Orford Conservation Commission

 Minutes of March19, 2015 Meeting

Commissioners Present: Harry Pease, Tom Bubolz, Jeff MacQueen, Carl Schmidt and Kathy Baker; Alternates Present: Emily Bryant; Selectboard Representative: Anne Duncan Cooley

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

Harry requested that Emily Bryant fill in for Commissioner Carl Cassel who was absent.

Emily moved and Kathy seconded a motion to approve the February minutes and they were unanimously approved.

Old Business:

Status Update on Conservation of Bischoff Property in Quinttown: Harry reported that the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) has awarded a contract for an appraisal, which is due not later than mid-May. Once the appraisal is done, we will know the total cost of the project and can hold a public meeting about the project and a contribution toward the project from the Conservation Fund. The Commission is still interested in having the barn on the property preserved. Harry will discuss this with UVLT, including the possibility of them applying for a barn tax easement.

Planning for Spring Activities for Orford Conservation Land Project: Harry reported that the Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC) will propose a list of trees and shrubs to plant in the riparian buffer. We need to select dates in late April and early May to remove invasive plants from the buffer area and plant the trees. We also want to encourage the public and the school to observe and/or participate in the project. Harry will set up a meeting with NRCS, CRWC and Tullando Farm to plan and propose dates for the work. Harry will prepare a letter to nearby landowners to inform them of the work we will be doing on the land.

Update on Tree Planting around Newcomb Hollow Bridge: We still expect to obtain trees from the CRWC for the planting. Robb Day suggested planting red maples, alders and red osier dogwoods. Harry has also asked Sarah Schwaegler for suggestions. We will need to coordinate with the landowners before doing any work.

Conservation Fund and Budget: There were no changes since the February meeting.

New Business:

Feedback from Town Meeting: Many people looked at the display regarding the Bischoff Property in Quinttown, but there were no questions. There was very good reaction to the photo contest.

Commissioner Terms and Election of Officers in April: Kathy Baker announced that she is resigning from the Commission due to other commitments and lack of time. This will create a second Commissioner vacancy. Harry asked that current alternates consider becoming Commissioners. Chris Balch was suggested as a potential Commissioner and Harry agreed to ask her if she is interested. Harry also asked that all Commissioners and alternates consider running for the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. Elections will be held at our April meeting.

Conservation of Schwaegler Land at Indian Pond: Harry reported that he has had conversations with Bruce Schwaegler as well as Brian Hotz, Vice President for Land Conservation with the NH Forest Society. They are actively working to find a way to conserve the land, but it is a large project and finding the funding to accomplish it is difficult. They are currently exploring the federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) as a potential source of funding. However, the new rules for WRP in the 2014 Farm Bill have not been finalized yet, but are expected soon. Bruce and Brian will keep the Conservation Commission informed of progress and let us know if/when there is something we can do to help.

Harry passed around a brochure he received from Comprehensive Trail Services which offers consultation and labor for establishing and maintaining trails.

Anne asked if we plan to have an informational public meeting regarding conservation easements. It was agreed that such a meeting is a good idea, and should include presentations by conservation groups such as UVTL and the Forest Society. We will discuss this more in the future.

Emily reported that she attended a Corinth Conservation Commission outing with Alcott Smith who led a walk pointing out flora and fauna. She found it most interesting, and suggested we might consider something similar, maybe at the Bischoff property in Quinttown.

Carl Schmidt reported that he learned at a meeting of the Upper Valley River Subcommittee that the application to the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) regarding a dock on the Fisher property was not approved as proposed. This was the application that we commented on last fall, but we were not informed by DES of the results. Carl said that he learned that DES does not routinely report back to interested parties on the status of applications, but rather updates information on their website.

Anne reported that the Selectboard received an application for floodplain development from the Quackenbush family.

Tom moved and Kathy seconded a motion to adjourn which was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Baker