Orford Conservation Commission

 Minutes of May 21, 2015 Meeting

Commissioners Present: Harry Pease, Tom Bubolz, Jeff MacQueen, Carl Schmidt, and Carl Cassel; Alternates Present: Fran Plaisted, Emily Bryant and Craig Putnam; Guest: John Roe, UVLT

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Harry requested that alternates Fran Plaisted and Craig Putnam serve as Commissioners tonight for two vacant positions.

Old Business:

Report from UVLT on Bischoff Property Appraisal and Budget: John Roe reported that the appraisal came in higher than expected and that he is in discussions with the owners on a sales price. This will result in a higher project budget than previously presented to the Commission in February. John also recommended that the Commission be the applicant for the proposed LCHIP Grant for the project rather than UVLT. UVLT has another high priority project that they are applying to LCHIP for and they think having the Commission apply for this one will improve the chances of it being approved. There is a mandatory LCHIP Workshop in Concord for all applicants on June 3; Intent to Apply forms are due by June 8, and the deadline for applications is noon on June 26. LCHIP decisions will be announced in late November. Following questions and discussion of the merits and process for the Commission to apply for the LCHIP grant John Roe agreed to find out from LCHIP how the funds would be provided if the application is approved and Harry agreed to consult with the Selectboard. Carl Cassel moved that the Conservation Commission apply for the LCHIP Grant to help acquire the Bischoff Property in conjunction with the UVLT, Fran seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. We then had a brief discussion of the barn and shed on the property. John Roe said that, just before the meeting, he had spent time taking a close look at the buildings and he agreed that they form an iconic and important part of the landscape. Perhaps they could be supported by adding interior cabling. It was agreed that we cannot preserve the buildings indefinitely, but that enough could be done, such as keeping good roofs on them, to slow their natural demise. We’ll discuss this further in the future.

Minutes of the April 16, 2015 Meeting: Tom moved that we approve the minutes from our April 2015 meeting, Jeff seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Update on Riparian Buffer at Orford Conservation Land: On April 29 we removed about 75 honeysuckle, two barberry and two burning bush invasive plants from the buffer area. Commissioners were assisted by Nate Tullar with his tractor for pulling out the larger honeysuckle, and by Ron Rhodes and Fritz Gerhardt of the CRWC. Commissioners were assisted on May 5 by Ron and Fritz again and a CRWC contracted crew in planting 102 trees and 45 shrubs in the western edge of the meadow to widen the existing buffer, and an additional 40 trees and 10 shrubs within the existing buffer. Nate Tullar supplied mulch for the planting. Paul Messer hauled water and helped to water all the newly planted trees and shrubs. On May 9 Commissioners again watered all the trees and shrubs.

Update on Invasive Plants Contractor for Orford Conservation Land: Jeff contacted five different invasive plant contractors and was successful in getting Mike Bald from Pomfret to do the work. Both NRCS and CRWC are familiar with Mike’s work. Mike estimates it will take two days to remove the invasive plants and cost about $750, which will be paid for with NRCS and/or CRWC grants. Work will be completed by August.

Conservation Fund and Budget: In April, the Tax Collector received $6,960 for the Balch property (Bunten Farm) taken out of current use. That should show up in our bank account in May. There were no other changes since last month.

Discussion of Potential New Commissioners: There are two vacant Commissioner positions. Names of potential Commissioners were discussed. Fran, Carl, Craig and Harry agreed to contact them before the June meeting to see if they are interested in being considered.

New Business:

Conservation Camp: Jeff is doing a week of conservation camp this summer for Rivendell and he is looking for projects/ideas to get kids active in conservation. All agreed this was a good idea and will give some thought to potential projects.

Tom moved and Carl Cassel seconded a motion to adjourn which was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Plaisted