

Orford Conservation Commission
Final Meeting Minutes November 20, 2025
Meeting held in-person in Niles Room at the Town Offices

Commissioners Present: Bob Hedges (Chair) via video, Ted Cooley (Vice-Chair), Chris Gothberg, Dave Hubbard, Harry Pease, Alternates: Emily Bryant, Fran Plaisted, John Miller; Kevin Follensbee representing the Selectboard

Meeting called to order: 7:04 PM. Emily Bryant and Fran Plaisted were seated as Commissioners.

Minutes: Minor change to minutes regarding the planned start time of hike on December 13th from 1 PM to 9 AM. Motion made by Harry, seconded by Chris, to approve the minutes of October 16, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Regular Business

1. We reviewed the upcoming planned Hike Orford! winter outings:
 - Orford Heritage Trail Hike on December 13, 2025 at 9am on Grimes Hill Rd. Out and back. 4.5-5 mile hike. Plan on 3 hours.
 - Bear Tree Outing on Sunday, January 4, 2026. Upper Baker to Bear Tree. Ski or snowshoe afternoon possibly 2:30 PM. A head lamp may be required for the return. Up to 5 miles and can be shorter if needed.
 - February 1st, Moonlight snow shoe at Mountain View Farm
 - February 22nd, Stonehouse Mountain hike
 - March 15th, Brackett Falls
 - April 20th, Mud season “dirt road” walk to be identified

2. Discussed the High Bridge Road bridge project. David and Bob met with several potential stonemasons and engineers to discuss how to address both the bridge need as well as stabilizing/repairing the stone abutments. A very productive meeting was held with Bill Wanner. Reviewed the structure of the bridge the stonework was done over 100 years ago. Concrete sill plate from the 60’s. 5-beams. The southwest side stone abutment is the area that needs help. Bill Wanner has experience w/ replacing these culverts/bridges and he offered to make introductions to two companies who may be able to assist. Discussed the options for building a foot bridge across Archertown Brook while in parallel, or independently, repairing the stone abutments. If our project focus is a new pedestrian bridge and repairing the historic stone abutments that will cost significantly less than restoring the road/bridge to Class 5 status. Looking to get preliminary design ideas and cost estimates for discussion at the next Commission

meeting. The stone abutment work should qualify as “historic preservation” so we may be able to get grant funding. Ted suggested contacting the NH Preservation Alliance.

3. Rivendell Trail Association Meeting on November 9th. Dave updated and reported that there were 28 people in attendance. The new RTA Board has been addressing key trail issues (e.g., easements, trail maintenance) and the RTA organization has stabilized. Thank David and Gail for their efforts to help rebuild the RTA Board and community commitment to the trail.
4. Discussed the potential for adding trail counters on Mount Cube and Sunday Mountain to get accurate counts of hiker traffic. Trail traffic counts would be very helpful for applying for potential trail maintenance grants. David has done preliminary work on costs and how to collaborate on hiker traffic reporting with UVTA. At our December meeting, we will consider a motion to purchase the required trail counters for the trails for Mount Cube and Sunday Mountain.
5. Discussed the 150th anniversary of the AMC torch relay through Orford in July 2026. 6 segments from Hanover to Moosilauke. 15-mile segment in Orford. July 12 or July 13. The AMC is interested in collaborating with Orford on logistical support as well as participating in the hike. Bob will follow-up with the AMC on this program. this.
6. Update on collaboration with Northeast Wilderness Trust and the Upper Valley Land Trust on building a “Quinttown” trail network. Emily, Chris, and Bob have been exploring potential routes. Recently meet with Jason Berard from UVLT. Bob is going to update Jon Leibowitz. Looking to establish a formal agreement among the various parties to develop and maintain the trails.
7. Discussion of potential 2026 Hike Orford Outings for next year: In December we will have calendar to review in detail. Suggestions from Chris include: Wildflower Atwell and Or Hill, Loop over Smarts Mtn. Lily Pond loop, Eastman Ledges, Moosilauke, Piermont Mountain lookout , Tunnel Brook.
8. Kevin updated on the New Hampshire State rule regarding Town committee minutes. Town committees must always include a specific time for the Call to Order, a specific time for the Meeting Adjourned, and the name of the official taker of the meeting minutes.
9. Chris moved that we adjourn the meeting. David seconded. Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned 8:14 PM.

Minutes taken/prepared by Fran Plaisted