

Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes: January 16, 2025
Meeting held in person at the Niles Room in the Town Offices and via Zoom

Present-in-person: Commission Members: Ted Cooley, Harry Pease. Alternates: Emily Bryant and John Miller. Representing the Selectboard: Kevin Follensbee. Other: Chris Gothberg.
Attending via Zoom: Bob Hedges (Chair).

Meeting called to order 7:06 PM.

Emily Bryant and John Miller were seated.

1. **Minutes from 12/19/24:** *Motion* (Ted/Harry) to accept the minutes of 12/19/24 as written. Motion passed.
2. **Report on the 1/12/25 Moonlight Snowshoe at Mountain View Farm:** Emily said that people had a good time even with a 100-yard excursion off the trail bushwhacking to get to Mason Pond. Bob said that Cassie Bernyk of UVLT counted 55 attendees. John suggested that the gate be opened so that people do not have to negotiate the stile over the fence. Bob will contact Alexander and Cassie of UVLT about 1) having the gate open and 2) improving the trail to the pond.
3. **Events:** *Winter hikes and speakers:* Bob reported that these are set. *Summer hikes:* Bob has also been in touch with people about access and permissions for summer hikes: Jason of UVLT will talk with Heidi Wilson about Cottonstone Farm. Harry has spoken with Tom about the lupine walk – Tom has given permission but might not be able to be there himself. Bob will talk with Russ Hirschler of UVTA to see about organizing a Mt Cube to Rivendell Academy (15 mile) hike. Ted will talk with Ann and Fran will talk with Jeff MacQueen about early May birding outings. *Calendar:* Bob said he would like to have a full calendar of events for the year so we can hand out a flyer at Town Meeting in March.
4. **Managing large groups:** There was discussion of ways to handle large groups of people on outings. Chris said that the AT has a rule that groups should not be bigger than 10-12; Ted said that the Rivendell Trail has a suggestion to that effect as well. It saves the trail and makes the experience more pleasant. If you break the large group into smaller groups and stagger the start by 10-15 minutes that works. You need more leaders to do this. There could be a fast and a slow group (fast group goes first). We could educate people on trail etiquette (stay on the trail, etc.)
5. **Science research projects.** Bob has contacted Gail Kieffer at Rivendell about involving students in things like weather reporting, and is waiting to hear back from her. She mentioned re-establishment of the Rivendell Outing Club.
6. **Town Meeting:** Bob suggested having a handout calendar with the year's OCC events available for Town Meeting, perhaps with some photos. He will work on that. Emily will make a big map showing where the planned hikes are. People should send Ted photos of Orford for the slide show. Emily suggested for next year making a monthly calendar with the OCC events indicated and with nice pictures (like the "The Beauty that is Bradford's" calendar that the Bradford CC puts out).
7. **Conservation issues:** There was discussion about some conservation prospects and how to get a way of having a trail from Stonehouse Mtn to Mountain View Farm (how to get through the "four

corners” where the properties touch but don’t overlap). There may be a meeting later in the spring about this. There was no action on the part of the OCC on this.

- 8. Invasives:** Emily said we can’t take care of all the invasives ourselves, but she offered to work on the Tillotson Falls Road knotweed project, and suggested that the OCC’s role in this could be to help educate townspeople about invasives, and work on locating small outlying patches of invasives where there’s a chance of stopping their spread. Harry will contact Doug Cygans (NH state invasives person) about coming to give a talk to townspeople; it would be good to have a date to put on the calendar handout for Town Meeting. The state has flyers on invasives -- we could get some of those for Town Meeting as well.

- 9. Members:** Bob has sent the nomination letter for Chris Gothberg to be an OCC member to Esther and Kevin mentioned that Chris would likely be appointed to the OCC at the next Selectboard meeting. Bob asked the members to find a couple more people to add to the commission. There has been some interest from people who have come on the hikes this year.

- 10. Other:** Ted reminded us of the Back Yard Bird Count, which will take place Feb 14 – 17. Fun for all. It was noted that Alan Dyke, who mowed the Orford Conservation Land for many years, just passed away.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Minutes taken by Emily Bryant.