**Orford Conservation Commission**

**Minutes for 5/16/13 Meeting**

Present: Harry Pease, Jeff MacQueen, Carl Cassel, Carl Schmidt, Kathy Baker, Bry Beeson, Anne Duncan Cooley, Tom Bubolz and Fran Plaisted

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Carl Schmidt motioned we accept minutes of the April 18 meeting, Carl Cassel seconded, motion carried.

Jeff MacQueen reported on his attendance of Saving Special Places Conference - Granite State Future. He reported they are hoping local commissions would work with neighbor commissions and regional commissions to come up with a vision for the entire state. He attended a seminar on basic land conservation options, reviewed conservations easements, etc. Jeff recommended others go to conference in the future.

There was a follow-up conversation on improving communication with area conservation commissions. Anne recommended a google group for the local conservation groups to exchange ideas and information/goals, etc. Anne agreed to contact the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Ccommission to get their feedback. Harry Pease said he would search for contact information. Once the contact information is received, Fran agreed to send a message to determine interest in a google group.

It was also suggested we work closer with the Orford Planning Board as many other towns do this. No action taken, but all agreed it was a good idea. Harry said he would talk to Ann Green.

Carl S. reported the Upper Valley River Subcommittee of the Connecticul River Joint Commission needs a new representative from Orford as Marc White resigned. Carl S. is one of representatives from Orford. There are ten towns in this segment of the River that are represented on the subcommittee, each with two representatives. Anne agreed to look into this with the Selectboard.

Carl Cassel provided an update on the Current Use Change Fees. Per his report, the fee from 2012 was $9,570 and from 2013, is $4703.10 (to date total). The money has not been transferred into the Conservation Fund because the current treasurer was not aware of the procedure. The town is required to put the money directly into the bank account for the Conservation Commission as it is received by the town.

Carl C. also reviewed the question regarding Tax Liens for when there is a lien on property for property taxes for current use land. If land in current use is sold and taken out of current use, 10% is supposed to go to the Conservation Fund. Carl will communicate with the Selectboard at their next meeting to determine the procedure for collecting the lien.

Carl Cassel suggested that Harry Pease obtain a Treasurer’s report (monthly) and the Tax Collector’s report each time one is prepared.

Out Reach Report: Carl S. provided a review of Orford’s river front property. At least 10 properties along the river are presently “in play”, including three recent sales and four for sale. Carl reviewed the tax map with the group. Carl S. communicated with the Upper Valley Land Trust to look at the bigger picture tied in with recommendations in the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI). One way to conserve river front property/shoreline/prime agricultural soils may be to bring land owners together to discuss conservation. Carl read a response from Jeanie McIntyre, President, Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT), which summarized its past work with the Commission, indicated some reasons why landowners are not yet willing to conserve riverfront land, and welcomed renewed efforts in partnership with the Commission. Carl will forward the message to us all.

Discussion took place of a more comprehensive effort to conserve river front land with assistance from Upper Valley Land Trust. The Commission may take a more active approach. All were in agreement to save not only riverfront but also preserving other un-developed land in Orford. Bry suggested we look at other agencies, such as the Society for Protection of NH Forests, etc.

Anne suggested Bruce Schwaegler come to a meeting to update us and get his aide as a volunteer on working with outside agencies. All were in agreement to ask him to come to a meeting and serve as a volunteer. Bry agreed to enlist Bruce Schwaegler as a volunteer to assist the Commission in utilizing other conservation organizations.

Carl Schmidt reviewed the process of securing conservation easements with group.

Short Term: Anne, Harry and Carl will meet with Jeanie McIntyre of the UVLT during the next four weeks.

Long Term Steps: Invite Bruce Schwaegler to come to meeting for an overall discussion of conservation organizations, funding, etc. Also have Jeanie McIntyre come to a meeting.

Carl S. indicated we need to do some homework to obtain names of owners of river front land. Harry offered to request help from Bill McKee in getting the information from the tax maps.

Carl S. attended the bird walk at the Orford Conservation Land, which was canceled the first day due to inclement weather and three showed up so Bill Shepard went out with them. The second day, 12 attended. Bill Shepherd was great with bird calls. He suggested we need sign markers for the trail at the property and he was very impressed with the land. There are very few mixed habitat spots on the Connecticut River like this land.

Anne reported the Town of Orford is developing a new website so at a future meeting we need to discuss what we want on our page.

Review of NRI recommendations: We had a Round Table discussion of what we want to work on:

Bry-focus on invasive species, management plan for the Orford Conservation Land.

Kathy-focus on wildlife habitat, river property and invasive species.

Tom-water testing to begin in three weeks. Harry asked Tom to look into the state’s Volunteer Lake Assessment Program for Upper Baker Pond. Harry said he would contact the Millers who own the two camps and most of the property around the pond.

Anne-the Energy Committee is looking at replacing street lights to reduce energy consumption and light pollution.

Carl C.-agree with what we have been talking about and that we should be more active on conservation of property.

Fran-nothing to add.

Carl S-nothing else.

Jeff- looking at his role regarding wildlife habitat and protecting the Orford Conservation Land. He mentioned that Orford now has two NH Birding Hotspots: Orford Conservation Land and Reeds Marsh.

Other Business:

1. Harry was contacted by Rivendell Academy about installing a disc golf set up on the Orford Conservation Land. He discussed it with Bry and told them it could not be done since the land is leased for farming. He suggested that they try to utilize the playground area at the boat landing.
2. Anne Duncan Cooley-Christine Bills approached the Selectboard about expanding the recycling program in Orford. Harry talked to Christine after being contacted by Anne. Christine is going to send her ideas on recycling to us and Harry will invite her to a future meeting to discuss it.
3. Fran agreed to contact Andy Boyce to follow up on the wildlife filming project that he discussed with us several months ago.

Tom motioned we adjourn, Carl C. seconded, the motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

 Respectfully submitted,

 Fran Plaisted