

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2007, 4:00 PM

Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Dave Cochrane, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman, Laurie Ullmann; guests: Mike Hatfield (Eagle Scout), Cathy Hatfield, Hart Millett

Meeting minutes: The October minutes were approved.

Robbins Mill Pond Eagle Scout project: Mike Hatfield attended the meeting to present his project to the committee. He will be building 75 feet of the trail that will lead to the point on Robbins Mill Pond where an observation platform will eventually be constructed; this is a bit less than half the length of that trail. Both because the terrain is prone to wetness and because of the decision to make the trail accessible to residents of the Inn at Robbins Brook, Mike will be using Geoweb, a material suggested by Philip, to provide a strong support structure for holding crushed stone, thereby creating a smooth, stable, and long-lasting walking surface. He has begun work already, having cleared the 75 feet to a 4-foot width (the path itself will be 3 feet wide, but this gives some leeway), and he is now digging to a 6-inch depth to accommodate the Geoweb material. Below the Geoweb will be a layer of landscape cloth. He hopes to get most, if not all, the work done this fall, though that will depend on the weather.

Tom announced that he has just received word of approval of the \$6,900 Recreational Trails Program grant (initiated last fall by Philip) that will pay for the Geoweb material, the landscape cloth, and the crushed stone and stone dust.

Other Eagle Scout projects: Besides Mike Hatfield's project and three others that have been mentioned at recent meetings (Andrew Ossman, who is building steps at the canoe launch; Andrew Kappel, who is working on trails at the stone chamber; and Nick Peterson, who is putting in benches at Town Forest), Jim noted that Joshua Crofton-MacDonald has been removing invasives (primarily multiflora rose) from an area at the Arboretum.

Tick-removal device: Jim brought to the meeting a supply of a device, "Tick Twisters," that he has found to be useful and effective for removing ticks without leaving any of the mouth parts of the tick in the skin. He is selling them at cost to anyone who wants them (\$4 for a set of two—one for smaller ticks, one for larger ones).

Website: The old LSCCom web address has been fixed to automatically redirect web users to the new address (www.actontrails.org/).

EMS "Club Day": EMS designates certain organizations/groups as "club members," and they have recently extended this status to LSCCom. Club members are entitled to 20% off at a once a year sale, which is being held this year at the Acton store on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 9-10; to get the discount you'll need to identify yourself as a member of the LSCCom. They have also invited us to be present on those days with our guidebooks and any other information we want to give out. Jim plans to be there for several hours on Saturday afternoon and would be glad to have others join him or to represent the committee when he is not there.

Tool storage at Morrison Farm?: Tom reported that he has spoken with Dean Charter about the possibility of moving LSCCom's tools from Bob's garage to the Morrison Farm barn, and Dean has indicated that he has no objections. Nan suggested that another possibility might

be the Morrison Farm garage. That choice as well as the type of lock (padlock? combination lock?) and how access to the key, or keys, would be controlled need to be decided. Tom, Jim, and Ann (and anyone else who would like to come) will meet at Morrison Farm on Friday morning, Nov. 16, at 9:00 to discuss this further.

Geocaching: Bettina, Jim, and Tom have been talking about geocaching (and the related game, letter-boxing) on Acton conservation lands. An earlier proposed policy discussed by LSCoM and the Conservation Commission would have required a formal written application from the cacher and an approval process run by LSCoM and the Natural Resources office. However, Tom has decided that this is more overhead than necessary and puts an extra burden on his office. After discussions (and a tour) with Bettina, who is a frequent geocacher and knows all the cache sites in Acton, Tom has agreed that instead of the more formal process, Bettina will work with Jim to review any new cache sites, and they will request the owners to move or remove the cache if the placement is problematic. The criteria for appropriate placement will be the same as in the earlier proposal and match the guidelines put out by the cachers themselves.

Trail maintenance guidelines: Jim reported that Bob has redrafted our trail maintenance guidelines, but he hasn't had a chance to go over them yet or to send them out to stewards. He will do this soon and we will discuss the revised guidelines at the next meeting.

Preparation of trails for winter: Following up on his email about using our volunteer list to perhaps recruit a few people to help with preparing trails for winter (i.e., brushing out to approximately 4-foot width and 8-foot height), Jim said that both Guggins and Great Hill could use some work. He will send out the request for help at those two areas.

Parcels: *Nagog Hill:* Joan reported that the blazes on the red trail from the Grassy Pond parking lot need touching up. Also, at the junction of that trail with the yellow trail (where the yellow trail turns toward Hy-Bid), there is no longer a suitable tree to blaze, and she thinks a post might be needed. Jim and Laurie noted that both paint and some posts and arrows are in Bob's garage (Jim has some others) and indicated their willingness to help; Joan will also check in with Bob. *Grassy Pond:* Ann reported that Jimmy Young hasn't yet mowed the Grassy Pond meadow. *Spring Hill and BCT:* Laurie reported that he has done a check of the BCT blazes, adding and changing them as needed and removing some old Acton Conservation Land metal trail markers on the Jay Lane access trail. He is also considering putting BCT blazes along the street segment of the trail between Spring Hill and Stoneymeade. Blazes on Strawberry Hill Rd. and Pope Rd. could be put on trees along the sidewalk, but in the Stoneymeade subdivision there are no trees or utility poles along the street, so mailbox posts would have to be used. Nan said that she knows several people who live along this stretch who would probably agree to this if Laurie wants to pursue the idea. *Report from Bob:* Jim read a report from Bob, who was unable to attend the meeting, noting that he had removed a number of blowdowns and done work on extending the Heath Hen Meadow footbridge.

Update from Concord Water District about blazes and access: Jim spoke with the person in charge of environmental issues at the Concord Water District and was told that they know nothing about the blazes that Bob found recently at Nagog Hill. A call to the Littleton Conservation Trust yielded the same negative result.

While speaking with the water district representative, Jim also brought up the question of possible access across Concord Water District land that would allow a trail link between Nagog Hill and Littleton's Sarah Doublet land. He found that, because Concord doesn't filter the pond's water, the formal restriction on access to all the water district's land remains in place, even though they are not overly concerned about access except near the water's edge. However, they are currently considering installing a filtration system, and if and when that happens, the restriction might be eased, opening the possibility that a formal trail connection could be approved.

Trail near stone chamber to Sawmill Rd.: Laurie and Jim have flagged a short new trail from the Nashoba Brook yellow trail to Sawmill Rd., as agreed at the September meeting, and would like another steward to take a look at it before the Eagle Scout, Andrew Kappel, cuts it. Nan agreed to do this.

Overlook Trail at Heath Hen Meadow: Dave, Bob, and Jim have been discussing the idea of closing the Overlook Trail. It has always been difficult to negotiate and, because of recent beaver activity, the water level is higher now than ever. There was no objection to the idea. It was suggested that the boardwalk segments might be retrieved.

Quail Ridge Country Club update: Jim and Joan met recently with Dennis Ring, representing QRCC, concerning the trail easement that was in the 18-holes/no-houses proposal, but was not in the last 9-holes/many-houses proposal. QRCC has responded to our request for an easement by offering a plan under which LSCoM would flag one trail appropriate for the 18-holes/no-houses configuration (near the northern edge of the property); then QRCC would write up an easement that matched that trail, with the proviso that they could reroute part of the trail onto new sidewalks and roads if the 9-holes/many-houses version of the proposal is approved and QRCC decides to proceed in that direction. This is a complex idea with many pros and cons that needs more research on the part of LSCoM before we have a useful response. Our written response has been requested by the Planning Department by November 27. Joan and Jim will continue working on this. Jim expects that he will need help from other LSCoM members with flagging a possible trail. If anyone has questions or concerns or offers of help about any of this, please contact them.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 5, at 4:00 P.M.