

# FoAGM Steering Committee Minutes- DRAFT

## December 5, 2022

DRAFT 12/18/22

**Present:** Laurel Carpenter, Ellen Finnie, Gordon Jones, Michael Ratner, Greg Shenstone, Mike Tabaczynski, David White. **Regrets:** Jeanette Voss.

### 1. New and Ongoing Steering Committee members approved:

- a. Ongoing: Michael Ratner, Mike Tabaczynski, David White; Gordon Jones has communicated that he will step down from an active role but will continue to manage the meadow mowing. We thank him for his work at AGM.
- b. New: Ellen Finnie, Greg Shenstone. Laurel Carpenter, a former member, will provide support for Greg.

### Review of what has been happening in the last year

2. **Upland Meadow mowing** was coordinated with Dennis Busa; it was the first mowing since 2019 given the pandemic and construction. Access for the mowing machine was resolved via the fire department, and ultimately Dennis used the crushed stone walkway/access road to enter. The mowing is all set now until next fall.
3. **Boardwalk maintenance** was carried out by Arlington Boy Scouts over the summer, a process that has become routine for the Scouts.
  - a. It was noted that work beyond replacing boards will be needed on the boardwalk near the bike path in a year or so, given some rotting posts, and some parts that are no longer level. It was clarified that the boardwalk near the bike path was built on top of many feet of mud with wooden support posts, and that is why its aging varies from the other boardwalk, which was built on an old fire road, a more solid surface.
  - b. Nail heads emerging above the boards are a potential tripping hazard, and it was suggested that they be tapped back down with a hammer during the warm weather. This is seen as preferable to using screws, which are hard to remove.
  - c. Lorelle Yee provided the staging area for this work again this year, but she will not be able to do this in the future. Thus, **we will need to find someone else to coordinate and stage these efforts**. We thank Lorelle and her husband for all they have done.
4. **Invasive plant control efforts have continued, including the following:**
  - a. **Michael Ratner** with two **students from the Arlington High School** focused on removing **Oriental bittersweet** plan to work on both sides of the Across Lexington C Route, near where it departs from the bike path near the Waldorf School. We are most probably done working in the meadows this winter and we will take this up again in spring.
  - b. Some residents living near the bikeway have been removing **bittersweet** along the bikeway shoulder, and another person has been cutting **knotweed** near Sickle Brook.
  - c. **Greg Shenstone** has focused on removing invasives along the frontage of the bike trail near the broad view of the Meadows near Sickle Brook. He has had a few individual helpers, and he collaborated with **Holly Samuels** on planting about 150 native seedlings in a sunny spot where knotweed and bittersweet were pretty well removed. The seedlings have now been labeled.
  - d. **Greg** has spoken with **Lexington Living Landscapes** representative Charlie Wyman. The group's focus is on shifting private landscapes to natives. They removed a knotweed patch and planted natives, and included a path, but the area (which is along the bike path) is not marked.

- e. **Holly Samuels was working in early December on the Brandon street area**, with scouts and other volunteers with a dumpster for disposal. The group brought in weed wrenches to uproot Buckthorn and Honey Locust. They are mulching cleared areas with cardboard. It was clarified that Holly's plan has been approved by the Lexington Conservation Commission (as well as discussed with members of the Arlington Conservation Commission), and due consideration has been given to all of its elements.
- f. Two ideas were suggested, but no actions determined:
  - i. The idea of a brochure about the problem with invasives, asking for help with Bittersweet, was floated.
  - ii. Further prevention of Bittersweet growth in the future, away from the trails, was mentioned, and it was suggested that the anti-invasives group in Lexington could be consulted about this.

## Updates on ongoing and new activities

### 5. Updated map & brochure needed

- a. A new perimeter trail (see below) and the new gravel access trail from Emerson Gardens road are not on the map.
  - i. Action step: Mike will be able to update the map sometime this winter to include these.

### 6. Lexington Greenways Corridor new route proposed

- a. The Lexington Greenways Corridor Committee (GCC) creates new trails each year. They propose a route that will enter AGM, include part of routes C and D, and a path parallel to the Emerson Gardens condo complex on AGM land. It will be a 5.7 mile loop path, much of it on streets, with a crossing at Maple street; it will also cross a relatively untouched area of AGM. This project will be led by the Lexington GCC, but FoAGM would be involved. The trail is likely to be built next year. It will be a lettered path (likely Q) (currently #19) The project will likely need a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) approval but not a wetlands permit from the Lexington Conservation Commission. It will be located on dry upland under trees, so there won't be a weeding or maintenance problem.
  - i. It was noted that there is AGM land along Maple Street that could be used for parking, but it is not a very viable location. We already have 7 new public parking spaces at the new development. In addition there is public parking along Emerson Gardens Road. Plus street parking near other entrances.
- b. The GCC wants a letter supporting this from FoAGM. David notes they will need permission from the Town of Arlington.
- c. Action step: We agreed to move forward; Mike will draft a letter to pass by the committee, and check with David on the process for permission from the Town of Arlington.

### 7. New website [www.foagm.org](http://www.foagm.org) is live

- a. David built the original website about 20 years ago using the technology of the day. We needed to move to new technology, including support for mobile/smart phones. Elisabeth and Alan Carr-Jones in Arlington are offering technical support to transition the website to a WordPress platform. Ellen Finnie has recently been involved in working on the website content with David.
- b. The new website is live at the same URL as for the old site ([www.foagm.org](http://www.foagm.org)). There are refinements to be made; it is a work in progress.
- c. The focus taken in the design was on how we think people would approach the site, and how we can inform them, and get them involved.
- d. The site includes a blog – with new stories about the native plantings work by Greg and Holly.
- e. The team working on the website welcomes feedback and suggests everyone take a look and provide comments.

**8. Legal protection for AGM is being discussed**

- a. Discussions about how to provide more legal protection of AGM are underway in Arlington among Town officials. There are existing protections for AGM due to zoning and the original purpose as part of a water supply system. The current effort is aimed at clarifying protection. The expected change will probably officially make it conservation land managed by the Conservation Commission.

**9. AGM is designated as a Priority Habitat by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program**

- a. AGM's designation as a Priority Habitat and Natural Heritage location by the state means we likely will need to get permission from the state for any projects. See the state website (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/regulatory-maps-priority-estimated-habitats>) All of AGM is designated as priority habitat "PH 1427" for both rare wildlife and rare plant species.

**10. New trail may need work in the future**

- a. It was noted that the new trail (about 2 years old), which is near houses along Circle Road and Fottler Road, needs some work. It was not built by FoAGM but likely by neighbors. The suggestion is to wait another year and then propose that some boardwalks be built, as the area can be wet. The trail also needs to be labeled. An improvement project would include trying to reduce the amount of path along the street. A bridge would be ideal but unlikely. It was clarified that the Lexington ACROSS group would not be interested in supporting trail work in this area as this part of the Town already has a number of trails.

**11. Annual report for 2022 underway**

- a. All committees in Arlington have to do a report in December, reporting on their activities. The Annual Report tells the town of Arlington and donors what we have been doing; it goes to the Arlington Select Board, which is the group that approved the AGM boardwalks and is the body that are the official managers of AGM. A copy also goes to the Conservation Commission who are the informal overseers.
- b. David has started drafting the report and will pass an outline by the group for input; individuals can offer to add content for certain topics. Mike suggests a condensed version of Holly's blog post about native plantings could be used in the report.

**12.** We closed at approximately 8:30 with the next meeting time yet to be determined. We will keep in communication by email.

Notes by Ellen Finnie with some edits by David.