Orford Conservation Commission

 Minutes of November 19, 2015 Meeting

Commissioners Present: Harry Pease, Carl Schmidt, Carl Cassel, Tom Bubolz and Jeff MacQueen; Alternates Present: Fran Plaisted, Emily Bryant and Craig Putnam; Guest: David Bischoff

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

Harry requested that Craig Putnam and Emily Bryant serve as Commissioners tonight for the two vacant/open positions.

Minutes from the October 15 meeting were reviewed. Craig motioned we accept them, Carl Cassel seconded and the motion carried.

Old Business:

Mason Pond Project: Fundraising to date is about $8,000 of our $20,000 goal. We discussed additional personal contacts with potential donors. LCHIP is doing their final review of grant applications. The decision on our grant application for $125,000 is scheduled to be announced on December 3 or 4.

Conservation Fund and Budget: Harry reported that we will come in under our $1,970 budget again this year. The balance in the Conservation Fund remains at about $206,000, with $50,000 committed to the Mason Pond Project. Harry reminded us of the history of the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Fund as follows:

The Orford Conservation Commission was established in 1972 by approval of Warrant Article 20 at Town Meeting, which stated in part “To see if the Town will establish a Conservation Commission under the provisions of R.S.A. 36A.”

At the March 14, 2000 Town Meeting voters approved Warrant Article 19 which stated “To see if the Town will vote to deposit 100% of the revenues collected pursuant to RSA 79-A (the land use change tax) in a fund known as the Conservation Fund as authorized by RSA 79-A:25 II, to be administered by the Conservation Commission to help preserve the rural character of Orford by encouraging the conservation of open land in accordance with RSA 36-A:5 III.”

In accordance with RSA 36-A:5 II “The town treasurer, pursuant to RSA 41:29, shall have custody of all moneys in the conservation fund and shall pay out the same only upon order of the conservation commission. The disbursement of conservation funds shall be authorized by a majority of the conservation commission. Prior to the use of such funds for the purchase of any interest in real property or for a contribution to a qualified organization for the purchase of property interests under RSA 36-A:4-a, I(b), the conservation commission shall hold a public hearing with notice in accordance with RSA 675:7.”

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New Business:

Update of Natural Resources Inventory: The current Natural Resources Inventory for Orford, dated June 2011, states the following in regard to updates: “The status and significance of natural resources and their protections do change over time, and this inventory should not be considered as a ‘final product.’ The inventory includes a summary of what exists at the current time and recommends actions for the future; this document should be revisited periodically to update the inventory with newly available data, protections, and priorities for natural resources conservation. It may be most helpful to update the Natural Resources Inventory on a regular cycle in sync with Master Plan updates, so that the statistics and recommendations contained within the Natural Resources Inventory can be used to inform the development of the Master Plan.” According to Ann Green, Chair of the Planning Board, Orford plans to begin organizing a committee to update the Master Plan in the near future. Given that, and the fact that New Hampshire just published its 2015 Wildlife Action Plan, it seems this is an appropriate time to undertake an update to the Natural Resources Inventory. We will discuss timing at next month’s meeting. In the meantime, Harry will check with UVLSRPC to see if they have someone on staff who could assist with the update like they did with the original inventory.

Fairlee Forest Festival: The Orford Conservation Commission has been invited by the Friends of Fairlee Forest to take part in their celebration of area forests on July 2, 2016 by joining other neighboring conservation commissions in having a booth at the event. We agreed to participate and Harry will let them know.

Commission Membership: Craig indicated that he would like to become a full Commissioner versus his current position as an Alternate. The Commissioners unanimously approved. Harry will contact the Selectboard to have Craig appointed. We also discussed a potential new member and the desire to have more alternates. There will be more discussion next month.

Carl Schmidt mentioned that the Town Hall Heritage Center will be open on November 21 from 10:00 to 1:00 and that the Quinttown Exhibit is still there. This will be the last day the Heritage Center will be open this year, but there will be a holiday celebration on December 6 outside.

Tom motioned that we adjourn, Craig seconded and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Plaisted