Orford Conservation Commission

APPROVED Minutes: April 19, 2018

Present: chair, Ted Cooley, Jeff MacQueen, Harry Pease, Carl Schmidt, Tom Bubolz, Emily Bryant, Paul Goundrey (Selectboard representative), Craig Putnam (scribe pro tem)

A motion was made by chair Ted Cooley to table the minutes from February 15, with a request to members to go over the minutes with careful consideration, for approval at our next meeting.

The motion was seconded by Tom Bubolz and approved by all.

Chair Ted Cooley reported on negotiations with the town Selectboard to allow the Town attorney to communicate with the attorney of the Upper Valley Land Trust regarding the possibility of the town transferring an easement to the Upper Valley Land Trust, to be inclusive of an existing parcel, as well as a new conserved parcel. The Selectboard has acquiesced to this request, which is in process.

Harry Pease informed the OCC that he and Linda are actively engaged in an effort to conserve Brackett Brook Farm. Harry reported that he expects approval of funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Commission’s program to help with conserving farmland, which would pay 50% of the cost of the easement. A representative of the Upper Valley Land Trust hopes to come to our May meeting to talk about the project.

Tom Bubolz reported that water testing will start in June, to continue through September, with sampling occurring in the first week of each month. Interest was expressed by some members in accompanying Tom to learn the procedures of the testing.

Reappointments: Chair Ted Cooley will check with the Town Administrator as to the dates of Commission members’ terms.

Reports: Commission members Emily Bryant and Craig Putnam, with Selectboard member and representative to the OCC Paul Goundrey, met with State officials on April 11, 2018, at the site on Rte 25 just east of Orfordville where major damage occurred to the road in the severe rain events in July and October, 2017. The state officials included NH Department of Environmental Services Wetlands Permit Officer Gino Infascelli, as well DOT supervisors from District II who are responsible for this section of the State highway. Also present were Jim Kennedy, a private wetlands engineer and member of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, and his clients Deenie and John Bugge who live on Brook Road and whose property was significantly affected by the high waters. The State officials intend to remove the berm that was placed between the brook and the road in that section. Although many ideas were “floated” as to modifications that might be made in the stream bed to mitigate damage from future high water events, no action is expected from the State other than some culvert improvements. The Town would need to arrange for its own engineering study, finding grants and other funding to pay for the work.

Jim Kennedy encouraged us to support a grant proposal he is preparing for submission by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions. The deadline for application was by the end of this month; it also appeared it would be important for the Orford Conservation Commission to commit an amount, perhaps on the order of $5000, to help secure this grant.

Carl Schmidt reported that during an April 16th meeting of the Upper Valley River Subcommittee of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC), Jim Kennedy reported that earlier that day he had been informed that the CRJC has agreed to submit a grant application for mitigation funds for the segment of Jacobs Brook in question. Jim, who is now preparing the grant application, with a preliminary deadline of April 30, therefore is requesting specific indications of support from Orford.

On the request of Ted Cooley, Carl offered the following draft motion as an indication of OCC’s interest in engaging in stream rehabilitation efforts:

*“The Orford Conservation Commission supports the objective of supporting efforts to “return life” to the segments of Jacobs Brook from the vicinity of the Brook Road crossing to a point approximately one-half mile upstream. This segment, located close to Route 25a, was heavily scoured by floodwaters produced by heavy rainstorms in July and October 2017, and further impacted by subsequent NH DOT “repair” work in and adjacent to the streambed.*

*Accordingly, the Conservation Commission agrees to support an application for mitigation funds now being prepared for submission by the Connecticut River Joint Commission (CRJC) to the Aquatic Resources Mitigation Fund, which is administered by the NH Dept. of Environmental Services. (The deadline for submission of proposals to be considered in the Preliminary Grant Round is April 30.)*

*“Examples of support from the Conservation Commission will include, but not necessarily be limited to the following:*

*a. A proposal to the Orford Selectboard to authorize the Orford Highway Department to provide certain “in kind assistance”, such as using its equipment to place rocks in the streambed, move gravel and other materials, etc.*

*b. Efforts to recruit volunteers to provide further “in kind” support by planting native species (e.g., alder, tree saplings) on the stream banks, and removing invasive species such as knotweed.*

*c. A contribution (suggested: $5,000) to the mitigation project from the Orford Conservation Commission, as a “Supporting Organization” for the ARM Fund application. It is understood that a public hearing will need to be held by the Conservation Commission in order to receive comments on such a proposed contribution.*

During the subsequent discussion, Commissioners expressed reluctance to indicate the Commission’s specific support when the timeline is so short and details about what would be entailed were so few. As a result, Paul Goundry proposed that the draft motion be amended to delete subparagraphs a. and c.

A motion to approve the revised text was made by Carl Schmidt, seconded by Paul Goundrey and approved unanimously.

It was also agreed that if Jim Kennedy would be able to meet with the Commission to provide details on the mitigation work to be proposed in the grant proposal, the Commission would meet in an extra session on the evening of April 26.

Tom Bubolz moved that the meeting be adjourned; the motion was seconded by Paul Goundrey, and approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45.

Respectfully submitted by Craig Putnam