Orford Conservation Commission

Minutes of May 15, 2014 Meeting

Members Present: Harry Pease, Carl Schmidt, Carl Cassel, Jeff MacQueen, Kathy Baker; Alternates Present: Emily Bryant, Craig Putnam, Fran Plaisted; Selectboard Representative: Anne Duncan Cooley

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

Harry asked that Alternates Emily Bryant and Craig Putnam fill in for absent member Tom Bubolz and our vacant position.

Old Business:

Solarize Orford Update: Carl Cassel provided an update of the public information meeting held on May 13. Turn-out was good with about 40 people in attendance. Sarah Simonds from Vital Communities provided a presentation. Currently there are options for financing and there may be an option for vital communities to become involved if we can develop a community group. An option may be open to work with Fairlee to form a joint community group. We need a Core Team of 5 to 8 people to work with Vital Communities and ideally with one person as the lead. The impression of Emily and Carl was that Orford has a “good chance” of being selected to participate in the Solarize Upper Valley because of good meeting turnout and the fact that we are a diverse community. We discussed potential community members for the committee. We also need to have the Selectboard on board with this. Carl Cassel and Emily will contact meeting participants, try to form a committee, and set up another meeting soon.

Orford Conservation Land Project Update: Tullando Farm filed an application for EQIP with NRCS for this project on May 13, ahead of the May 16 deadline. Harry and Emily have provided all other supporting documents, including the License Agreement between the Conservation Commission and Tullando Farm to farm the land, the Town’s deed for the land, the Conservation Easement held by the Upper Valley Land Trust, and the Control of Land form which Harry signed as Chair. The current 5-year license agreement expires in May 2016 and may need to be extended if NRCS approves and funds the project. The next step is for NRCS to schedule a site visit to plan the project. The Galerucella Beetles will arrive on June 17 and will be released that day near the estuary. We will advertise the release in the June 1 Friends of the Orford Libraries Newsletter and on the listserv, and Harry will send letters to nearby landowners. Sarah Schwaegler will go down with Jeff to identify where to release the beetles.

New Business:

Outreach with Upper Valley Land Trust: Carl Schmidt spoke to Sara Cavin at UVLT. There have been no changes in status on the river front properties or the large property on 25A. UVLT expects to make an easement offer on the Bischoff property in Quinttown this summer. UVLT will hold its annual meeting on June 3, 2014 at the Lyme Hill Conservation Land at 4:00 pm. Carl was reminded that he is to talk to Ray Clark about a possible easement on his river front property. We also discussed preparing a one page hand-out with examples of how we have used our Conservation Funds to support conservation easements in Orford.

Long Term Capital Investment Advisory Committee Update: Carl Cassel is our member on the committee. Nate Miller, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission is leading the study for the town. There has been one meeting so far to get the process started. Predictions are that growth will be slow and populations will be flat for 20 years. There will probably be few implications for the Conservation Commission.

Other Business:

Harry reminded everyone that we need to start thinking about and planning for a public information meeting about conservation and conservation easements.

Kathy Baker recommended that we have a monthly update on our financial status. It was agreed that we would get monthly reports on our budget, Conservation Fund balance and Tax Collectors report on current use change fees.

Carl Cassel is considering pricing a solar energy system and determining what the process is to select one and get it installed. He would use this information to help inform the Solarize Orford program.

Jeff MacQueen will lead a bird hike up Mount Cube on May 31 at 7:30 am at the Baker Road Trail Head. Jeff is also going to do Chimney Swift bird count at the old Orford Academy building. The Swifts roost there on their migration. He is also looking for grass land birds and suggesting that farmers delay haying as long as possible in order not to disturb nests.

Carl Schmidt mentioned that the application for a dock, steps and rail system to get boats to the river on the parcel across from State Garage has not been received by the DES. There is also a plan to build a house, barn and tennis court on the parcel. The Connecticut River Commission had several comments on the shoreland permit application. The Conservation Commission elected not to sign the permit application.

Anne and Carl Schmidt discussed the need for two Orford representatives for the Upper Valley River Sub Committee. One position is vacant and Carl Schmidt is stepping down from the other. The Selectboard is looking to the Commission to recommend candidates. Harry and Carl will discuss possible candidates.

Anne reported that Current Use Taxation was discussed at the recent Selectboard meeting. A town resident believes that the way current use has been implemented in NH is unconstitutional. In order for the Selectboard to take a position on the issue, it would need to be voted on by the town at a town meeting.

Kathy moved and Carl Cassel seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Plaisted