Mason Pond Project

Public Hearing

February 18, 2016

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Harry Pease, Carl Schmidt, Carl Cassel, Tom Bubolz, Craig Putnam and Jeff MacQueen; Alternates Present: Fran Plaisted and Emily Bryant; Public Attendees: Sarah Schwaegler, Bruce Schwaegler, Kathy Baker, Eva Daniels, Ann Green, John O’Brien, Sam Hanford, Karen Tullar, Rendell Tullar, Steve Sargent and Ted Cooley

* Chair called the Public Hearing into session at 7:00 p.m.
* Chair asked Conservation Commissioners to introduce themselves.
* Chair asked public attendees to sign in.
* Chair explained the purpose of the Hearing and reviewed the agenda for the Hearing. Agenda includes: explain the Conservation Commission’s proposal, explain the Conservation Fund, discuss the specifics of the Mason Pond Project and the project budget, receive public comments and questions, and discuss next steps in the process.
* Chair explained that the Town voted to establish the Conservation Fund at Town Meeting on March 14, 2000, to be funded with 100% of land use change tax collections. Current balance in the Conservation Fund is about $205,500. Funds can only be expended by a majority vote of Commissioners, and prior to spending any funds for the purchase of any interest in real property or for a contribution to a qualified organization for the purchase of property interests (in this case the UVLT) a public hearing must be held.
* Chair presented information about the Mason Pond Project (see page 2 for details) and the Mason Pond Project Budget (see page 3 for details).
* Chair explained the Conservation Commission’s proposal to contribute an additional $10,000 from the Conservation Fund for the project. The Conservation Commission previously approved a $50,000 contribution to the Mason Pond Project on August 20, 2015 following a Public Hearing. The proposed additional $10,000 contribution is the result of the LCHIP Grant being approved at $32,500 less than what we applied for ($92,500 approved versus $125,000 requested). That shortfall is covered by current owners David and John Bischoff reducing their selling price an additional $10,000, the UVLT agreeing to contribute an additional $10,000, and our local fund raising campaign covering an additional $2,500, leaving $10,000 as an additional contribution that we propose to make from the Conservation Fund.
* Chair solicited input from the public regarding the Conservation Commission’s proposal to contribute an additional $10,000 from the Conservation Fund for the project. Several public attendees spoke in support of the project. No one spoke in opposition to the project or the proposed additional contribution.
* Chair discussed next steps for the project, specifically the planned closing date of April 15, 2016, and the due diligence package being worked on that contains the budget, appraisal, survey, deed language and management plan.
* Chair thanked the attendees and adjourned the Public Hearing at 7:36 p.m.

MASON POND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

* Current owners, David and John Bischoff approached UVLT and OCC about 2 years ago when they began thinking about selling their property. They recognized the importance of its natural and historic features and wanted it preserved.
* Project is a joint effort by current owners David and John Bischoff, the Conservation Commission and UVLT.
* Commissioners and Selectboard unanimously approved the Conservation Commission participation in the project.
* Fee acquisition by UVLT, will remain in Current Use, UVLT will pay property taxes currently about $3,100.
* UVLT is nonprofit land conservancy working in 45 Upper Valley communities, has conserved over 475 projects, more than 45,000 acres.
* Land is the former Billy Brown farm, and the only remaining open farmland in Quinttown.
* Property includes 146.4 acres, cabin, barn and shed.
* Two-thirds of acreage is highly ranked wildlife habitat.
* 43 acres hay and pasture farmed by Tullando Farm, UVLT will continue.
* Forests have been sustainably managed and provide exceptional wildlife habitat and critical buffer to Mason Pond.
* Mason Pond is one of four “great ponds” in Orford, and the only completely undeveloped one.
* Property includes 850 feet of frontage on Mason Pond.
* Is part of the Jacobs Brook and Connecticut River watershed.
* Provides extensive views of Mt Cube and surrounding ridgeline.
* Abuts Stonehouse Mountain conserved land and close to Appalachian Trail corridor.
* Once conserved, will provide opportunities for conservation and stewardship education, hiking, cross country skiing, fishing, and public use of the cabin.
* UVLT will construct hiking trail to Mason Pond.
* Closing scheduled on/about April 15.
* 2 deeds to be executed: (1) Bischoff’s to UVLT for fee acquisition; (2) UVLT to Town of Orford acting through the Conservation Commission and to LCHIP conveying Primary and Secondary Executory Interests, respectively, and providing Covenants and Restrictions.
* Hand out and discuss budget. Changes from original budget to current budget are hi-lited in yellow. Expense increase is for transfer taxes not in original budget. Changes in income reflect lower than requested LCHIP grant, additional local fund raising, and other adjustments to cover LCHIP grant shortfall.

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| **Mason Pond Project Budget** |  |  |  |
|  | Original | Current |  Percentage  |
| **Expenses** |  |  |  |
| Land fair market value | $300,000 | $300,000 |  |
| Appraisal | 2,000 | 2,000 |  |
| Survey | 7,000 | 6,975 |  |
| Legal/Environmental Due Diligence and Closing | 3,300 | 5,000 |  |
| Stewardship Fund | 20,000 | 20,000 |  |
| Printing & Mailing | 2,000 | 2,000 |  |
| UVLT Staff (project manage, fundraising, mapping) | 9,250 | 9,250 |  |
| Basic signage, gates | 450 | 450 |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Total |  $344,000  | $345,675 |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Income** |  |  |  |
| Bischoff's contribution - reduced sale price | $61,000 | $71,000 |  21%  |
| Quabbin to Cardigan - grant approved | 4,500 | 4,500 |  1  |
| Moose Plate - grant approved | 20,000 | 20,000 |  6  |
| Orford Conservation Fund | 50,000 | 60,000 |  17  |
| Orford Local Fundraising | 20,000 | 23,744 |  7  |
| LCHIP - grant approved | 125,000 | 92,500 |  27  |
| UVLT Non-local Fundraising | 63,500  | 73,500 |  21  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Total |  $344,000  | $345,244 |  100%  |