

Otisfield Conservation Committee
Meeting Minutes - Wednesday, March 25, 2015, 7 p.m.
Present - Pixie Williams, Lee Dassler, Susan Feller, Bob Blake

No set agenda tonight - open for discussion of concerns and ideas.

February minutes were emailed by Lee, previously read and approved tonight.

Lee spoke about all the Maine land trusts and conservation groups meeting in Augusta regarding Gov. Lepage withholding bond funds from the Land for Maine's Future (LMF). The Western Foothills Land Trust (WFLT) and Otisfield are directly affected since this action by Lepage imperils the finalization of purchasing the Twin Bridges land parcel as a community forest for recreational use and selective timber harvesting, and the important protection of the Crooked River riparian corridor.

The residents of Otisfield voted last June to have the town give WFLT \$5,000.00 toward the purchase of the land parcel. The WFLT had been promised \$400,000.00 from the LMF toward purchase - those funds are now being withheld. The WFLT has been given an extension of the purchase deadline by the property owner, and has gotten some promises from the Nature Conservancy, The Open Space Institute and others to loan them funds toward purchase, but this will increase the WFLT's costs when interest rates are included to payback any loans. Timber harvesting was originally planned to offset the costs of purchase left after funds from the LMF paid the bulk of the purchase costs.

Lee said the attendees in Augusta met with Lepage's assistant Chandler Woodcock, who only offered that Lepage will pick and choose which groups are granted funds. There is a strong likelihood that Lepage is favoring some conservation groups in the Moosehead Lake region purchasing land from the Plum Creek group.

Lee said the groups at the meeting had some discussion about getting some lawyers on board to take action against Lepage. Susan questioned the legality of his actions, and whether the Security and Exchange Commission should be involved.

Lee asked that we each write a letter to our state representatives stating the negative effects of Lepage's actions, and seek permission from the town selectmen for the OCC to write a letter on the town's behalf regarding the setback of plans at the last minute to purchase land for a community forest after thousands of dollars have already been spent with preliminary legal costs toward the purchase. Lee drafted a letter on her lap top computer while discussion took place - she read it to the group, some changes were made, and Lee will fine tune it then email it to everyone for final suggestions. Once done Lee will send it to Selectman Rick Micklon for approval.

Lee also mentioned that there is a significant land parcel adjacent to Jugtown Plains in Otisfield that the WFLT wants to purchase and conserve,

owned by the same person who owns the Twin Bridges property. This will be a three year process to gain ownership if all goes according to plan.

Pixie spoke about her concerns for future lake surveys. Her survey partner passed away, and Pixie will most likely be moving in with her daughter this summer out of Otisfield. Mary Grace Barber has been trained and participated in surveys, but she is busy with summer activities when vacationing at Pleasant Lake, and can't be expected to be available to do all the lake surveys. Roberta Williams of Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program in Auburn is in charge of the lake surveys training and data collecting, and may be able to provide help with finding people to do surveys. Bob Blake offered to take the training and do surveys, and Pixie knows a high school student, Tyler Curtis, who told her he would be interested in doing surveys. Bob said he will call Tyler about the possibility of them working together.

Pixie wants to get her two articles she wrote on vernal pools and pollinators to Rick Micklon for approval to post on the web site. Pixie has been unable to access her computer upstairs due to her knee injury.

Pixie also spoke about a program on the importance of beavers she heard on PBS radio, and that there will be a film coming out called "Beaver Believers" sometime in 2015.

Susan revisited the idea that Otisfield should do something to recognize/commend Camp Arcadia on this 100th year of their service to kids and good land stewardship. Susan suggested that a commendation be written and placed in the 2015 Town Report, a notice placed on the Otisfield website about Arcadia's centennial, and will email Rick Micklon about it. Susan will contact Anne Fritts, camp owner, and get her ideas about their centennial celebration, and Pixie wants Susan to ask Anne if she would work with and provide Jean Hankins with information and photos that Jean could preserve for the Otisfield Historical Society.

An idea was floated about having the OCC sponsor some kind of outing, possibly a canoe/kayak/float trip on the Crooked River from Ryefield Bridge to Bolster's Mill, maybe have the Day's Country Store at the end provide drinks. Revisit this at the April meeting for further ideas.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm. Next meeting Wed., April 22, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Feller, Co- chair.