Orford Conservation Commission

Minutes of October 16, 2014 Meeting

Members Present: Harry Pease, Carl Schmidt, Tom Bubloz, Jeff MacQueen, and Kathy Baker; Alternates Present: Emily Bryant and Craig Putnam; Selectboard Representative: Anne Duncan Cooley; Guest: Sara Cavin from Upper Valley Land Trust

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Alternates Emily Bryant and Craig Putnam were designated as voting members for the meeting.

New Business:

Sara Cavin of the UVLT made a presentation regarding the 142 acre Bischoff property in Quinttown, formerly known as the Billy Brown Farm. The owners, David and John Bischoff, are working with the UVLT to have the property conserved through a purchase by the UVLT. The Quabbin to Cardigan Mountain Partnership has approved a grant of $4,500 towards the cost of the project, to be used by December 2015. UVLT has applied for a state Moose Plate grant in the amount of $25,000 for the same purpose and they expect to have an answer by January 2015. The town’s assessed value for the property is about $154,500. In addition to the purchase price, other project costs will include about $2,000 for an appraisal, $1,000 for title work and survey, $5,000 to $6,000 for UVLT project management and $20,000 for a long-term stewardship fund. Funds will need to be raised or donated to cover the costs of acquiring the property that are in excess of any grants received. Sara suggested that the Orford Conservation Commission could help by donating funds from our Conservation Fund and by assisting with a fundraising campaign and that a game plan should be in place by spring 2015. Carl Schmidt stated that preservation of the barn on the property should be seriously pursued as part of the project. The Conservation Commission will consider a contribution for the project at a later meeting.

Minutes of the September 18, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved after a motion by Craig and a second by Emily.

Old Business:

Solarize Orford Update: Emily reported that Milhouse Enterprises has been selected as the installer. Milhouse will make a presentation at a meeting in the Rivendell café on October 18. Costs of advertising were discussed. Members of the Solarize Committee paid for advertising out of their own pockets. The Conservation Commission will consider helping reimburse for those costs at its next meeting. Anne suggested that the Niles Fund might be a source of reimbursement, and Emily agreed to check into it.

Orford Conservation Land Project Planning: Jeff and Craig volunteered to help Harry coordinate the project with Tullando Farm and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The first stage is eliminating invasive plants by July 2015. Carl stated it is important to include more people in this project. Our goal has been to include the community and school as volunteer and educational opportunities.

Conservation Fund and Budget: The Conservation Fund has a balance of approximately $167,000 with an additional $29,500 anticipated from land recently taken out of current use. Harry presented the 2015 budget to the Selectboard on October 15 in the amount of $1,970, the same as our 2014 budget. He stated that we are receiving all necessary monthly financial reports.

Fisher Shoreland and Wetland Permit Applications Update: We received a letter from Schauer Environmental Consultants regarding the shoreland application. They have removed the funicular from the project and are proposing other modifications to reduce erosion, which should allow to the State to issue the permit.

Other New Business:

Anne reported on the hazard mitigation planning committee, and the consensus was that flooding is a big hazard for the town. Preserving wetlands is a key component of flood mitigation, thus Anne suggested the Conservation Commission be represented on the committee, which is being led by the State. The next meeting is November 7 at 9 a.m. at the Town Offices. Harry will attend.

Carl reported that Christine Balch is serving on the Upper Valley River Subcommittee and attended the last meeting with him as the Orford representatives. Carl had a discussion with Taylor Soper, and due to health issues, no decision will be made to conserve his land by the river at this time. Taylor did report that he has a potential buyer for the property who may be interested in conserving the land. Carl asked Eric Parenti about serving on the Conservation Commission, and although he is interested and willing to help, he cannot be a member since meeting times are inconvenient for him.

It was suggested that the Conservation Commission meet with Dave Bischoff for a tour of his Quinttown property. The weekend of November 1-2 was suggested. Harry will coordinate with Dave and put out a meeting notice.

Tom made a motion that we adjourn, Kathy seconded the motion, all agreed and the meeting adjourned at 8:50.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Baker