Orford Conservation Commission Minutes, March 21, 2013

Members present: Bry Beeson, Chair, Harry Pease, Vice Chair, Emily Bryant, Carl Schmidt, Tom Bubolz, Craig Putnam, Secretary; also present, Alternates: Fran Plaisted and Kathy Baker

OCC member Carl Cassel arrived at 7:20

Visitors present: Ann Green and Jeff MacQueen

The meeting commenced at 7:00 PM. Minutes from the December 20, 2012 meeting were reviewed; Harry made a motion, which Tom seconded, to approve the minutes; approval was unanimous.

Minutes from the February 21, 2013 meeting were reviewed, correcting a few typos. It was noted that Ann Green’s first name is spelled without a final “e”. Tom made a motion, seconded by Harry, that the minutes be approved as corrected; approval was unanimous.

The Conservation Commission by-laws approved at last month’s meeting have been forwarded by Harry to Sheri in the Town Office for posting. Bry suggested that some extra copies be printed up. Fran noted that it would be helpful to include a copy of the by-laws in each Member’s blue Handbook.

Pete Helm, Stewardship VP of the Upper Valley Land Trust passed on to Bry information on laws regarding access for disabled people to public lands such as our Orford Conservation Land. Although we are not required to make trails accessible, disabled people do have the right to access the land using whatever means they have, such as mechanized conveyances.

Carl Schmidt gave an update on the former Dennis property, about which the OCC has maintained an active interest regarding possible conservation. The property has been sold to Orford residents Rob and Deirdre O’Donnel who, it is understood, plan to restore the house, barn and farm outbuildings, as well as to actively farm the land. Active conversations are being carried on between them and the Upper Valley Land Trust as to various possibilities for conservation. Talks are also underway with the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the USDA about programs they offer for river bank stabilization.

Carl also reported that there are two other farms in Orford currently in transition; both the “Bunten Farm” with 185 conserved acres, and the “Strawberry Hill Farm” with 330 acres (not conserved) are now on the market.

Ann Green stopped in to check on details of the upcoming bird-walk to be held on May 11 from 7 – 10 AM (to be held on May 12 in case of heavy rain). The walk will be led by Bill Shepard, and will take place at the Orford Conservation Land. Binoculars are recommended.

Bry reported that several Minimum Impact Notifications have been received from the Dept. of Environmental Services. No comments were deemed necessary from the OCC.

Emily reported on the recently held Orford Photo Contest sponsored by the OCC. There were first, second and third prizes awarded for both youth and adults. Once again the event was deemed a success. A suggestion was made to make an announcement of next year’s Town Meeting Day OCC photo contest months ahead of time, in the summer newsletter, to encourage wider participation, with more diverse seasonal subject matter.

The annual receipt of a Certificate of Insurance Liability License by Tullando Farm was noted . They are required to carry liability insurance as a condition of their lease agreement with the OCC to farm the Orford Conservation Land.

The OCC “lending library” consisting of a copy of Northern Woodland’s “The Outside Story” was passed on to Harry Pease for the months of March and April.

Under New Business, an announcement was made of the “Saving Special Places” conference to be held in Weare, NH, on April 6. Members are encouraged to go; OCC will pay the registration fee for members.

Harry reported that he has asked the Orford Selectboard to appoint him as a representative of Orford (and the Conservation Commission) on the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commssion.

A slate for new OCC officers for the coming year was put forward: Chair: Harry Pease, Vice Chair: Carl Cassel, Secretary: Fran Plaisted, with Kathy Baker agreeing to provide back-up when Fran has to be absent. Bry moved the slate, which was seconded by Carl Schmidt. Approval was unanimous. Appreciation was expressed for Bry’s recent service as Chair, as well as for his many years on the Commission.

Harry will notify the Selectboard of a request by OCC to appoint Jeff MacQueen and Craig Putnam as Alternates on the OCC.

Carl Schmidt announced that the UVLT invites all members to its annual chili dinner on April 2, from 5:30 to 8:30. The program will present the results of a survey on public attitudes on quality of life, open spaces, and public access to conserved land.

Carl also reported that a key issue in Lyme’s Town Meeting was a request by the Selectboard of Lyme to control the monies in the town Conservation Fund. This is an issue we need to follow, said Carl.

Bry and Anne Duncan Cooley plan to look into a question arising out of the town Annual Report which reports 9 acres having been removed from Current Use in the past year – but no funds have come into the Conservation Fund in the form of Land Transfer taxes.

Tom moved that the meeting be adjourned, which motion was seconded by Carl Cassel and approved by all at 8:50 PM.

Craig Putnam, Secretary