**Orford Conservation Commission**

**Minutes for 4/18/13 Meeting**

Present: Harry Pease, Emily Bryant, Carl Cassel, Carl Schmidt, Bry Beeson, Craig Putnam, Kathy Baker, Ron Rhodes of Connecticut River Watershed Council and visitor, Ann Green.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Rhodes was there to describe his position on the Council. He stated that his purview regarding water quality issues runs from Pittsburgh south to the Hanover, White River area. He writes grants for funds to assist landowners who have Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) approved projects with cost share payments for projects completed on their land. Grants may originate from the NH Charitable Trust Foundation, the NH Trail Foundation or others. The projects are for riparian bank conservation, invasive species elimination, fencing waters to keep animals from contaminating them, etc. Landowners qualify for such projects with approval from NRCS and his visits. Town owned property does not generally qualify for this type of grant money…just landowners. Bry asked it the Richmond land qualifies for any projects and Ron stated that it would for forest trail stabilization. The Watershed Council is involved in relicensing dams such as Wilder Dam. The Council fundraises for materials necessary for Green Up Days, such as tee shirts, bags etc. and do much advertising for Green Up Day. Mr. Rhodes writes grants for many projects such as a tree planting project in Piermont, funded by the NH Charitable Foundation, as well as for elimination of invasive plants such as purple loosestrife, Japanese knotweed and barberries by pulling, or herbicide applications. He works with towns for conservation easements.

Ann Green was present to answer any questions regarding the bird walk on May 11 and rain date of May 12 on the Orford Conservation Land (former Richmond property). The Conservation Commission will pay $50 as a co-sponsor to Bill Shepard who is leading the bird walk. Emily is making posters to advertise the event.

Carl Schmidt offered two corrections to last month’s minutes. Bry offered a correction to the paragraph regarding funds paid to the town for current use revocation. Bry moved to approve the minutes as corrected, Carl Schmidt seconded the motion, the minutes were approved.

Carl Schmidt reported on the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) annual meeting he attended. He stated that there were two presentations:

1. Jeanie McIntyre reported upon a survey regarding attitudes of the general public regarding land conservation (the last survey was done 5 years ago). Those questioned were chosen at random, and most were middle aged. The results showed an increased value in land conservation, and most important to them were schools, open space, community and rural, quiet, serene environments. They expressed much concern for protection of farms and woodlands. The internet and listserves were very important to all for acquiring information regarding all of the above.
2. The second presentation was the ruling regarding access to conserved land by persons with disabilities. The public needs to be informed whether property is accessible to the disabled.

Carl Schmidt reported that the UVLT is closely monitoring plans the O’Donnells have for the Dennis farm regarding conservation easements. The question was raised as to what is happening with conserving the Marino’s, Fisher’s and Pearlman’s properties. The general feeling was that it is up to the UVLT to pursue the easements and provide the OCC with information regarding their progress.

Harry has questions about Wetlands Minimum Impact notifications, and if the OCC wants to be notified when they are filed. He is going to look into the process and report back.

OCC has not been receiving information when fees are collected for land removed from current use. Carl Cassel will look into the matter and report back.

Harry is interested in developing an OCC action plan for the year ahead. He suggested we consider following up on the recommendations found in the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI). There are also recommendations in the NRI for the Planning Board and the Town. Harry will send the recommendations to Ann Green and the Selectboard. We will spend time at the May meeting considering how to implement some of the recommendations.

We will consider inviting NRCS to a future OCC meeting to discuss their work and how it relates to projects the OCC might consider for the town.

Bry reported upon an invasive bug seminar he attended in Hanover and passed around a handout he received.

Bry moved to adjourn the meeting, Kathy seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

 Respectfully submitted,

 Kathy Baker