

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting
May 17, 2022
Via teleconference - 7:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

Present: Tom Brownrigg, Debby Geltner, Warren Lyman, Rhonda Michaud, and Nick Ognibene. Judy Asarkof and Dwight DeMay were absent. Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard was present.

This meeting was conducted by Zoom teleconference due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with all participants at home. The meeting was opened at 7:05 PM by Chair Lyman. Ognibene was ill with Covid-19 and left the meeting when Michaud joined the meeting at approximately 7:15 PM.

The April 19, 2022, minutes were approved as amended.

New Business

1. Memorial bench at the Carlisle Cranberry Bog - inquiry & discussion

A Chelmsford resident has requested permission to install a memorial bench at the Carlisle Bog memory of a father who enjoyed walking there. This issue was discussed at the May 12 ConsCom meeting, and members were supportive except that they wanted to know the proposed location. Lyman asked LSC members how they viewed the proposal.

Geltner was concerned that permitting another bench (there are now five benches) could start a trend and result in too many benches. If another bench were permitted, she suggested locating it along Curve St. overlooking the bog. Ognibene thought another bench could be useful to the public and was sympathetic to the family members' wishes. However, he thought the number of benches should be limited. Brownrigg agreed with Ognibene. Lyman thought that there were enough benches and suggested that the family consider an alternative to a bench, such as planting a tree or providing a new kiosk. Willard agreed with Lyman that five benches are enough and was concerned about additional benches impacting mowing and other maintenance activities. She said that the Trails Committee has named two new trails installed by the public at the Chelmsford Bog, and the bench might be located along one of these trails. Michaud was in favor of the bench since it could be useful, and the family would pay for it. Since there was no consensus regarding the bench, Lyman suggested that he and Geltner summarize LSC's discussion and submit this to ConsCom prior to their meeting on May 26.

2. Notes from 5/9/22 Cranberry Bog Working Group (CBWG) meeting

Lyman sent LSC members his notes prior to the meeting. There was no LSC discussion except for a proposal by abutters John Ballantine and Chris Spinney to clear a strip of water lilies to make a "kayak trail" in the west reservoir. Kayaks or canoes would be transported from Fiske

St. to the reservoir via a trail easement on Ballentine property; the trail has not been constructed. Members of the CBWG were agreeable to this proposal, but it has not been discussed by ConsCom. Ballentine and Spinney have requested time for discussion with the Trails Committee.

Geltner was not in favor of the proposed kayak trail since kayaks could disturb wildlife. Regarding removal of water lilies, Willard said that this project would require filing a Notice of Intent (NOI), and that water lilies will grow back if they are simply cut below the water level. According to Michaud, hand-pulling water lilies is very difficult. Willard obtained an NOI from the Wrentham ConsCom, in which the applicants proposed chemical treatment for water lilies. After discussion, Lyman said that LSC will postpone further discussion unless the proposal comes to ConsCom for review.

3. Towle Field Mowing Protocol

At the May 12 ConsCom meeting, ConsCom members voted unanimously to approve the new mowing protocol. Willard was surprised at the vote and expressed several concerns. She expected that ConsCom members would visit Towle Field this spring prior to a change in mowing protocol. Willard said that LSC members will need to monitor the field and flag areas for treatment of poison ivy and buckthorn prior to arrival of John Bakewell this spring. She also needs to advertise the new mowing protocol and is concerned that it covers three years; the previous mowing agreement covered a single fiscal year. Lyman offered to help Willard with drafting a request for proposals for the new protocol.

Bakewell is expected to treat Towle Field and the Cranberry Bog with herbicides a few times before the end of June. Willard has purchased 200 flags from Agway, and Brownrigg has 100 flags purchased by Bakewell last year. Geltner, Michaud, and Brownrigg volunteered to flag invasives at Towle Field.

4. Habitat/Pollinator Project

Lyman sent members a list of projects in other towns and asked them to submit a report if they visited these properties.

5. Purchase of new signs

Lyman said that LSC obtained \$5000 from an ARPA grant for purchase of signs. He and Geltner discussed the specifications with Express Signs of Chelmsford. Because of some additional purchases of hardware and handicap access signs, the final amount was \$5380, which has been approved by the Town.

6. Items for Towle kiosk

Michaud has obtained a key from Willard and will clean out the kiosk before installing new signs later this spring. The signs will include one with a QR code (?) regarding handicap access. Geltner suggested including a sign that describes the new mowing protocol, and members thought that this was a good idea.

Other Business

1. Cranberry Bog

Geltner said that the four “Burma-Shave” style signs regarding dog waste should be installed soon. Also, she noticed that fishermen have been leaving fishing lines and hooks along the dams, and this is hazardous to dogs and wildlife. Lyman said that he tried to clean a sign with plexiglass cover, but the dirt is difficult to remove. Brownrigg suggested trying a plastic dish pad with liquid detergent.

2. Policies regarding conservation land plants

Lyman asked members to think about policies relating to native plants on conservation lands, a topic raised by Asarkof in the past. Examples are collecting mushrooms, picking fruit, and removing plants. Discussion is planned at the next meeting.

3. Benfield cart path

The path has a layer of coarse stone which is not comfortable for walking. Lyman suggested adding a layer of finely crushed stone along an edge for easier walking. Willard said that some of the coarse stone has been removed, and that more could be removed. No course of action was discussed.

4. Towle Field stone wall

Lyman asked if there were members with strong backs who might put fallen rocks back on the stone wall bordering Westford St. There were no volunteers.

Next Meetings:

June 14, 2022 @ 7 PM

July 12, 2022 @ 7 PM

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Submitted by Tom Brownrigg

Minutes approved: 6/14/22