Orford Conservation Commission

Minutes of Meeting on January 19, 2017

Commissioners Present: Tom Bubolz, Carl Cassel, Jeff MacQueen, Harry Pease, Craig Putnam, and Carl Schmidt; Alternates Present: Emily Bryant and Diane Gildersleeve;

Guest: Amber Boland, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission Representative

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

Harry asked Diane to fill in for Paul Goundrey who was absent.

Review of NRI Update with UVLSRPC: Amber handed out copies of the latest version of the new Climate Change chapter and asked that we send her any comments. Amber then went over the maps she has been working on that show Wildlife Habitat, Water Resources, Public and Conserved Lands, and an Aerial Photo of Orford. We discussed the map contents and explanatory notes and made suggestions for adding and changing information. Emily will forward her trails map to Amber. Harry suggested that we consider adding the soils map available from NRCS. He also suggested adding the poorly and very poorly drained soils information from NRCS to the Wetlands map as UVLSRPC has done for other uses. We then continued discussions from earlier meetings about how best to present the new information in this NRI Update. Since the original NRI published in June 2011 documented the most important natural resources in Orford, we want this update to talk about what has changed, tell personal stories about protecting our natural resources, and identify natural resource protection priorities. We may call this the Natural Resources Inventory Volume II. The impact of climate change will be a recurring theme throughout the chapters. We agreed to ask Kelley Monahan to do a write-up for the Ground Water chapter since that is an area of interest of hers and Craig Putnam will do a story about smaller-scale agriculture. Emily presented ice out information for the Connecticut River. Carl Cassel suggested we contact Lake Morey Inn about ice out information for Lake Morey, and he agreed to check. Harry proposed we have a special meeting just to work on the NRI. Friday, February 3 at 7 p.m. was agreed upon.

Approve Minutes of December 15, 2016 Meeting: Tom made a motion to approve the minutes, Craig seconded and the motion carried.

Discuss Proposed Warrant Article Regarding Riverbank Erosion Caused by Dam Operations: Carl Schmidt, speaking as an Orford representative to the Upper Valley River Subcommittee of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, described an advocacy effort being undertaken by a number of Connecticut River riparian towns in New Hampshire and Vermont to urge that a mitigation fund, to benefit towns and landowners incurring damages due to Connecticut River bank erosion, be created as an outcome of the current relicensing process for Wilder Dam owner TransCanada that is being conducted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The advocacy effort involves getting as many of the relevant towns as possible to pass a uniform Warrant Article at Town Meeting urging FERC to establish such a fund, for which there is a precedent, as part of its eventual relicensing terms. He pointed out that this undertaking would not entail any cost to the Town or to landowners. Carl presented the draft warrant article. Following some discussion, Carl Schmidt made a motion that the Conservation Commission recommend that the Orford Selectboard agree to place the proposed Article on the Town’s Warrant for the March 14, 2017 Annual Meeting. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The proposed Warrant Article reads as follows:

“Resolved, that the Town of Orford, through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process, has been presented with information on the Connecticut River. If it is shown that there is a causal relationship between the operation of the Wilder Dam by TransCanada Corporation or subsequent owners resulting in the deterioration of the riverbank and attendant roads and farmland, it is recommended that the Town of Orford formally request that the TransCanada Corporation or subsequent owners modify current dam operations and create a mitigation fund to reimburse towns and landowners for any and all damages.”

Review Operating Budget and Conservation Fund: Harry reported that there were no changes from the December meeting.

Preparation for Town Meeting: Following some discussion it was agreed that our display this year will focus on the NRI Update. We will use UVLSRPC maps and set up a slide show on laptops. Jeff suggested that instead of the photo contest we have sponsored in the past, that we request digital photos for inclusion in our NRI slide show. Given that it is getting harder each year to get photo contest entries, all thought this was a good idea.

Emily reported that she is working on a map for the new Orford Phone Book.

Tom made a motion to adjourn, Carl Cassel seconded and the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Fran Plaisted