

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes May 2, 2007, 4:00 P.M. Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Bob Guba, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Rich Rhode, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman

April minutes: The April minutes were accepted.

Fall lecture: Philip stated that since last month's meeting he had had a different idea about our fall lecture. In following up on the news report of Mass. Wildlife's response to a bear problem in Carlisle (see Philip's email dated April 12), he spoke with a woman from that agency who, he found, would be willing to do a presentation about "living with wildlife in the suburbs," dealing with problems that arise with a variety of wildlife when human development pressures encroach on wildlife habitat. She has indicated that she would be able to do a fall presentation, which she suggested might involve a roundtable format with one or two others whom she could arrange to join her. Philip suggested this in place of the stone wall lecture featuring Robert Thorson that was discussed last month, and those present were amenable to the idea. Philip will contact her to set a date.

Fall event at Camp Acton: Jim reported that the Recreation Department brochure announcing the 2007 programs is now available (our campout is Sept. 22-23). The department has suggested that we begin planning now for a speaker and also that we might do some publicity this summer. Following up on the earlier idea that we might arrange an owl-related event, Jim has spoken with someone from the group Animals As Intermediaries and has been advised that we can probably find someone to do this for free; he will be looking into this further. Bob suggested that, for an evening campfire, we arrange for a good storyteller and/or a musician to lead some singing. Jim said he might be able to find someone for one or both of these (though leads from others are also welcome). A small planning group was formed: Jim, Rich, Bob, and Laurie (who has volunteered to head up the Sunday morning pancake breakfast).

Canoe launch info. on website: Rich brought up the question of whether there should be information on the website about the canoe launch. Presently it is not mentioned there at all, and it is mentioned in the guidebook only on the town map on the inside cover (although the website does include a town map, it doesn't show the canoe launch). It was decided that the website should be changed so that the canoe launch is shown on the town map; that a more detailed map of the site, on the model of those for the conservation lands, should be drawn by Tom and given to Rich; and that a short written description of the site should be included. For this purpose, Jim said that he could rework and condense an article he wrote for the Acton Weekly article. (In looking at the town map in the guidebook, it was also noted that the line indicating its location is incorrect; this will need to be corrected by Rich when he adds it to the website map and fixed the next time the guidebook is printed.)

New boundary/encroachment issues: (1) *Heath Hen Meadow:* Following up on the recent email from a walker about the dog whose backyard lead allows him to reach as far as the trail at the end of Billings Street, Jim reported that he has gotten the owner's name and, as a first step, he will get in touch and attempt to clarify where the owner thinks his property boundary line is. (2) *Spring Hill:* Following up on Philip's recent email stating that a portion of the access trail from Spring Hill Road goes onto

private land, Bob reported that he has now flagged the boundary line there and that approximately 40 ft. of our trail does encroach on private property (thereby avoiding a wet area), though the kiosk is on conservation land. Tom suggested that the Engineering Department be notified. Bob stated that he thinks that permanent boundary markers should be installed, especially where access trails follow narrow corridors (e.g., here, at the Parker St. entrance to Pratt's Brook, and at the Jenks parking area on Central St.).

Priorities for pursuing encroachment problems: In response to these and earlier encroachment problems, Jim suggested three levels of priority for pursuing them, based on feedback from Bob:

Priority 1: Abutter infringements of conservation land (e.g., Stoneymeade and the Pratt's Brook access trail from Parker St.).

Priority 2: Town infringement of abutters (e.g., the Spring Hill issue noted above).

Priority 3: Other unclear boundaries (e.g., the Jenks parking area, the Heath Hen Meadow issue noted above, and the Berry Lane backyards at Wetherbee).

Followup on earlier encroachments: (1) *Stoneymeade:* Tom noted that he has recently spoken again with these homeowners and has been told (again) that they will be arranging to have the boundary surveyed. (2) *Jenks, Heath Hen Meadow, and Pratt's Brook/Parker St. access:* Tom and Jim will be meeting with Bruce Stamski in Engineering to discuss these problems. (3) *Wetherbee/Berry Lane:* Tom reported that he recently spoke with the owners of 2 Berry Lane; they are no longer dumping debris or mowing beyond their boundary, but they have not yet repaired the wall, as they promised to do.

Mowing/brush-hogging of meadow behind Hy-Bid Farm: Joan brought up her concern that the meadow behind Hy-Bid Farm hasn't been mowed for several years, although the farm's lease with the town requires them to maintain the land as when they started the lease, nor are the horses being let out to pasture there. Jim said he would be willing to initiate communication with them about this question.

Trail Through Time: Jim reported briefly that Linda has held a first meeting with a small group (including Nan) about her idea to create a "Trail Through Time." The idea, which Linda described at the September 13, 2006, committee meeting, is to tie together a number of sites at Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, and Robbins Mill Pond that move through time, from prehistorical to colonial to early U.S., and include Native American and European-American cultural elements.

Acton Cleanup Day: Cleanup day is scheduled for this Saturday, May 5.

Earth Day: Jim reported briefly on this event, held on April 28. Both he and Nan had tables (Jim for ACT and LSCoM, Nan for the Acton Bluebird Recovery Program). Jim's props for LSCoM were a large town map showing the conservation lands and a display about invasives in town.

Invasives: Jim said that he is planning to pull garlic mustard this spring, and he will be sending out an email with several dates to potential volunteers.

Eagle Scout project at Nagog Hill: Jim, Tom, and Laurie, and later Joan and Bob, have met with an Eagle Scout, Tom VanLangen, who is planning to extend the Nagog Hill boardwalk near the meadow. Bob gave him recommendations about materials and building techniques. Because the Scout will turn 18 in July and needs to complete the project by that time, he needs to move quickly with it, but Bob has not yet received any detailed drawings.

Senior Service Day: The only Senior Service Day project that will be happening on conservation land this year (May 4) is at Nagog Hill, where Joan will be overseeing 12 students who will be laying down wood chips on the trails by Hy-Bid Farm and leading to the meadow and cleaning up around the burn pile in the meadow.

Consideration of Bettina Abe as new land steward: Jim reported that Bettina is interested in formally becoming a steward of one of our unstaffed parcels (as well as continuing to serve as our liaison with the Arboretum). Anyone who has any comments about this should contact Jim.

Access trail from Quail Ridge to Route 2A: Because of recent reports of changes in the Quail Ridge Country Club's plans, Jim and Joan have scheduled a meeting with Roland Bartl of the town's Planning Department to discuss how to make sure that the agreed-upon proposed access trail connecting Nagog Hill to Route 2A survives any changes in QRCC's plans.

Update about Paul Wasserboehr: Jim reported that he has heard from Paul, who is on the mend from surgery to his neck and hopes to be able to starting attending meetings again soon.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 6, at 4:00 P.M.