

# HARVARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION - Land Stewardship Subcommittee

## MINUTES OF MEETING

**December 6, 2016**

**Members Present:** Wendy Sisson, Jim Adelson, Phil Knoettner, Jim Burns, John Lee, Sydney Blackwell, Bill Blackwell

**Members Not Present:** Pam Durrant, Jo Ward, Bob Benson, Brian McClain

Wendy Sisson called the meeting to order at 7:20 P.M. at the Congregational Church

With a number of newcomers, all attendees introduced themselves

Minutes from the previous meeting (10/18/16), as prepared by Jim Adelson, were approved

### Recent Activity Reports

- Hermann Orchard clearing work scheduled to resume last week was delayed by wet weather
- Fall Walk, Nov 13th on Prospect Hill/Dean's Hill was very popular, with 46 attendees, 50% more than the largest previous walk. Good weather and additional "neighborhoods" on Nextdoor Harvard may have contributed to high attendance.
- Elizabeth Krone's talk 9/29 on her butterfly research was well received by ~ 20 attendees
- Weed whacker – Phil will check on what's needed for battery charges over the winter

### Spring Walk

- Possible vernal pool emphasis
- Wendy mentioned possibly inviting Matthew Varrell to talk on the walk – he's a Harvard resident and Director of Conservation for the town of Needham with particular interest and expertise in New England wetland habitats and their amphibians and reptiles.

### Property/Trail Reports

- Clapp-Scorgie
  - o Phil (with help of Ned Leeming) completed a double boardwalk suitable for snowmobiles over an area where water pools on the trail and drainage work there in the muddy Clapp cove area did reasonably well with the 2" of rain we received recently
  - o National Grid will work on removal of an old power line (not live) near Hoskings Point
- Old Mill
  - o Concom received a letter from the Department of the Interior describing routine site visit (Fed. Land from Devens gifted to town) and noted some fallen trees on trails
  - o Wendy surveyed and saw a number of dead white ash down
  - o We'll see what the snowmobile club clears, and then organize to remove what remains
  - o Once that's been done, we'll write a response letter to DOI
- Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary
  - o Wendy & friend pruned & cleared old storm damage around the entry to the old orchard
  - o There's one particularly large, dead white pine leaning over the trail intersection in woods to west of old orchard that we're watching to see if it presents a hazard

- Holy Hill
  - o There has been severe erosion on a steep section formerly used by snowmobiles and the new parallel trail is at high risk of eroding
  - o Alternate routes were considered, but they had their own problems, so we stuck with the current trail location
  - o Jim Burns installed temporary water bar with silt sock at top of eroded trail and it will be monitored. He will also install picket fencing to keep any traffic off that section.

For the benefit of newcomers, we reviewed the requirement to complete the liability release form for chain saw work, as well as the requirement that such efforts be conducted by a minimum of two people for safety reasons

Jim Burns agreed to take on Phil's lead trail crew role, fielding reports of downed trees on trails and mobilizing chainsaw crew. Phil will be away Jan – March. Come April, Phil will continue to participate, share his expertise in bridge/boardwalk and wooden sign construction, etc., but will enjoy retirement from his many years of leadership maintaining Harvard's trails. Trail tools and signage supplies will be transferred from Phil's shed to Jim B's barn.

Shaker Spring House trail needs significant work – ask DPW for help removing plow debris berm

#### Trail Monitoring responsibilities

- Sydney and Bill Blackwell to become the trail monitors for Powell-Reed-Abbot and for Hoch
- Karl Kreeb to become the trail monitor for Sprague
- John Lee to become the trail monitor for Small Nature Trail (he also has ideas for a potential trail extension here) and for Clapp-Scorgie
- Wendy to send out an updated trail monitor responsibility list

Jim Burns requested a brief invasives guide – Wendy will supply and offer field training in Spring

#### Trail Condition Reporting

- Wendy described challenges with the current online reporting system, including her tendency not to record her observations or work, and also difficulty in easily incorporating photos
- From the discussion, we decided to continue to use the online Trail Status log (a Google Sheet)
- Bill Blackwell will look at the log to see if he can identify a better approach for photo handling

#### Snowmobile Trail Activity

- Jim Burns will get a copy of this year's map; Sydney will scan it and distribute
- Sydney will show Jim Burns some spots where it would be desirable not to have rocks moved in the course of snowmobile trail use or widening
- We'll need to monitor and report if there are trail spots that have problems; any problems can be reported to Liz Allard (M-Th 8-4:30) or Jim B. or Wendy on Fri/weekends.

Wendy will look at prospective dates for the next meeting – it may be early February  
Addendum: Next mtg confirmed Tues, Feb 7<sup>th</sup> upstairs @ Town Hall's Vol mtg room

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM