

Orford Conservation Commission (OCC)
Meeting Minutes: September 16, 2021
Meeting held in person at the Niles Room in the Town Offices

Present: Members: Ted Cooley (Chair), John Miller (Vice Chair), Craig Putnam, Carl Schmidt, Harry Pease; Alternates: Carl Cassel, Emily Bryant

Meeting called to order 7:01.

1. Minutes of June 17, 2021:

Motion (Ted / Craig) to accept the minutes of June 17, 2021. Change the person who made the motion to pass the minutes of April and June to "one of the Carls". The motion passed.

2. Business

a) Recruiting Ted and Harry said they had reached out to several people who had either declined or not responded. We want to have people from different parts of town and with diverse interests.

> Craig with ask Bill and Shannon Wilson.

>John will reach out to the Hartman's.

> Emily will ask Fran if she can contact the Hedges.

Question: do you have to be a resident of Orford to be a member of the Conservation Commission?
Need to look this up.

b) Invoices.

Motion (Ted/Carl C.) The Conservation Commission permits the Chair of the Conservation Commission to submit invoices for water testing for payment. The motion passed.

Invoices for Mowing on 7/7, 7/27, 8/5, 9/2 at \$80 per time (total \$320)

Invoices for water testing: 6/29: \$140, 7/6: \$224, 7/13: \$112, 7/20: \$112, 7/27: \$112, 9/7: \$224. Total \$924. There was an additional test in August.

> Ted will find the August water test invoice.

c) Water testing. The reason for more water testing this year was to try to keep tabs on the E. coli results at Indian Pond (there were high results last year). Ted asked: How did the testing program work this year?, and Do we need to do the same next year?

Harry responded that this testing schedule did keep better tabs on the results. He expressed concern that the Selectboard (SB) has neglected to act sometimes when the results were high. Tests are taken on Tuesday, results available by Thursday. We have an obligation to let the public know the results, since we are using public funds. Why test if the SB doesn't act?

Ted suggested sending a letter to the SB recommending posting when the results are high. Could the highway Dept post for the SB? There are posting signs from DES to use. Could Esther give someone the signs to post?

Harry adjusted the testing schedule this year depending on the results. (More tests when results were high.) Do we want to give the authority for timing and location of testing to the person in charge of testing (Harry was this person the past couple of years)? The schedule has been from the first Tuesday in June, monthly, to the first Tuesday in September. Harry scheduled test pickup weekly, for every Tuesday, and then canceled if no test was taken. Easier to cancel a scheduled test than to request an additional one.

Harry is willing to continue coordinating the water testing but would like to have assurance that the SB will act on high results.

Craig inquired why are the test results so variable? No one knows.

The testing procedure does take a lot of time.

Water testing action items:

> What should the testing schedule be for next year?

> Need to reach out to the SB: who will post and take down signs, and when? We should propose a plan to the SB.

> Determine a budget for water testing for next year.

d) Orford Conservation Land (Richmond property) Need to do mowing (of the trail down to and along the water) and fix signs.

e) FERC – relicensing of Wilder Dam. Ted will forward information on a relicensing hearing. Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC) gave two presentations about relicensing. They would like to encourage more access points and more recreational opportunities. There may be places other than at the dam where the power company could provide recreational opportunities. Relicensing happens once every 40 years.

f) Highway/Culvert project in Fairlee. Carl S. expressed concern over the large project being done in Fairlee near the RR station: trees cut, excavation from the highway down towards the river. He found out that it is apparently a VTRANS project to provide runoff from Route 5. He mentioned this to the Upper Valley River Subcommittee. We should continue to monitor it.

g) We are looking for: website updates, pictures, events, e.g. bird walk with Earl (friend of Steketees)?

h) Other projects/reports:

Invasives: John reported that there has been cooperation on the part of the Highway Department.

Terry Straight purchased a brush trimmer to cut knotweed (rather than mowing) and brought the knotweed cuttings to the sand pit. CC members and another town volunteer moved last year's knotweed cuttings from behind the highway garage over to the sand pit for burning.

Tillotson Falls Road knotweed control experiment: The mulch/tarp/mulch method seemed to work well, but is lots of work; we touched it up this year. The hardware cloth experiment did not work as well – knotweed grew up through the holes and send roots down around the wires. The repeated weeding method seemed to help – growth not as big this year as last year; we weeded a couple of times this year.

Jacob's Brook: NH DOT has not retooled the "bench" area near Brook Road as they said they would.

Culvert Inventory (Conservation Fund helped pay for this): doesn't seem to have been used by the town. Harry thought perhaps the new Road Commission might or might not be aware of it.

Conservation Properties: Need to emphasize how useful they are. Could list them as an Ebird hotspot. Add the Trail on the Orford Conservation Land.

Grant proposal. Emily mentioned that Laina Warsavage at the Social Library said there was a solicitation for grant proposals (due by Sept 30) to be used for outdoor activities. Could we use this for the maintenance of the Indian Pond Heritage Trail? Perhaps should contact Paul Goundrey.

Harry mentioned that he was just appointed to the Upper Valley Land Trust's Board of Directors.

Upper Baker Pond lily pads: Carl S. said that someone in town had expressed concern that the beach at Upper Baker Pond has lily pads growing in. But can we legally do anything about this?

Motion (Carl C./John): To adjourn. The motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18pm

Next meetings: October 21 and November 18 at 7:00 pm. These will likely be held in the Niles Room of the Town Offices.

Minutes taken by Emily Bryant.