Orford Conservation Commission

 Minutes of Meeting on November 16, 2017

Present: Commissioners – Ted Cooley (Chair), Jeff Macqueen (Vice Chair), Carl Schmidt, Tom Bubolz, Craig Putnam, Emily Bryant, Harry Pease, and Fran Plaisted (Secretary) as an alternate. Paul Goundrey attended as Selectboard Representative.

Megan Chapman- Conservation Project Manager, Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) attended meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:01.

Upper Valley Land Trust attended to review a proposal for the Hedges to create an additional easement on Stonehouse Mountain, and to transfer the easement from the OCC to the Land Trust for the existing 100 acres on Stonehouse Mountain. We reviewed the current easement and reviewed what a transfer to the UVLT might mean, and whether a transfer might even be possible. If these properties were all transferred, there would then be a large corridor of land from a tract conserved in Lyme through Mountain View Conserved Land. We agreed to some minor changes in the proposal. Overall, the OCC was in support of this change and the easement of an additional 100 acres. If the easements were to go through, there would be allowance for a parking area, and development of a hiking corridor/ trail up Stonehouse Mtn. Plans include subsequent development of trail to access to Mountain View Farm. OCC discussed the easement, of the additional parcel of 99.7 acres. We discussed whether the easement could be managed by the UVLT, covering the easement to the Zaldastani parcel. UVLT would take over annual monitoring.

Ted proposed a motion that the OCC supports in principle the proposal from the Upper Valley Land Trust, pending review by the Orford Town Attorney. If the change in easement were to occur, Orford would not be the grantee of the easement but would hold Executory Interest in the easement. Harry pointed out that this easement is would be in line with other easements in town including Mountain View Farm and other conserved lands. The New Hampshire Attorney General must review and approve any proposed changes to an easement. The NH AG will be reviewing any proposal pending approval by the Orford Town Attorney, the OCC, the Orford SB, etc.

Harry moved that we agree with the UVLT proposal in concept subject to review and/or approval by the Selectboard and Town Attorney. Emily seconded. Motion passed.

Mountain View Farm L Chip has been updated and it looks promising and hope to have the LCHIP funds shortly.

Minutes:

All members will review minutes and send Fran any changes via email. Fran will review minutes and send them out ASAP.

Communications:

Yearly report is due the first week in January, 2018. Harry recommended a skim through OCC Minutes for projects, accomplishments, etc.

Friends of Orford Library Newsletters due every 3 months. This venue is used to list activities we hold, etc. The OCC is also listed activities on our Facebook Page. Members are encouraged to send their events comments to Tec for inclusion in the Friends’ Newsletter.

Carl S.

Carl reported on the October 26th inspection visit to Peter Fisher’s Connecticut River bank.

Those in attendance reviewed the reconstruction installation after some of the infrastructure had been washed away in high water. The riverbank is very fragile and highly unstable. Prior owners removed all of the riparian buffer. The project is an experimental one, with logs bound together and anchored into the bank. The logs are used in an attempt to stabilize the bank. This stabilization is a difficult process. Agreed to evaluate in a few years.

Comments:

Emily expressed deep concern about armoring the brooks and that the armoring could potentially be causing problems in the future. Emily noted that there is are differences in NH DOT and NH DES policies. There are further differences when clearing / armoring stream beds occurs as emergency construction projects. Emily will look into how to submit comments.

Carl attended a program in Lebanon on Tuesday night. The program was a large forum on “Protecting Land and Wildlife in a Changing Climate”. Carl explained the event was a well-run meeting with eight different presentations. One was on “What Conservation Committees can do to protect resources in a changing climate”. There were 5 action considerations:

1. Encourage landowners to preserve beneficial function of natural features
2. Control invasive species
3. Communicate and build public awareness about climate change
4. Incorporate climate change into municipal documentation, and
5. Develop and add climate vulnerability and adaptation benefits to the criteria.

Carl’s take away from the meeting was that we should increase our focus on conserving land in strategic locations, such as links in wildlife corridors.

Invoices:

Ted paid the mowing.

NRI:

Need to get your chapter done.

Meeting is scheduled 12/21/17 and we will keep it scheduled for that date.

Budget:

Sent out the proposed Budget.

Other Business:

Discussion within the Budget Advisory Committee that land use change tax (LUCT) payments be diverted away from the OCC. The funds currently in the OCC fund are, by NH RSA, only expendable on OCC projects that include obtaining land. We agreed to provide an update on the amount of funds, where they were spent, etc. Carl Cassel worked on this and we agreed to contact him to obtain his outline from prior attempts and discussions in town. The OCC has utilized the funds in conjunction with many other funding sources to continue to conserve areas in Orford.

Rivendell Conservation Easement. Carl referred to the large tract of land abutting Rivendell’s Orford campus on its north side that is owned by the Interstate School District and conserved with the Upper Valley Land Trust. At a recent meeting of the Conservation Easement Management Committee, Carl said he had called attention to an infestation of barberry in a wooded area of the property and suggested that a former student project to remove the Invasives might be revived, perhaps with advice provided by the Conservation Commission.

UVLT has an easement on land for Rivendell trail, and is on a new easement. There are many invasive plants in the area of the easement, and we suggested a project working with the students to remove these.

Master Plan:

Planning Board has started the process of generating a Master Plan for Orford. The OCC will contact them when appropriate to provide input regarding conservation in Orford. Contact will take place after completion of the NRI.

Motion: Tom to adjourn. Harry seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Plaisted