

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2007, 4:00 P.M.

Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Dave Cochrane, Maura Herlihy, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman, Laurie Ullmann; guests: Andrew Ossman, Andrew Kappel (Eagle Scouts)

Eagle Scout projects: Eagle Scouts Andrew Ossman and Andrew Kappel attended today's meeting to give an update of their project plans.

Andrew Ossman will be putting in stairs along the riverbank at the canoe launch, where there is a drop due to erosion. This will involve digging, building the five-step stair structure, and putting down gravel under and around it. Because of the proximity to the water, the probability of further erosion, and even the possibility that the structure might be dislodged and float away, Tom suggested that Andrew incorporate hardware that would tie the whole structure together as well as a chain to secure it to a nearby tree. Tom also said that Andrew should file a Request for Determination of Applicability form with the Conservation Commission (under the Wetlands Protection Act); ConsCom could then require him to file a Notice of Intent form, but Tom doesn't expect that that further step will be necessary since the structure is a small change to the riverbank and provides a public benefit. Tom and Jim agreed to work with Andrew to be sure the form is filled out correctly. Andrew stated that he plans to do the work next spring, which will be enough time to complete this process.

Andrew Kappel will be doing a three-part project at the stone chamber. The first part is to cut a short new trail from the yellow trail to the chamber entrance and "erase" the old entrance trail. The new trail, which has already been tagged, will curve left and then right when approaching the chamber. Jim suggested that, since the old entrance trail ties in to the informal access to/from Sawmill Rd., Andrew also cut a second new trail slightly downhill from the old one to keep this access open for neighborhood residents. The project's second part is to identify and remove invasive species around the chamber and to research, choose, and plant some low-growing, non-thorny native species as replacements. Third, he will build and install a signpost to hold the educational panel (similar to the one at Will's Hole) that we will eventually be producing and remove the old post that holds the "Danger/Keep Out" sign. Tom noted that CPA funds are available for this part of the project. Andrew's timetable is to do the trail work this fall, research the plantings over the winter, and do the plantings and install the signpost in the spring. He said that he plans to speak with Nan about the plantings, and Linda was also suggested as a contact.

Quail Ridge update: As a result of the Quail Ridge Country Club's financial difficulties, its developers have filed plans with the Planning Board to scale back the 18-hole golf course to nine holes and to build 175 senior residential units. Jim reported that the plan explicitly excludes the trail easement that had been included in the country club's plan, and he has requested a chance to comment at the Planning Board's September 25 meeting, when the special permit application will be reviewed. Jim and Joan will also draft a short letter to the Planning Board that points out this change and notes the Town Master Plan's recognition of the importance of public access to open space; this will accompany a copy of our earlier letter to the Planning Board (sent in June) about this issue.

Grassy Pond boardwalk: On September 7 Bob removed the "Warning: Slippery When Wet" sign from the Grassy Pond boardwalk after the last of the rotting, non-pressure-treated wood was replaced. He and several helpers put in 42 feet this season, largely completing the project that started in 2005. There is still a short connector ramp between the old and new

sections because the new section is slightly higher, and the old section will need to be raised and leveled at some point.

Junior high service day: The eighth-grade service day organized by Allen Warner is scheduled for Friday, September 28. The students will be organized into groups of 10. Ann and Bob have requested one group to put down wood chips on the Grassy Pond trail starting at the Willis Holden Drive cul-de-sac (Ann) and to move boardwalk project debris from the Newtown Rd. end of the boardwalk to the Newtown Rd. parking lot (Bob). Joan has also requested one group (possibly two) to put down wood chips at Nagog Hill.

Hy-Bid Farm: Jim reported that he had a successful and cordial meeting with Rita McConnon. She promised that they would brush-hog the back meadow soon, and Jim noted that as of September 11, when he walked the area again, the job was almost completed. He also broached the subject of their lease on the back meadow (they own the farm itself) and told them he will be in touch with them about any concerns he can find out from Town staff and land stewards. He will be passing on the following updates to the McConnons: (1) The Town lawyer is going to be asked whether the lease is still valid, because although it expired a few years ago, the McConnons have continued making annual payments. (2) The lease calls for the McConnons to review any changes to structures with the ConsCom, and this hasn't happened. (3) It appears that riding lessons on the conservation land are not allowed in the lease.

September 22 event at Camp Acton: Laurie said that he has put up some posters, and Jim reported that he has put notices in *The Beacon* and *The Acton Weekly* and has sent out email announcements to Beth Petr's list, the ACT list, and our volunteer list. As of last week four families had signed up. Jim has arranged for a storyteller to be there and is trying to finalize arrangements with a song leader. He will be setting up a small-group planning meeting.

Nagog Hill blazes: Joan reported that on the day of the meeting Bob sent an email to Jim, cc'ing Tom and her, reporting that he had found yellow paint blazes on the informal trail leading westbound from the point where our official yellow trail turns south, at the northwestern corner of Nagog Hill Conservation Land, near the pond. This informal trail, and the yellow blazes on the trees, continues to the west, which, according to Bob, takes the trail across private land, then Acton Water District property, followed by more private property before ending at Nagog Hill Road near the Acton/Littleton town line. Bob noted that there was a yellow blaze under the Town of Concord Water Supply sign on Nagog Hill Road, near the town line. It was not clear who owns or has rights to the land on which the sign is placed. Only a small portion of the newly blazed trees are on our land. Bob wanted those blazes removed since additional yellow blazes leading in a third direction from that intersection could confuse walkers. Joan asked whether it was possible that the Town of Concord had placed the blazes there to mark some right of way or easement they may have in connection with their rights to Nagog Pond itself. Perhaps they had some kind of marking rights but either marked the wrong trail (there's an informal one closer to the pond than our official yellow trail) and/or needed to be asked to take measures that would avoid confusion. Joan suggested that we check first with the Town of Concord Public Works Department (Water & Sewer Division) to see if they know anything about the blazes and maybe check with Town Counsel about possible marking rights before we paint over the new blazes. Jim said he will check out this idea with Tom (who had by this time left the meeting) and, if appropriate, follow up with Concord. In the meantime, Joan had asked Bob to provide signs if he wanted her to put some up to clarify the correct trail route for Nagog Hill visitors.

Pratt's Brook trail tags: Bettina reported that pink plastic ribbons have been tied on trees along a portion of the yellow trail between Parker Street and Valley Road. She will check with Charlie to see if he knows anything about this.

Yin Peat/Town Forest update: Maura noted that Yin Peat has begun construction on a residence on her property in the quarry area. There is no longer an on-site educational component to her plans.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 3, at 4:00 P.M.