

Orford Conservation Commission (OCC)
Meeting Minutes: July 16, 2020
Meeting held via Zoom due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements

Present via Zoom: Members: Ted Cooley (Chair), John Miller (Vice Chair), Harry Pease, Craig Putnam, Carl Schmidt. Alternates: Emily Bryant (Assistant Sec’y), Carl Cassel.

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

Emily and Carl C. were seated as members.

1. Minutes of June 18, 2020:

Motion (Carl S./ John): To accept the minutes of 6/18/20 as written by Fran and edited by John and Ted. The motion carried.

2. Water Testing: Harry reported that the first water tests of the season were collected 7/7/20. (The June test was skipped due to lack of supplies.) Ten sites were tested and three came up with E. coli results above the state level for swimming (88/100 ml): Dublin Road 90.6, Upper Baker Pond Beach 90.5, Lower Baker Pond Beach: 98.4. These results were reported to the CC Chair who reported them to the Select Board (SB) and Town Health Officer. Harry mentioned that a few years ago it was agreed with the SB that when high results came in, the SB would notify the town via the listserv and by posting signs. If we find high results, it is our responsibility to inform the SB. Ted will follow up with Esther.

Motion (Harry/John): To retake water tests at Dublin Road, Upper Baker Pond Beach and Lower Baker Pond Beach, and add a test behind the Grady’s house on Archertown Road, to be done Tuesday 7/21/20. The motion carried.

Ted mentioned that Esther requested approval for paying an invoice from Eastern Analytics for water testing, but he would like to see the amount first. Harry would also like to receive a copy of the invoice. Harry and John also recommended that we drop the Mousley Brook test site in Quinttown, since it always has a low count, and the Antique Barn site on Route 25A since there are other sites nearby, and then add a site at Jacobs Brook behind the Grady’s and at Brackett Brook (Brackett Brook flows into Lower Baker Pond). Others suggested adding a test at Flat Rock, which is still pretty far upstream, and people swim there as well.

Motion (Harry/John): that starting in August 2020, we drop the Mousley Brook and Antique Barn water testing sites, and add Flat Rock, Grady’s, and Brackett Brook. The motion carried.

3. Invasives - Knotweed. John reported that he and Emily did follow-up work on Tillotson Falls Road a couple of times, pulling the knotweed regrowth. The regrowth was more modest (about 18 inches) than the initial growth, which was above John’s head. He also did follow-up work along Rte 25A. He welcomes suggestions on how to recruit volunteers. John wants to be in touch with the State about the knotweed cutting they have done on the roadsides, and whether they have used herbicides. He has talked briefly with Terry Straight about the town’s contracting out for mowing town roadsides, and Terry indicated that it might work to flag the areas that should not be mowed (due to the presence of knotweed). Follow-up with Terry is needed. Concern was expressed about cross-contamination from mowing equipment used in other areas. Carl C. mentioned that we will need volunteers to help in the control effort, since the town or state will do their work only within the road right of way, and the knotweed doesn’t stop at the edge of the right of way. Craig suggested focusing the knotweed control effort on a limited area, and making it a demonstration of what can be done. John and Emily put flagging along the edge of the plantings along Jacob’s Brook, so the state can see where not to mow (to avoid the plantings and the knotweed that is there).

4. Orfordville Bog culvert. As of last meeting, the \$1500 overage on the estimate for design work from Horizons Engineering was to be split between the Town and Horizons Engineering. An invoice to the Town for this for \$751.25 has been paid. Ted pointed out that the Town agreed to build the culvert next

year, but given time and budget restraints due to Covid-19, there may be delays. We will have to remind them that the design needs to be implemented within 5 years or the permit runs out.

5. Natural Resources Inventory. John's plan is to send out 2 chapters of the NRI in their current versions every two weeks for review. Chapters 1 - 4 have been sent out so far, 5 and 6 to come shortly. Emily has been working on Chapter 4.

6. Trail Finder. Emily said she has not progressed on this. She still needs to get GPS tracks for the Daniel Doan Trail up Smarts.

7. Land use Agreements (for Boat Launch and Orford Conservation Land). Ted had not heard back from the town attorney on the agreements. The current plan is to sign a one-year agreement with the Tullars without including delayed mowing requirements for Bobolinks to carry us through this year. Then we can investigate adding delayed mowing requirements in the subsequent 5-year agreement. Mass Audubon's Bobolink Project (<https://www.bobolinkproject.com/>) reimburses farmers for delayed mowing. We need to find out how farmers can apply and when the application deadline is for the 2021 growing season.

8. Invoices: Ted reported that there are no new invoices. He expects an invoice for mowing to come in soon; he will go ahead and pay that.

9. Membership and recruiting. Ted talked with Christine Bill and Libby Chapin about becoming CC members. Christine's interest lies toward recycling. Craig contacted Deenie Bugge – she is interested but too busy to be a member now. They have been fighting knotweed on their property. Ted suggested sending her a Zoom link to the CC meeting.

10. Outreach and website: Ted asked members share any nice conservation-related images with him to put up on the CC website.

11. Other business:

a) Beaver at Mountain View Farm: Carl S. mentioned the issue of beaver on the Mountain View Farm property. The Tullars pasture cattle there and one of their expectant cows got stuck in the mud created by the beaver impoundment and died. Jason Berard is in charge of this land for the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT); he suggested that rather than trying to eradicate the beaver, one could move the fence to exclude the beaver impoundment from the pasture. David Bischoff manages the land for UVLT; he mentioned to Carl S. that this had been suggested last year, but had not been done. Carl S. suggested that the CC recommend to UVLT that in order to most effectively deal with the beaver situation at Mountain View Farm, they should move the fence enough to the east to avoid the beaver impoundment. David Bischoff (who has an official status with UVLT for managing the land) mentioned to Carl S. that he was not interested in moving the fence himself. Carl C. pointed out that moving the fence might not be a permanent solution to the problem, since the beaver might move.

b) Mountain View farm buildings: Carl S. noted that \$4250 had been raised and put into a fund to stabilize the barn and shed. The plan for last year was to 1) shore up/replace sills, and 2) replace siding on the barn, but neither of these was accomplished. He suggested that the CC should adopt these as a goal for this year to be done in early fall. We would need volunteers, and to hire a carpenter and a backhoe (possibly Clifton Taylor). Pay could come from the fund. Ted suggested that Carl S. select a possible date for this.

Motion (Carl C./Ted) to Adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 8:07pm

Minutes taken by Emily Bryant.

Next meetings: August 20, Sept 17, likely via Zoom