

HARVARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION - Land Stewardship Subcommittee
DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

January 16, 2024

Virtual Meeting called to order @ 7:27 pm

Present: Wendy Sisson, Brian McClain, Pam Durrant, Jim Gorss, Petri Flint

1. Minutes of the LSS meeting on 11/28/23 approved unanimously.
2. Land and trail updates:
 - The private property that the Great Elms access trail from Stow Rd. crosses over now has a new owner. Liz Allard has been asked to contact the new owner about the easement and to let them know that LSS volunteers will be refreshing the trail this winter. Ben Myers has expressed an interest in helping with blazing generally and Wendy will work with him on this section of trail, which he uses, as an intro. There had been a large trunk down over this trail for years. They will enter it into the TrailCare app if needed.
 - Jim Gorss notes that portions of the Prospect Hill trail need to be re-blazed.
 - Brian reports that the Boy Scouts boardwalk on the BHWS trail needs repair and will take that on.
 - *Postscript – 1/18 Concom approved Eagle Scout installation and cost of materials for two new boardwalk/bridges on the western blue trail of Prospect Hill supervised by John Lee.*
3. Monitoring trails, trail log, etc., Jim Gorss
 - Jim Adelson was in charge of Old Mill and Prospect Hill - so these trails will need to be reassigned.
 - The trail log will continue to be used since it is a record of stewardship activity on town trails - unlike the TrailCare App.
 - Trail monitoring vs trail maintenance was discussed. Trail stewards are responsible for monitoring trail conditions – walking periodically, reporting downed trees to TrailCare, noting encroachments, water impediments, etc. The question is who will do the pruning, blazing, boardwalk repair, etc., as needed and it was suggested that stewards can bring these needs to LSS and when possible coordinate maintenance projects they do not do themselves.
 - Wendy would like more of the small map kiosks at trailheads. Maybe we can document the kiosk design and ask scouts if they'd like to make more.
4. Deer program update:
 - Deer hunting season ended on 12/30/23.

- o Wendy reports that 10 deer were taken this year from Daman-Stephenson (3), Barrett, Tripp (2), Coke, Willard/Poitras, Hermann Orchard and Blomfelt.
- o Land Stewards should remove any orange hunting signs that may still be posted at trailheads.

5. Snowmobile season

Snowmobiling on designated trails was opened after the 1/7 snowstorm and closed 2 days later with rain and temps in the 50s. Stewards should report any damage to trails or violations like going off trail they witness during the winter. Off trail snowmobiling has been tolerated on Hermann Orchard if not damaging to the ground.

6. Memorial markers on conservation land

Wendy will attend the Conservation Commission meeting on January 18 to represent the land stewards for the draft policy of no new memorials on town conservation land. *Postscript: policy adopted 1/18.*

7. NRWA regional Wild & Scenic stewardship meeting

Will focus on issues that connect neighboring towns like trails, invasives, deer management, etc. Wendy will attend along with Liz Allard and is interested in the possibility of neighboring DPWs training together in best practices to reduce the spread of invasives and maybe in dealing with new challenges from climate change

8. Spring walk & Hermann Orchard

In preparation for the walk, Wendy will work on restoring the old trail close to Bowers Brook.

9. Barbed wire

Brian would like old abandoned barbed wire to be removed from conservation land where it could injure animals and people. Wendy argued that this evidence of the land's agricultural past is all over and need not be removed when not near a trail or recreation area. Brian will coordinate some removal with HCT which has offered to assist with teams of Bromfield students fulfilling community service hours, avoiding working in the spring when new plants and reproducing animals are susceptible to disturbance.

Next LSS meeting will be Tuesday, February 27, 2024 @ 7:15pm

Adjourned at 8:35pm

Brian McClain