

**TOWN OF ACTON
LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

MISSION STATEMENT

Pursuant to Section 4-1(b) of the Town of Acton Charter, the Acton Board of Selectmen (“Selectmen”) creates the Acton Land Stewardship Committee (“Committee”), an advisory committee to the Selectmen, the Conservation Commission (“Commission”), and the Conservation Director of the Town of Acton, to define and implement standards of care for the public conservation lands owned by the Town and the geographic sites of conservation restrictions, trail easements and similar interests held by the Town in other lands (together, the “Stewardship Lands”).

MISSION

The Committee acts for the collective and sustainable benefit of humans, wildlife, and vegetation to help preserve and enhance the woodlands, meadows and wetlands of the Stewardship Lands.

DUTIES

The Committee:

- Constructs and maintains trails and structures on the Stewardship Lands;
- Monitors conditions on the Stewardship Lands;
- Reports to the appropriate Town official or board evidence of material non-compliance with the Town’s rules, regulations or contractual arrangements that adversely affect Stewardship Lands;
- Increases public awareness of and appreciation for the Stewardship Lands, the benefits of land conservation and the protection of natural habitats and resources;
- Recruits Volunteers (defined below) to assist with the foregoing; and
- Publishes and implements standards of care for the Stewardship Lands.

Subject to available resources, the Committee may also assist the Selectmen, the Conservation Director, other Town staff members designated by the Town Manager, and outside individuals or groups with projects that are consistent with the Committee’s mission.

The Committee may draft and recommend proposed policies for Commission and/or Selectman approval.

The Committee conducts its duties in a manner consistent with the Town’s Charter, Bylaws and Board/Committee Handbook (“Handbook”).

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee consists of nine *full* members (voting) and up to fifteen *associate* members (non-voting, *except as provided below*), each appointed by the Selectmen:

- (a) In general:
 - (i) in the case of *full* members, to staggered three-year terms beginning at the start of the Town’s fiscal year; and
 - (ii) in the case of *associate* members, to one-year terms beginning at the start of the Town’s

fiscal year; or

- (b) In the case of a vacancy being filled due to resignation or otherwise, to fill the remaining term of the former *full* or *associate* member.

The voting members shall elect one member to serve as Chair, one member to serve as Vice-Chair, and one member to serve as Secretary/Clerk at the following times: (a) annually, at the beginning of the Town's fiscal year, or at another interval that the voting members agree is reasonable; or (b) when any such position becomes vacant. The responsibilities of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary/Clerk are described in greater detail in the Town's Handbook.

All Committee members (both *full* and *associate*) must sign the certificate provided by the Town Clerk that acknowledges receipt of materials concerning the Open Meeting Law ("OML"). This certificate must be signed within two weeks of a member's appointment or the taking of the oath of office, whichever occurs later. Once sworn in, all such members are "special municipal employees" for purposes of the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 268A), are "municipal employees" and "municipal officers" indemnified by the Town to the extent allowed under the Massachusetts Tort Claims Act (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 258), and are covered by the Town's general liability/excess medical payments insurance policy.

MEETINGS

The Committee meets at such reasonable intervals, times and locations as the Chair may specify and the voting members may agree. *Full* members are expected to attend all Committee meetings; attendance by *associate* members is encouraged but not mandatory. The Committee must provide proper public notice of its meetings, and observe the other requirements of the OML, including making available to the public agendas and minutes of its meetings in compliance with that law.

The work of the Committee at public meetings includes such matters as establishing priorities for trail projects; developing public education programs and lectures; formulating recommendations for new or amended policies and practices regarding public use, maintenance and other matters relating to the Stewardship Lands; and otherwise deliberating on matters within the scope of the Committee's mission and duties.

QUORUM

A majority of voting members of the Committee constitutes a quorum of the Committee. A quorum must be present at each meeting, and a decision of the Committee requires the supporting vote of a majority of the voting members present. At the request of any voting member, the Committee takes the vote on a given issue by polling the participating voting members and recording the individual votes in the minutes; if the vote is unanimous, only that fact need be recorded.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER VOTING

If the absence, inability to act, or conflict of interest on the part of one or more *full* members, or one or more vacancies on the Committee would prevent it from having a quorum for a meeting in general or for a particular vote, the Chair may designate a sufficient number of *associate* members to participate as voting members for the limited purpose of establishing a quorum for the meeting or vote in question.

TRAIL WORK, OTHER ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF MEETINGS

Committee members regularly perform their duties on Stewardship Lands and at public education programs and other non-meeting events. During such events, Committee members may discuss the practical details of performing those duties without having to adhere to OML requirements. If the number of members (*full or associate*) attending such events constitute a quorum, the members may not discuss any matters that are or may be coming in front of the Committee, or any matters that are within the Committee's jurisdiction as described in the Meetings Section above, without proper notice and compliance with the OML.

VOLUNTEERS

Under the guidance of the Conservation Director, the Committee may recruit, assign and support members of the general public who are not Committee members ("Volunteers") to assist with maintenance of Stewardship Lands and participate in other activities that further the Committee's mission. The Volunteers may work under the supervision of Committee members and are subject to any policies and guidelines, including safety guidelines, that the Town, the Committee, the Commission or the Conservation Director may establish and provide to Volunteers. Such Volunteers participate as and are recognized by the Town to be voluntary participants and not employees of the Town. The Committee and the Conservation Director maintain a list of Volunteers' names and contact information

REPORTING

The Committee acts with the guidance of and in consultation with the Conservation Director or other Town staff member whom the Town Manager may designate (either, the "Town Designee"), and is responsible for communicating regularly with the Town Designee about planned and completed Committee activities, typically through minutes, agendas, and other supplementary communications. The Town Designee is responsible for alerting the Committee to the need for Town reporting or approvals required in connection with Committee activities, including, for example, Commission filings, Selectmen or Commission votes, Town Manager approvals or purchase orders.

The Committee shall provide an annual report of its activities in the preceding year to the Commission and the Selectmen by March 1. Each annual report should include a description of the principal activities of the Committee and Volunteers during the previous year.

The Committee shall review and assess the adequacy of this Mission Statement no less frequently than biennially and submit for the Selectmen's approval any recommended changes.

APPROVAL OF THE SELECTMEN

This Mission Statement of the Acton Land Stewardship Committee was adopted by said Committee on **November 17, 2015**, and was approved by the Acton Board of Selectmen this _____ day of _____, 2015.

Clerk, Acton Board of Selectmen