

Orford Conservation Commission (OCC)
Meeting Minutes: December 17, 2020
Meeting held via Zoom due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements

Present via Zoom: Members: John Miller (Vice Chair), Craig Putnam, Carl Schmidt, Harry Pease, Tom Bubolz. Alternate: Emily Bryant (Assistant Sec’y)
Meeting called to order 7:03

John chaired the meeting since Ted could not attend. Emily Bryant was seated as a member.

1. Approval of minutes of 11/19/2020: Passed over till the January meeting.
2. Land use agreements for Boat Landing and Orford Conservation Land- The agreement has not been signed yet. John will follow up with Ted on this.
3. Orfordville Road Culvert: John reported that the wetlands application is still pending with the state. Horizons Engineering said that all items necessary for the application have been received by the state, so at this point we are waiting for action from the state.
4. Natural Resources Inventory. John reported that the NRI chapters have not yet been uploaded to the Town website. He will check with Esther on this. Once it is uploaded, we need to publicize it. One idea was to send one chapter a month out on the Listserv. Carl wondered whether Facebook would be a good place for publicity.
5. 2021 budget. John reported that there has been no feedback yet on the budget that was proposed to the Selectboard.
6. Invoices: None pending
7. Monitoring of the Richardson and Schwaegler conservation easements. Emily and Harry monitored the land on December 3 and found no problems. Emily submitted the report to Society for the Protection of NH Forests.
8. OCC projects update: John sent an email around on this. Highlights at the meeting:
 - Knotweed: John met with Leslie Garamella about the knotweed situation on her newly purchased property on Tannery Road. Carl reported seeing some work on the knotweed as he went by.
 - Jacob’s Brook replacement culvert (near Brook Road). John reviewed the situation (the “shelf” designed by Jim Kennedy for flood protection was damaged by the state’s replacement of a culvert). Also we need to locate funding for replacement plantings which were destroyed by the culvert project and by mowing. John has not heard from Ron Rhodes or Jim Kennedy on this. Chris Turgeon of NH DOT said they would fix the bench, but this has not been done yet. We need to follow up with Ron R. Jm K. and Chris T.
9. Water testing. John reported that the Selectboard (SB) adopted the water testing policy that the CC proposed, except they changed “shall” to “may” in terms of the SB consulting outside experts if test readings are high. John will check with Ted to get the wording on the policy. There was discussion on water testing, mostly about what should be done when reading are high. (The Budget committee asked, why do we need to increase testing if we don’t do anything about high readings?)

-Harry: we have an obligation to the Town to let them know when readings are high, especially since we are using town funds for the testing.

- Tom's understanding was that the Health Officer has the responsibility to do this.

- Health Officer is under the SB, so SB has responsibility.

- What needs to be done when there's a high reading:? Put up a notice at the site; put it on the listserv.

Tom: put the standards for safe swimming on the notice along with the readings obtained.

Emily: put the date on the notice.

Emily (confirmed by Tom): the testing originated as a way to see what quality the water was for the ecosystem, not just for human health purposes.

John will locate the policy and see if it states that it is the SB's responsibility to act and to see if it specifies water testing frequency.

10. Outreach: Website/ Photos/ Links to interesting sites or online events: Please keep them coming – the site needs to stay live to be interesting.

12. Budget for water testing: this will be voted on at Town Meeting in March.

13. Knotweed: John suggested that we need more volunteers to carry on the knotweed project. How can we get more? Have a seminar from NH DES? Rivendell Students? He expressed concern that the construction on the High Bridge Road bridge will damage the work done at the intersection of High Bridge and Tillotson Falls Roads. Emily said it would be too bad not to follow up on the work done last year.

14. Commissioner Terms: The terms for Craig and Harry (members), Fran, and Emily (alternates) are up in 2021. John suggested that those people should let Ted know if they do not want to take on another term. This is how it usually works: CC nominates people to be on or continue on the Commission and sends this to the Selectboard, who typically approve the appointments, and do this on the first SB meeting after town Meeting. Then the new members/alternates get sworn in.

15. Carl: Carpentry work has been done on the barn at the Billy Brown (aka Mountain View) Farm, and it is in good shape for winter. John suggested that Carl send some pictures of the work being done on the barn.

Next meetings: Jan 21 and Feb 18, 2021 (likely via Zoom)

Minutes taken by Emily Bryant.