

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2008, 4:00 PM

Acton Town Hall

Present: Bettina Abe, Joan Cirillo, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Ann Shubert, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair)

Minutes: Since the June minutes were not approved at the July meeting, both the June and July minutes were approved.

Updates re stewards: (1) Charlie Carlson has informed Jim that he and his family will be moving to the Cape, so he is stepping down now as steward of Pratts Brook. Bettina offered to take over for him, perhaps on an interim basis. (2) Jim reported that Paul Wasserboehr has resumed some activity. (3) Jim reported that he has not heard from Alison Gallagher, our potential new steward, since the July meeting; he has a call in to her.

Hats: Bettina brought in the new hats (baseball style, forest green with yellow Acton Conservation Land logo) and distributed them to those who were present; she will bring them to subsequent meetings as well.

New conservation restriction off Carlisle Road: Jim reported on a newly approved land deal in which a Carlisle landowner whose land extends into Acton along Carlisle Road has agreed to place a conservation restriction on around 15 acres in Acton (and more in Carlisle). A trail will be cut on the Acton acreage that will more or less parallel the Acton-Carlisle line from Carlisle Road to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail on the east side of Route 27. This will then potentially allow the portion of the Bay Circuit Trail that currently goes along Route 27 from the Carlisle line to Wheeler Lane to be rerouted, so that it instead goes from the Rail Trail to this new trail to Carlisle Road to the Robbins Mill land to the Scout Land and finally to the Nashoba Brook trail.

CPC proposal for purchase of land adjacent to Great Hill: A proposal to purchase a 5.51-acre parcel adjacent to Great Hill with CPA funds will be voted on at the Special Town Meeting on Thursday, October 2. At issue is a property behind School Street (one of two properties that the red trail out of the playing field currently crosses); a house on it would be sold after it gets historic preservation designation, with the money from the sale going back into the open-space part of the CPA fund. The property's owners have agreed to accept the Town's price, even though they have a higher offer from a developer. Please try to attend Town Meeting, at least for this vote.

Junior high work day on Sept. 23: There will be four student teams helping out this year: Joan and Bob will both have teams at Nagog Hill and Ann will have one group at Grassy Pond, all of which will be putting down wood chips. The fourth team will do invasives removal with Jim at Guggins.

Meadow mowing: Jim has checked with Tom and been told that meadow mowing by Town employees is scheduled to start next Monday at Jenks; the Nagog Hill meadow behind the Youngs and Grassy Pond meadow are also on Tom's list. A question was then raised about the status of mowing of the meadow behind Hybrid Farm, which is the McConnors' responsibility, and Bob stated that there is a wooden fence in the rear part of that meadow that he thinks should be removed. Jim said he will check in with the McConnors.

Parcel updates: *Arboretum:* Bettina is looking into possible grant funding under the topic of wetland education to get the bog boardwalk rebuilt at some point in the future. Also, a large

tepee structure was erected this summer. After some discussion it was agreed that Jim, Bob, and Bettina will dismantle it.

Canoe launch: Bob said that he mowed here recently but that the Japanese knotweed still needs to be cut back. It was also stated that Andrew Ossman still hasn't submitted his plans for steps to the launch area (a project that Bob thinks may be difficult for an Eagle Scout); Bettina said she will contact him. Last, there was discussion about what should be done about the tarp that was put down several years ago to try to kill off a portion of the Japanese knotweed. Both Bob and Jim suggested that we move the tarp to another location to find out whether the attempt was successful, but some others simply doubted that the knotweed was dead yet or that the tarp could be pulled up cleanly (without tearing it apart after its long exposure to the elements). Another suggestion was that we leave this tarp where it is (and perhaps cover it with wood chips) and get a second tarp to cover a new area. There was no clear consensus, but Jim suggested that a small group meet there sometime in October and make a decision about what to do.

Grassy Pond: Bob hasn't done any work this season on the boardwalk, but he plans to finish it up this fall when the weather is cooler and the water has (hopefully) subsided a bit.

Guggins: Jim reported that Eagle Scout Ryan Crumlish has installed his boardwalk segments on the blue trail near the Idylwilde fields. Also, Jim worked at Guggins yesterday with a crew from EMS (three employees and one customer) on trail widening and putting down more wood chips.

Heath Hen Meadow: Bob (with some help from Jim and Dave) has cleared the stone wall that separates the two meadows. He has also mowed the lower meadow twice this summer.

Nagog Hill: Bob (with some help from Jim, Joan, and Allen Warner) has done a lot of work in the meadow, pulling down and cutting back bittersweet and multiflora rose and in the process opening up the stone walls

Conservation land rules and regulations: Jim, Joan, and Bettina agreed to meet on October 9 to review the three versions of conservation land rules and regulations and work on a single version for Conservation Commission approval.

LSCom goals document: Jim stated that he has been thinking about drafting a document that would help to define and clarify the committee's overarching goals and priorities. He currently has three main points. The first two concern biological/ecological benefits that are provided by conservation lands (and that can be optimized by proper management), while the third concerns the benefits of human experiences provided by conservation lands:

- biodiversity, which can be encouraged and enhanced by interventions such as keeping meadows open and removing invasives;
- carbon sequestration, which can be optimized by encouraging stands of larger, older trees (which have been shown to capture and hold more carbon, in their deep root zones, than do smaller, younger trees);
- experiences of nature, which some have suggested lead to a lifelong ethic of environmental stewardship, especially if these experiences start early in life.

One addition to this list was suggested:

- protection of natural resources, including water.

Joan also suggested adding wording that ties our goals and priorities in with the Town's goals and priorities as stated in the Master Plan.

Morrison Farm status: In response to Dave's request for an update on the situation at Morrison Farm, it was noted that all of the community garden plots were taken almost immediately after the sign-up period began. Jim also stated that the Board of Selectmen voted to formally accept the Morrison Farm subcommittee's recommendation report, although Peggy noted that there was no discussion at that time of the problematic issue of playing field use vs. community farm use. More generally, in reference to comments about local agriculture and the weekly farmers' market in Maynard, Jim reported that there is a

group working on establishing a weekly farmers' market next summer in West Acton (which they hope to schedule on Sundays in order not to interfere with the Saturday schedule in Maynard).

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 15, at 4:00 PM.