

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting
August 15, 2023
7:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Present: Judy Asarkof, Adam Chojnacki (remote), Dwight DeMay, Julie Durrell, Deborah Geltner, Warren Lyman, Rhonda Michaud, and Shane Usher. Claudia Talland was absent. Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard was present.

The hybrid remote meeting was held at Town Hall. Co-Chair Michaud called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

The July 18, 2023 minutes were approved as amended.

Durrell took the Minutes in Talland's absence.

1. LSC Learning Session Ideas:

DeMay suggested a Native Plant Trust person could come speak with us. Lyman would like to learn more about how other towns manage fields other than those in agriculture. Willard supported DeMay's idea. She said that ConsCom asks residents who are doing restoration to use native plants and she is hoping that Native Plant Trust will encourage local nurseries to offer more native plants. Asarkof notices that nursery staff are often unclear about what is actually native. Geltner introduced the work *Nativar* to the group. A nativar is a cultivar derived from native plants. She recommends the *Illinois Wildflowers* website for accurate botanical information. Usher mentioned that he is interested in using some of the slate from the Greenough Barn to re-roof Town Conservation land kiosks. Durrell is interested in learning more about how beaver deceivers work, the actual mechanics of them. Willard said that a beaver deceiver will be installed at Greenough Pond, maybe next week, if anyone wishes to observe. Michaud would like to learn more about general plant identification, how to remove invasive plants properly by hand, how to certify vernal pools with NHESP, how to use MassGIS and INaturalist, how to find and write grants, and learning more about biological diversity. Chojnacki would like to learn how to know if land is in generally good health. Asarkof will write up a list of topics/

2. Status of LSC Appointments:

Dwight DeMay and Debbie Geltner have both been sworn in at Town in for three year terms.

3. Stewardship Program:

LSC is currently working on new poster signage for the Towle Field and Foss Farm kiosks. LSC estimates approximately \$800 cost for posters and roofing for the two kiosks. Asarkof will get quotes for posters soon to get a better cost estimate.

The big ticket item is edge maintenance at Fisk Meadow. Large equipment is needed to cut down the trees that are creeping into the meadow. For edge maintenance, the cost estimate from Lyman is approximately \$1.00 a foot. Willard said that ConsCom will decide whether or not to do this project. She further said that LSC should submit funding requests estimates to ConsCom when LSC has a more accurate idea of the costs.

4. LSC/ESC Possible Joint Coordination to bring Native Plants to Town Hall:

This is a project led by the Environmental Sustainability Committee. The goal is to add native plantings around the front area of Town Hall where no plants currently exist. The idea is for LSC to support the project and possibly assist with plantings of native plants at Town Hall next spring. LSC supports working with ESC on this project. Asarkof spoke with a local nursery about supplying native plants. It is hoped that plants will be chosen in such a way as to have plants blooming throughout the entire growing season. No currently growing plants will be removed. Geltner suggested a site evaluation and soil testing. Maintenance of the plantings will be overseen by the ESC.

5. CBWG:

Michaud will take notes during the CBWG's August 21st meeting.

6. Cranberry Bog:

A. Status of NOI for bog Restoration

Willard said the NOI notice was published in the Mosquito this week, it has been registered and the hearing will open on 8/31. Lyman asked for clarification of the timeline so that LSC can help and submit comments focused on the longer term management of the Bog. For example, we need a careful study of the ditches, whether to block them or allow water flow. Also, we may want mowing to be more selective going forward to better foster an environmental habitat. Willard is very concerned that what happened to the Wilmington Bog could happen to the Carlisle Cranberry Bog whereby trees were allowed to grow and the meadow became wooded. Willard also noted that at the end of the NOI one can find the Operations and Maintenance Plan tables where there is some flexibility. An LSC subgroup will make a list of comments and suggestions for ConsCom regarding the NOI before the closing of the hearing. All LSC members will send comments to Michaud prior to 8/31.

B. Bog House Repairs

Lyman and Usher covered exposed live wires with caps and covers. Lyman states that the fire extinguishers have been checked and 1 in the attic needs recharging. The outside staircase leading up to the 2nd floor apartments needs attention and is wobbly with at least 2 broken treads and old wood connections needing fixing. He wonders who will be responsible for Bog House maintenance in the future since it has been getting little attention. Lyman will make a current list of maintenance needs.

7. Metal Detecting on Town Conservation Lands:

Discussion postponed to September meeting.

8. West Street Proposed Conservation Cluster:

Michaud asked Willard if there is anything LSC should be aware of now. Willard said that ConsCom just received notice of this project, but the land will likely go to CCF.

9. Foss Farm Kiosk Signs:

Asarkof reached out to an Acton LSC member and got information for a printer they use. Durrell is working on the poster design. Asarkof and Durrell will present a draft to LSC when it is more complete.

10. Towle Field:

Willard said that an invasives treatment person has been hired to treat poison ivy. Michaud flagged a lot of poison ivy in the West Field. Asarkof said that it is important to remove the flags before mowing commences in the fall. We are just trying to manage the poison ivy and realize it will never be completely gone. Asarkof expressed concern about the very large section of the field containing invasive Canadian Thistle.

11. Discussion – Foraging on Town Conservation Lands Revisited:

There is a growing trend in foraging workshops and foraging. LSC recommends discouraging foraging on Town lands. Lyman said we need to carefully define foraging. Geltner agrees it should not be allowed on Town conservation lands. Discussion to carry over to September LSC meeting.

12. September Meeting:

Asarkof will give LSC a presentation on how to use INaturalist. It will be a good opportunity to test making recordings of ongoing learning sessions via Zoom.

Next Meetings:

September 12, 2023 @ 7 PM (In-person at Town Hall)

October 10, 2023 (tentative date)

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Submitted by Julie Durrell.

Minutes approved: 9/12/2023.