acton). There was some discussion of Phil's suggestion that we set a minimum amount for donations, but no firm decision was reached. Nan will first approach those individuals and businesses she thinks will give the largest donations and get a sense of how to proceed from there.

- Publicity: Paul's article for this month will be about bluebirds, and those for the next two months will cover Heath Hen and invasives. Suggestions offered for future articles included the problem of residents' dumping debris onto conservation land, improvements at Wetherbee, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing on conservation land, beavers (perhaps in conjunction with a public talk), the guidebook, the annual Christmas bird count that takes place from mid-December to early January, and an interview with Concord birding author David Sibley.

- Website: Rich reported that our website will be integrated into the town's website sometime this fall, perhaps in November. We will not be required to make any changes in our design to conform to standards of the larger website, but the address will change.
- Grassy Pond boardwalk: This summer, Bob, with help from Dave and Laurie, elevated the 32-foot section of the Newtown Rd. access trail that had been close to or under water.
- Wetherbee trails: Gigi has been working on clearing the cart road that leads through the woods to Rt. 2, but the loop trail remains to be cut. Bob has helped her clear some of the brush and has mowed a trail through the meadow near the Korean church. It was agreed that the only publicized entrance would be from Wetherbee Street, at least until representatives of both the church and the state land have given official approval for an access from Forest Street.
- Stonemeade: Nan reported that the residents on one side of the Stonemeade Way access have planted a tree that obscures the entrance and installed a mailbox too close to the entrance; she feels these things make people feel as though they are intruding on someone's private property as well as make the entrance harder to find. She would like to have the tree removed and a kiosk built that would be visible from the street (although set back somewhat). Dean Charter, however, has suggested that the tree might be left but instead be limbed up in order to make the entrance more visible.
- Heath Hen-Stow connection: Dave has sent information to people on both the Stow Conservation Trust and the Stow Conservation Commission but has not yet received replies from either. He has been trying to set up a meeting between representatives of Stow with some of our people to discuss what is needed to connect Heath Hen Meadow to Captain Sargent Farm Conservation Land.
- Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 2, at 4:00.