

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
August 1, 2007, 4:00 P.M.
Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Bob Guba, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Rich Rhode, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman; guest: Nick Peterson (Eagle Scout)

July minutes: The July minutes were accepted.

Website: Rich, still trying to resolve the problem of interfacing with the Town's website, reported that there are two ways to proceed: stay with the town server or move to an external server, with a link to and from the Town website. Staying with the Town's website would entail making changes to our existing website design in order to tie in with the Town website's new protocols and tools, but it would be free; setting up our own website would allow us to keep our existing design and give us the freedom to do what we wanted with it, but it would cost perhaps \$60 per year. Philip said that he thought it would be worth the cost to have control of our website, and Rich stated that this is also his preference. Bob wondered about authorization to spend Town money for this purpose. Jim said he would check to see if there are any legal problems with this idea. If we do proceed with our own website, those present thought that www.actontrails.org was the best of the URL options; Rich will investigate this further.

Wheeler Lane activity: Bob stated that he, Rich, and Jim had replaced the rotten decking on the sluiceway bridge and added steps at both ends. Several logs have also been removed from the spillway. In addition, Town workers have put down loam around the rock in the field, but he doesn't think grass seed has been put down. Tom said that the seed would be visible if it is there, and if it isn't, he suggested that we wait until September. Last, Bob reported that he had trimmed branches on the tree in the field by the picnic table.

Philip stated that he has noticed that the water intake hose in Robbins Mill Pond, leading to an abutter's property, is still in use. Some time ago he put photos and a description of the situation in the file in Tom's office, and he wonders whether anything has been done about notifying the Conservation Commission (mentioned in meeting minutes for July 5, 2006). Jim will follow up on this. There was an inconclusive discussion about who has the water rights for use of the pond (which Tom thinks is Town property) and about whether pumping water from it is actually illegal.

Wills Hole/Town Forest Eagle Scout project: Eagle Scout Nick Peterson attended today's meeting to give an update of his plans to build and install three benches at Wills Hole and the Town Forest. His plans were initially reported last year (see May 3, 2006, meeting minutes), but he is only now moving forward with the project, which he plans to complete this summer. He has walked the trail in question—the yellow trail between the Nagog Park Drive entrance and Wills Hole—with Maura, and together they identified three locations for the benches. Two are along the trail and the third is in the open area with the educational panel before the Wills Hole boardwalk. Nick stated that his lumber costs will be approximately \$325, that he is presently raising those funds, and that the plan has been approved by his troop (284 Acton) and council. He showed his plans to the group and, after receiving several suggestions, was given the go-ahead to proceed.

Heath Hen Meadow activity: Jim reported that with wood chips that Town workers dumped at the end of Billings Street, he put some down behind 6 Billings Street to better define the trail there (beyond the reach of the dog's cable). Later Bob and Dave hauled some chips to a low, wet spot further along on the yellow trail, near the kiosk. Dave also did some plant

trimming along the trail near the upper meadow, and he and Bob did some further work positioning logs on the upstream side of the footbridge between HHM and the Mt. Hope land, trying to keep any further beaver activity from being right against the bridge. Bob also stated that the lower meadow would benefit from brush-hogging a couple of times in the summer.

September 22 event at Camp Acton: Various aspects of next month's event were discussed:

- Jim showed a publicity poster that he has made for posting around town, and he received several suggestions for changes.
- It was suggested that we make a list of things that participants need to bring (food for Saturday dinner, grilling tongs, drinking water, and flashlights were noted) and give this to the Rec. Dept. Tom also noted that vehicles are not allowed beyond the parking lot, and participants should be aware of this as well.
- We should have map books on hand, in case any participants are unfamiliar with our conservation lands.
- The number of people that can be accommodated was touched on, with Jim saying he thinks a maximum of 40 might be a good number, though the site could accommodate more.
- The Town can provide a large metal barrel for use as a charcoal grill, wood for campfires, additional picnic tables (from NARA) if needed, and a "water buffalo" for fire safety if there is not enough water in the stream for this purpose. Buckets will be needed.
- The Rec. Dept. will provide portable toilets, which will be covered by registration fees.
- Jim is beginning his search for a song leader and a storyteller.
- There will be an event subcommittee meeting in early September (Jim, Rich, Bob, and Laurie, according to the May 2 meeting minutes).
- Other "positions" needing to be filled will include a greeter, a fire-safety person, and one or more people to lead walks into the Spring Hill /Camp Acton/Nashoba Brook areas.

Volunteer list poll: Jim reported briefly on his recent email poll to the volunteer list, in which he asked what would help people who have signed up for the list to actually come to volunteer day events. Initial results suggest that giving more advance notice, making events family-friendly, and providing a bit of social time are important. He will report further next month.

Equipment update: Jim brought two grasswhips to the meeting, and Joan left with the sturdier one, in the hope that she could use it for the area at Nagog Hill, on the yellow trail north of the newly refurbished boardwalk. Weeds there have become more of a problem since heavy bittersweet vines and some trees killed by it have fallen or been pulled down. Bob also reported that he has received the hand-powered chain saw he mentioned last month, but he hasn't tried it out yet.

Hy-Bid Farm: Jim reported that he has scheduled a meeting with Rita McConnon to begin a discussion with her and her husband about problems that have been observed relative to their management of the field (back meadow) behind the farm at Nagog Hill. Their failure to regularly brush-hog that area, which is required in their lease, is leading to an increase of woody growth. In addition, building of unauthorized structures has been noted at past meetings, and Bob mentioned at today's meeting the use of a jumping bar and a riding-ring structure in the meadow, which is not permitted under the lease. Bob also noted that the lease has expired and stated that the Conservation Commission, which is the issuer of the lease, needs to follow up with the McConnons. He has communicated with Tom about both the apparent lease violations and the need for the proper Town authorities (which would not be LSCom) to oversee the situation. Joan encouraged Jim to make it clear at his meeting with the McConnons that he is talking with them in an unofficial capacity, to get a sense of their plans regarding maintenance and use of the meadow, and not about the legal status of the lease, renewal terms, or the like.

Junior high service day: Jr. high science teacher Allen Warner has notified us that he is planning another workday sometime between the last week of September and the second week of October. He is looking for projects for approximately 120 eighth-graders, who will be separated into groups of 10-12. Joan said she could use one team to put down wood chips from the Nagog Hill parking lot beside Hy-Bid Farm to the meadow behind Jimmy Young's.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 12, at 4:00 P.M.