Orford Conservation Commission

Minutes of January 23, 2014 Meeting

Members Present: Harry Pease, Carl Cassel, Carl Schmidt, Emily Bryant, Bry Beeson, Craig Putnam, Jeff MacQueen, Tom Bubolz, Kathy Baker; Selectboard Representative: Anne Duncan Cooley; Guest: Bruce Schwaegler

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

The minutes of the November 21, 2013 meeting were unanimously approved after a motion by Carl Cassel and a second by Bry Beeson.

Old Business:

Conservation Fund Spending History Update: Discussion postponed until February meeting.

Orford Conservation Land Project Update and Planning: Tullando Farm has a license agreement to farm the Orford Conservation Land until 2016. The question is whether the license is sufficient for obtaining NRCS funding for the project since the farmer has to show that he has control of the property through the life of the project. There was a discussion of licensing and land control. Harry will discuss this with the Tullars and NRCS and find out more about the application process and due dates for NRCS funding which would include a 25% cost share by the farmer.

Outreach Update: Harry spoke with Jeanie McIntyre at UVLT. Taylor Soper is still interested in conserving his land, but his land is still for sale. UVLT sent a second letter to Chuck Perilman, but has not received a response. Jeanie has concluded that Perilmans are no longer interested in conserving their land. Trinity Farm is still on hold. The Bischoff property in Quinttown is still under discussion. There has been nothing new regarding the large property on 25A, although the owners are hoping for support from the Conservation Commission.

Website Contents Update: Discussion postponed until February meeting.

New Business:

Photo Contest at Town Meeting: Emily and Jeff will coordinate getting ads in the newsletter and on the listserv. The deadline for submitting photos is the Saturday before Town Meeting.

Planning for Public Conservation Information Meeting: Discussion postponed until February meeting.

Renewable Energy Property Tax Exemption: Bruce Schwaegler stated that over 85 towns in New Hampshire provide an exemption from property taxes for one or more types of renewable energy systems. New Hampshire law allows individual communities to determine whether they will allow a property tax exemption for the assessed value of solar, wind and wood heating renewable energy systems. He provided a chart showing which towns in NH exempt renewable energy systems from property taxes. Bruce suggested that it is good public policy to support renewable energy and hoped that a warrant article could be included for a discussion and vote at the March 11, 2014 Town Meeting. He asked if the OCC would be interested in sponsoring a warrant article for Orford to vote whether it will approve a renewable energy property tax exemption for solar energy systems. After much discussion about the merits of a tax exemption and whether to include one, two or all three types of renewable energy systems in a warrant article, Harry moved that the Commission sponsor a warrant article that would include exemptions for solar, wind and wood burning renewable energy systems and Bry seconded the motion. The motion passed with an affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners. Bruce provided a copy of the language for a warrant article recommended by the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning. The Commission agreed to have Harry prepare a petition for the warrant article and send a copy to all Commissioners to obtain signatures and present the Petition to the Selectboard by January 29.

Conserving Land Around Indian Pond: Bruce Schwaegler is working with Brian Holz at the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests on conservation easements for two 40-acre parcels under the NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program. He suggested that the Commission meet at some time with Mr. Holz, who has recently become Vice President for Land Protection at the Forest Society. In response to a question, Bruce said that his goal is to conserve all of the watershed around Indian Pond.

The Upper Valley Land Trust is holding its annual meeting February 4 in White River Junction. The speaker will discuss the value of wetlands in mitigating flood damage. Harry will attend and invited others to attend as well.

The annual “Saving Special Places” workshop will take place on April 5 at the Laconia Middle School. Details are to be distributed in February.

The Commission was under budget by $484 in 2013.

Carl Schmidt passed out a pamphlet on invasive species published by the Plant Industry Division of the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food. Harry agreed to request more to have available at our table at Town Meeting.

It was agreed that we take the weed wrench to Town Meeting to advertise it and its use to the community.

Harry handed out a list of Commissioner appointments and their terms. Terms for Bry, Emily and Carl Cassel expire this year. Harry asked that they consider being re-appointed for another term and also asked all Commissioners to consider being an officer for the upcoming year. Election of Officers will be conducted at our March meeting.

Bry moved to adjourn and Kathy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Baker