

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2007, 4:00 P.M.
Acton Town Hall

Present: Joan Cirillo, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Gigi Hopkins, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Millett, Rich Rhode, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman

Meeting minutes: The December minutes were approved.

Possible Nagog Hill addition: Jim mentioned briefly that there is a possibility that there could be a small addition made to Nagog Hill (on the southern edge of the property, toward the town center). He expects that he will know more in a month or two.

Fall campout event at Camp Acton: Jim said that if we are going to proceed with the idea proposed last month (a one-night family-oriented campout at Camp Acton, organized through the Recreation Dept.), we will need to move quickly since the Rec. Dept. needs to firm up its 2007 schedule by the end of January. Jim has already scheduled a meeting with Cathy Fochtman, the former head of the Friends of the Acton Arboretum who is the town's new Recreation Director, for Jan. 16. Those present indicated their interest in doing so, and Rich said he would like to join Jim at the meeting. Besides the pancake breakfast and owl walk mentioned in last month's minutes, activity suggestions included a campfire with singing and storytelling, short and long trail walks, perhaps someone to talk about the stone piles, and making glow-in-the-dark necklaces as a kids' activity (Nan knows a source of supplies). September 22 was suggested as the date Jim should propose at the upcoming meeting.

Camp Acton permits: Rich reported that he has put the Camp Acton permit on the LSCom website and said that the cost of camping there is \$15 per campsite.

Spring lecture: Philip said he would try to contact someone about a possible lecture about stone walls. Peggy said she thinks the speaker we have heard about through an NRWA talk is Robert Thorson. She will check on the name and let Philip know. Wednesday, March 14, was suggested as a date to aim for.

Wetherbee website update: The need to update the Wetherbee description on the website was mentioned again. Gigi said she would work on it, and Joan and Peggy offered editing help.

Rock bench: Jim reported that since last month's discussion of doing something to honor Linda for her contributions to the LSCom, Tom had suggested that a rock in the quarry at Town Forest might make a good bench. He and Jim have walked around the area and found several flat rocks that they think would be suitable, and Tom said that the Town's earth-moving equipment could be used to move one to the stone chamber, which they thought would be an appropriate site. It was suggested that a small inscription (perhaps her initials?) might be carved in the rock. Jim and Nan will go to the quarry again to look at the possibilities.

Town equipment building: Jim said that a new line item for a Cemetery equipment building is included in the Town's current capital plan, though the item is still under debate. Several years ago \$100,000 was approved for such a building, but bids came in much higher and the authorization finally expired. If the proposed building survives the capital planning process, Tom has said that we can have space in it to store the LSCom equipment that is now in Bob Guba's garage. Storage space in the Morrison barn was proposed, but that was ruled out since another use is planned for it.

Boundary walks: Jim noted that although annual property walks to look for boundary encroachments are on the list of steward responsibilities, they have not been done. He would like to do at least a few such walks with one or two stewards, perhaps concentrating on portions of property boundaries that are near to residences. Gigi and Nan said they would like

to do this at Wetherbee and Stoneymeade, where some previous encroachments (one still outstanding) have occurred. The uncertainty about exact boundaries was noted, and Jim said he would take along his GPS.

Pratt's Brook senior park: Jim reported that there is a picnic table at the senior park that the Audubon Hill residents rarely or never use, as reported by Charlie. Jim suggested that it be moved to somewhere where it will be used. Suggestions were the top of Great Hill, the open space near the Davis Rd. parking lot at Nashoba Brook, the canoe landing, and the Morrison land. The last seemed to generate the most interest. Tom also reported that Town workers had removed a large rock at the senior park and filled in the hole with loam, which will be leveled and seeded in the spring. The rock removal will make it easier when mowing the field.

Pacy land trails: Bob and Philip have walked this area and suggest that two loop trails, separated by a wet area in the center of the property, be cut. One loop will have two access points, Central St. and Tupelo Way (off Prospect St.). The other loop access is from Tuttle Dr. (also off Prospect St.). Sometime in the future a boardwalk across the intervening wetland can be built to connect the two loops. The next step is to flag the trails; it was suggested that Roy Dennington, the interested resident who initiated the idea of putting a trail in this area, be part of the team. Jim stated that this property is about 39 acres, about 10 of which are wetland.

Blazing: Gigi has finished with the Town Forest blazing and is wondering which parcels to turn her attention to. Suggestions were Pratt's Brook, Spring Hill, and the Pacy property.

Stick structures: The large Great Hill structure has been taken down, but there was a general discussion of the issue. It was agreed that if a structure is judged to be unsafe, it should definitely be taken down, and also that a steward can take down any structure without consulting the rest of the committee. If someone wants to consult others, however, good communication is essential, and photographs were recommended. Use of lumber in a structure was mentioned as a clear reason to take it down. In reference to the idea that we don't want to discourage kids from engaging in this basic childhood activity, it was noted that what is really important is the activity itself, not future use of the structure.

Acton-Stow update: Jim reported that he had a productive meeting with a Stow landowner, George Morey, who owns property that abuts Heath Hen Meadow and the ACT's Whitcomb land. Jim is hopeful that an agreement may be reached with Mr. Morey to provide an access between Heath Hen Meadow and Stow's Captain Sargent land. He plans to contact the Stow Conservation Trust about this.

Jim also reported that on Saturday, Jan. 27, at noon, the ACT will be leading a walk from Stow's Flagg Hill parking lot on West Acton Road to the ACT's Whitcomb land by way of the old farm road across the road from the parking lot.

Beavers at Heath Hen Meadow: Dave reported that he has spoken with a number of people who are concerned about the beavers and the flooding around the footbridge connecting to the Mt. Hope woods. Bob suggested that it might be possible to alleviate the bridge flooding by positioning some downed trees in the water a bit upstream from the bridge and parallel to it, in the hope that the beavers would begin to build against this rather than against the bridge. This could be tried next spring or summer.

Lazarro property proposal: Doug Halley of the Town's Board of Health is presenting a proposal to the CPC to purchase the site of the old Lazarro Paving Co. in South Acton (a narrow strip between River Street and the railroad tracks just east of where River St. joins School St., and including the dammed up portion of Ft. Pond Brook visible from River St.), with the intention of making it part of a Ft. Pond Brook greenbelt. He had expected to come to the meeting to present the idea and answer questions but was unable to come. There was some discussion, however, and Gigi brought photocopies of some old photos of the area (late 19th-early 20th

century) when South Acton was more built up, with a number of mills and factories along the brook. She mentioned her concern about possible contamination from the factories.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on February 7 at 4:00 PM.