Orford Conservation Commission Minutes, September 20, 2012 – Approved

Present: Bry Beeson, Chair, Harry Pease, Vice Chair, Carl Schmidt, Carl Cassel, Tom Bubolz, Anne Duncan Cooley, Kathy Baker, Craig Putnam, Secretary, Andrea Caruso, visitor

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:05 PM.

The draft minutes from our meeting August 16, 2012, were reviewed and revised after discussion in which it was agreed that there is a need for the Commission to become clear about the laws relative to giving advice about using chemicals in dealing with invasive species. A motion was made by Tom and seconded by Carl Cassel to accept the minutes as revised; the motion was approved with one abstention.

The Chair asked for reports from our various “point people”.

In the absence of Emily Bryant for “Conserved Lands”, Bry brought us up to date on the Orford Conservation Land, for which Bry is undertaking the development of a Management Plan. Bry has consulted with Peter Helm of the Upper Valley Land Trust, with whom he visited the site, for ideas on management of the parcel; out of that consultation arose the idea of creating a canoe camping site on the edge of the river (inaccessible by cars). They observed various invasive species. Andrea contributed her own observations from her (separate) site visit, of Glossy Buckthorn and Honeysuckle along field edges, as well as extensive Honeysuckle growing directly on the riverbank, with one large Russian Olive bush there as well. Andrea noted that removal on the bank itself would be impossible because of inevitable destabilization of the riverbank. Commission members reiterated the notion that this parcel of conserved land could serve as a showcase for the public in various ways, including how to deal with invasive species.

Following through on a suggestion from a previous meeting, Kathy contacted Alan Dyke, who offered to mow the area immediately surrounding the parking area at the Orford Conservation Land at a price of $20 per cut. Carl Cassel made a motion that the OCC agree to engage Alan Dyke to mow the grass around the parking area on an as-needed basis, at a cost of $20 per cut. The money would come out of the Conservation Fund. Harry seconded the motion, and all approved.

Harry made a report on his extensive work on revising the by-laws for the OCC. The initial draft has been sent to Bry, Carl Cassel and Carl Schmidt for comment. Later the draft will be sent to the entire Commission for review. The intent of the revisions, according to Harry, is to simplify and clarify, to make it easier for the public and new members to “know what we do and how we do it”.

In Tom’s report on water testing he noted that the last tests of the season were conducted last week; all sites look good, with Indian Pond looking “very good”. Members commented that when some of the results of the water testing program were put on the list-serv, there was some very positive feed-back from members of the public. This program can contribute to a positive perception of the work (and importance) of the Conservation Commission.

Carl Schmidt reported on Public Outreach efforts. Ginny Marino has been in touch with Upper Valley Land Trust, and with Carl, about her interest in conserving approximately 6 acres of her riverfront land “River Meadows” on the west side of Rt 10 north of the Orford village. Ginny Marino has offered to donate the conservation easement. Most of UVLT staff and legal costs can be covered by the $3600 remaining from a grant UVLT procured from the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund. UVLT has calculated a $5000 need for a Stewardship Fund contribution, which is the fund that ensures monitoring of the property in perpetuity.

Commission members expressed strong support for this conservation effort; a public hearing would be necessary to assess the pros and cons of expending that amount from the Conservation Fund for this purpose. It was agreed to invite a representative from the Upper Valley Land Trust to make a presentation about its proposal at the next Commission meeting on October 18, at which time a public hearing would also be held.

In an up-date on trails, it was reported that new signs and a trailhead kiosk for the Indian Pond Heritage Trail have been built and installed by Paul Goundrey, using gift money from the Beesons.

At 8:30 PM Carl Cassel moved that the meeting be adjourned; Harry seconded the motion, and all approved.

Craig Putnam, Secretary