

Orford Conservation Commission (OCC)
Meeting Minutes: August 20, 2020
Meeting held via Zoom due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements

Present via Zoom: Members: Ted Cooley (Chair), John Miller (Vice Chair), Craig Putnam, Carl Schmidt, Tom Bubolz. Alternates: Emily Bryant (Assistant Sec’y), Carl Cassel, Fran Plaisted
Meeting was called to order at 7:01pm.
Emily and Carl C. were seated as members.

1. Minutes of 7/16/20. Carl S. made 2 corrections: 1) under #2 Water Testing, line 7, change “...inform the town” to “... inform the SB”. 2) under #11, change “cast/e” to “cattle.”

Motion (Carl C./ John): To approve the minutes of 7/16/20 as amended. Motion carried.

2. Water Testing: Ted spoke with Tom Steketee of the Select Board (SB) about the responsibility for posting advisories when test results are too high for swimming. The advisories need to be posted only for the beaches, but results for all test locations will be posted on the website. The most recent test results at Indian Pond were 200 above the last test. We will be testing on 8/25 and 9/1. There has been increased activity on the ponds and there is no porta potty there, which might help explain the increase in results. We want to post what the safe levels are. Advisory signs have been posted at the beaches. Andy Schwaegler asked whether the CC could add a test site on Indian Pond – he would be willing to pay for it. Ted mentioned that we will be doing a test at the Hosts’ (paid by them) and could possibly add a test near the Schwaegler’s. He has spoken with the SB about this and they thought this would be OK. Andy thanked the CC for doing the water testing – he would not have been aware otherwise of the high testing results.

2. Land Use Agreements. The Town Attorney reviewed them, and suggested that we make one motion to approve the Land Use Agreements and another to say that Ted can sign in lieu of the entire OCC. The bobolink text (to delay mowing to protect nests) was not included in the Land Use Agreement. As it stands, the agreement is for 5 years; Carl C suggested that an addendum about delayed mowing for bobolinks could be made to the agreement at a later date if the Tullars agree.

Motion (John/ Tom): to accept the Land Use Agreements. Motion carried.

Motion (Ted/Emily): that the chair can sign the agreements on behalf of the commission. Motion carried. Craig agreed to facilitate contacting the Tullars regarding the agreements.

3. Knotweed. John updated the CC on knotweed control work. At the triangle (intersection of Tillotson Falls Road and High Bridge Road) – both the mulch/plastic and repetitive weeding methods are looking OK. The pulled knotweeds are put in grain bags and put behind the town garage. David Gustafson worked with John Miller on an area on his land on Brook Road upstream of the bridge, and that has been moderately successful. They used the “burrito” method; wrapping the pulled knotweed up in plastic. The plastic is costly but can be reused. David is interested in becoming an OCC member. The hardware cloth (wire mesh) method was done at the Tillotson Falls Triangle as well. Knotweed plants are growing through the mesh, but they are much smaller and not looking good.

4. Culvert project on Orfordville Road. NH DES has requested additional information for the permit; John contacted Horizons Engineering about this but has not heard back from them. There may be additional charges. Invoices have been paid to date. Terry Straight asked whether it would be possible to add a dry hydrant to the culvert design for fire protection.

5. NRI subcommittee – Craig has sent out text for a chapter. Ted asked us all to read it and comment/edit it.

6. Trail Finder- Emily made it up Smarts Mountain the Daniel Doan Trail (Trailhead is near Mountain View Farm) and collected GPS data for it. Looks like it followed an old road. Trail is not in great shape. Emily has not given data to Upper Valley Trails Alliance yet. She is going to look into who the landowners are.

7. Invoices. Ted received an invoice from Alan Dyke for \$120 for three rounds of mowing.

Motion (Ted/Tom) to pay the invoice from Alan Dyke. Motion carried.

John has invoice for \$79.32 for supplies for Knotweed removal.

Motion (Tom/Carl S) to reimburse John for expenses. Motion carried.

8. Orford Conservation Land. (aka Richmond Conservation Land): Trail needs to be trimmed.

9. Report for SPNH: (monitoring conservation easements). Jeff used to complete them. Ted will contact Jeff about this.

10. Commissioner terms- David Gustafson is interested in joining. John will get in touch with him. We have one commissioner vacancy and 2 openings for alternates.

11. Star gazing party at Mountain View Farm. Upper Valley Land Trust got in touch with Emily about whether the CC thinks that a star gazing party at Mountain View Farm in September would be well-attended. There would be socially distancing etc. The sense of the meeting was positive. Star expert would be useful; if we know of someone, we should suggest them to the Upper Valley Land Trust. Ted will get in touch with [Stellafane](#) to see if they have suggestions. Stellafane is, “an active Amateur Astronomy and Telescope Making club located in Springfield, Vermont,” according to their website.

12. Website and virtual events. Send pictures of conservation/natural areas, etc. in Orford to Ted to put on the website.

13. Other Business Carl S. – Mountain View Farm: Intention to have work done to stabilize the old barn and shed. He spoke to David Bischoff who has hired Lenny Gray to put in some replacement sills. This will be paid for out of funds raised for the barn work. We should set target date for volunteer work. David suggested sometime in October. On the beaver problem previously reported (cow got stuck in mud created by flowage from beaver dam)-- Carl S. was going to talk to Jason Berard of Upper Valley Land Trust, but did not reach him. David talked with UVLT; they said to do whatever needs to be done. One recommendation was to move the fence line to the east to avoid the mud and the beavers. Carl S. forwarded the information about beaver control to David Bischoff and to UVLT.

Motion (Tom/ John) to Adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:56pm

Minutes taken by Fran Plaisted and Emily Bryant.

Next meetings: Sept 17, Oct 15, likely via Zoom