Orford Conservation Commission

Minutes of Meeting on February 23, 2017

Commissioners Present: Tom Bubolz, Carl Cassel, Paul Goundrey, Jeff MacQueen, Craig Putnam and Carl Schmidt; Alternates Present: Emily Bryant, Ted Cooley and Fran Plaisted; Selectboard Representative: Anne Duncan Cooley

Carl Cassel requested that Emily serve as a Commissioner in Harry Pease’s absence.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approve Prior Meeting Minutes: Carl Cassel reviewed the minutes from the January 19 and February 3 meetings. Ted made a motion that we accept the minutes of both meetings, Tom seconded and the motion carried.

Town Meeting Preparation: Carl Schmidt reviewed the Warrant Article regarding the Wilder Dam relicensing. The article reads: "Resolved, that the Town of Orford, through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process, has been presented with information on the Connecticut River. If it is shown that there is a causal relationship between the operation of the Wilder Dam by TransCanada Corporation or subsequent owners resulting in the deterioration of the riverbank and attendant roads and lands, it is recommended that the Town of Orford formally request that the TransCanada Corporation or subsequent owners modify current dam operations and create a mitigation fund to reimburse towns and landowners for any and all damages.”If this article is approved by the Town, the Conversation Commission presumably will draft a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission reporting the Town’s recommendation to create a mitigation fund. TransCanada has indicated that there are no adverse unavoidable impacts from the dam. Carl Schmidt offered to introduce discussion of the article at Town Meeting and will seek others, especially those having lost land to river erosion, to support its enactment. Jeff and Emily will put together a photo and map display for the Conservation Commission table at Town Meeting.

Climate Change Presentation: Sherry Godlewski from the NH Department of Environmental Services is willing to make her Climate Change presentation in Orford. Sherry also serves on the Coastal and Upper Valley Adaptation Work Groups that are planning for the impacts of climate change. Rivendell Academy is also interested in having Sherry make her presentation to students, and especially those in Science Teacher Rachel Sander’s class, who will have a unit on climate change this spring. We hope to have Sherry make an afternoon presentation to Rivendell students and an evening presentation to the public. Jeff offered to coordinate these Conservation Commission sponsored events.

Household Hazardous Waste Disposal: The Selectboard is asking that the Orford Conservation Commission help disseminate information about household hazardous waste collections at the landfill in Lebanon. The town funds this program for Orford residents who participate, so we are hoping residents will take advantage of the multiple days to bring in hazardous wastes. Information about the program should be added to the town website. Emily will get some information about household hazardous waste for our table at Town Meeting.

Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) Update: Carl Cassel suggested each member be responsible for a chapter in the NRI update. After discussion, the following chapter and appendix assignments were made:

Surface Waters – Tom

Agricultural Resources – Craig

Geology – Jeff

Wildlife and Native Plant Resources – Jeff

Outdoor Recreation Resources – Ted

Cultural and Historic Resources – Carl Schmidt

Forest Resources – Harry

Scenic Resources – Paul

Land in Conservation and Current Use – Emily

Floodplains – Fran

Air Quality, Peace and Quiet, and Dark Skies – Anne

Groundwater Resources – Carl Cassel

Natural Resources Co-Occurrence – Emily

We will ask Amber Boland if she can substitute the new 2015 Wildlife Action Plan layer for the 2010 WAP in the co-occurrence map. Carl Cassel will contact Bruce Schwaegler about the chapter on Wetlands and Jeff will contact Sarah Schwaegler for her updated list of Native and Non-native Plants. Members were asked to be prepared to discuss their chapter at the March meeting.

Saving Special Places: The Saving Special Places Workshop will be held on April 8 this year. Craig expressed interest in attending.

Carl Schmidt reported that, during the January 23 meeting of the Upper Valley Subcommittee of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, Rich Kirn of Vermont Fish & Wildlife and Ron Rhodes of the Connecticut River Watershed Council made a detailed presentation on the impact of various types of culverts and stream-bed configurations on “Aquatic Habitat Restoration”. Carl distributed copies of publications “Vermont Stream Crossing Handbook” and “Living in Harmony with Streams: A Citizen’s Handbook to How Streams Work”. Anne commented that much of this work followed from impacts caused by Hurricane Irene; she will provide the publications to the Selectboard.

Carl S. mentioned in the context of conservation that the Orford Historical Society will sponsor a presentation on March 11 featuring Dylan Wilcox, Sophie Tullar and Gwynnie Munroe about hiking the lengths of the Appalachian and Long Trails. Entitled, “Turning 11 on the Appalachian Trail” it will take place at 7:00 p.m. following the Friends of the Libraries’ Soup Supper at the Congregational Church.

Speaking of historic resources, Carl Schmidt reported that the 1817 Rogers House on the Ridge has been sold with a preservation easement as a result of lots of work and support on the part of the Selectboard and a group of interested citizens.

Carl Schmidt made a motion that we change the date of the next Conservation Commission meeting from March 16 to March 23 since March 16 falls during the week of Town Meeting, Ted seconded and the motion carried.

Craig reported that the Natural Resources Conservation Service may have seeds available to create a pollinator garden. Emily will check and report back.

Ted reported that the Upper Valley Land Trust and the Conservation Commission are co-sponsoring a full moon snowshoe hike at Mountain View Farm on March 11. Participants will meet in the Rivendell Academy parking lot at 7:00 p.m. More details will be provided on listserv and the UVLT website.

Tom made a motion to adjourn, Ted seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Fran Plaisted