

Orford Conservation Commission (OCC)
Approved Meeting Minutes: June 15, 2023

Meeting held in person at the Niles Room in the Town Offices (Zoom not available due to network problems)

Present in person: Commission Members: Ted Cooley (Chair), Bob Hedges (Vice Chair), Harry Pease; Alternates: John Miller, Emily Bryant; Members of the public: Shawn Washburn, Casey Washburn. Meeting called to order 7:05pm. Emily and John were seated as members.

1. Minutes. *Motion (Bob/John):* to accept the minutes of 5/18/23 as written. The motion passed. Emily will send the approved May minutes to Esther.

2. Invoices:

- from Alan Dyke: \$120 for mowing at the Orford Conservation Land on 4/28, 5/11, 5/26 (\$40 each).

- from Eastern Analytics for water testing: May 22 (\$120), June 5 (\$320), and June 12 (\$120).

See end of minutes for copies of invoices.

3. Subcommittee assignments. The following subcommittees were proposed:

A. Invasives (the “Knoheads”) to address control of invasive species, including knotweed and other species. John, Bob, Harry, and Emily volunteered.

B. Conservation Lands (aka the “Birdbrains”) to work on conserved lands in town, for instance maintaining trails and making signs for the Orford Conservation Land (OCL), and monitoring the Richardson-Schwaegler easement. Harry, Ted, John, Bob, and Craig volunteered. Re: Harry said that they plan to reroute the beginning of the trail at the OCL to follow a more direct route from the bottom of the lower field access road. Some large trees need to be removed. Brad McCormack donated some benches that are on the land. Thank you Brad. The subcommittee will wait till after nesting birds have gone to do the work.

C. Monitoring of the old dump closure (aka the “Dump Divers”). Ted will attend a training session in July on how to monitor an unlined waste site. The Town expressed interest in having the CC take this over.

4. Water testing. Reports have all been OK so far. Upper Baker Pond had an E. coli reading of 86 on June 5 (max count for swimming is 88), but it was back down to 11 on June 12.

5. Projects.

A. Tillotson Falls Road Knotweed control: The Selectboard (SB) sent a message saying that a citizen was concerned about the messy appearance at the road Junction on Tillotson Falls Road. This is where a multi-year project to control knotweed has been going on. John responded to the SB and said 1) The previous Road Agent supplied mulch to cover it up – could the Selectboard in its role as Highway Dept provide some more mulch? 2) How should we dispose of the pulled knotweed? 3) How to address the construction work along Archertown Road, since there is knotweed in that area. John noted that there are state regulations on how to dispose of knotweed. He has not yet received a response from the SB. John tidied up the area on Tillotson Falls Road, and added some signs explaining that this is an invasives control project. Weeding of knotweed has been done twice since the last CC meeting.

B. Mowing along Rte 25A: We are still waiting for a response from Chris Turgeon about the proposal for mowing along Rte 25A (DOT mows the first 15’ from the road and OCC maintains from there to the brook). A proposal and map were sent to Chris earlier.

C. Jacobs Brook Erosion: Shawn and Casey Washburn want to make it known to various parties in town about a part of Jacobs Brook along their property that is eroding – when the next big flood comes along, the brook is in danger of breaking through the bank and aiming for a house, Rte 25A, and the Town Offices building. Various suggestions were made: Contact Ron Rhodes of Connecticut River Conservancy (advice and possible funding), Jim Kennedy, wetland professional (project design), CT River Joint Commissions (possible funding), USDA NRCS (funding), Grafton County Regional Development Corporation (funding).

6. Events and Activities: Star-Gazing Party: Emily and the Hedges have inquired of the Upper Valley Land Trust whether they are planning to have the Star-Gazing Party at Mountain View Farm again this year,

and have not yet heard back. Other suggested activities: Bird-watching, perhaps with a workshop on the “Merlin” app. (Side Note: Whippoorwills have been heard near the south end of Indian Pond Road, and there are lots of bobolinks on Harry Pease’s fields). Boating on Indian Pond. Grand opening of the trail that is being made on Stonehouse Mountain (trail may be complete by the end of summer).

7. Membership: no new suggestions.

8. New Conservation Easement: Linda Paradee just signed a conservation easement with UVLT on her land yesterday: 8 acres abutting the Connecticut River on Route 10 north.

Motion (John/Harry): to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02

Minutes taken by Emily Bryant

See invoices in separate document.