

*Office of the Select Board
Town of Orange, New Hampshire
Minutes of August 13, 2019*

Present: Dorothy Heinrichs, Chair; Bob Ells, Tamara Fairbank, and Sandi Pierson (clerical).

Others: Bev Ells, Beth Di Francesco, Scott Sanborn, Gary Hamel, Brent Stevens, Bill Bellion, Louis Shelzi, Mike Sampson, Aaron Allen, Skip Smith, and Doug Weekes.

Meeting opened at 6:00 PM. Attendance taken by the secretary.

Minutes: The minutes of July 23, 2019 were unanimously approved.

July 11 Flood event:

Canaan Town Administrator Mike Sampson came before the Board to discuss mitigation on Orange Brook. He said that Canaan has cleared the section from the transfer station bridge up to Eastman Road (the Orange town line), which was approximately 3000 feet. A skidder was used to pull out the entirety of the woodland debris created by the flooding. He would like to continue the clean-out project an additional 8000 feet in the town of Orange up to the Basin Bridge. He felt that if there was another substantial storm, the existing debris could flow downstream and create a problem in Canaan. The cost to clear the debris between Eastman Road and Basin Bridge was estimated at \$60,000. Mike said he anticipated FEMA taking on the bulk of cost, and the cost to Orange would be \$15,000. If Orange did not want to pay, he was unsure if they could fit it into the Canaan budget. If a stump dump was not available in Orange, the cost would be an additional \$60,000 to have Hammonds grind the woodland debris, a process that FEMA prefers. Mike said he went ahead with the brook project in Canaan despite opposition from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which expected a permit process and requested they do not cut anything until that goes through.

A number of people present at the meeting, who had walked the brook following the storm, offered their insights and suggestions. Tamara displayed a number of photos she had taken. Aaron Allen said he felt there were three “hot spots” that merit attention: a couple of sections above Tuttle Hill Road and a section above the Basin Bridge. Aaron and Gary Hamel agreed that the flood waters between Eastman and Tuttle Hill roads created a delta of sorts, which leaves a much wider passageway for potential, future heavy water run-off. They agreed that taking out the sections of trees that wove themselves completely across the brook was a good idea. Gary suggested a community effort could take care of the areas that merited attention and the trees could be used for firewood for people in Orange. He asked about the authorization from land owners. Road Agent Scott Sanborn said that anything beyond the top of the brook would be the land owner’s domain.

Scott said he had reservations about the major project of a skidder operation through Orange Brook and suggested an expert, such as a hydrologist, be consulted to advise the best strategy

that would result in the integrity of the brook and the aftermath of potential future storms. He felt the existing woodland remnants left in the storm's wake could actually deter the rush of water during a future storm. He said "opening everything up" could cause its own problems. He added that in some areas, the situation during the flood was not only trees, but that it had displaced gravel and stone, and in some cases changed the course of the brook's path. Tamara agreed with Scott that a professional should be consulted before supporting a full clean-out of the brook.

Bob Ells talked about the frequency of rain events and about the issuance building permits in vulnerable areas. Dorothy said she will bring his thoughts to the Planning Board.

Dorothy suggested they establish an ad hoc committee to explore the best ways to move forward with a brook clean-up plan and mitigation in case of future storms. Bob and Tam agreed.

Other flood items:

- Dorothy reviewed and email from Colin Higbie, who expressed concern about the stream that empties into his fire pond, which has been eroding the dam. His concern was the excess of water into Orange Pond should the dam fail. He wrote that even though the work on the dam would be his responsibility, he asked if the it could coincide with when Remacle is doing road work on Tuttle Hill Road. Emergency Management Director Brent Stevens had advised him to call 2-1-1, the New Hampshire helpline and state-wide information center. This led to a discussion of the fire pond at Steve Hennig's that has a dry hydrant available to the Canaan Fire Department. Steve's fire pond, at the intersection of Cardigan Mountain Road and Tug Mountain Road, was just about totally filled up with gravel during the flood. Brent, also a member of the Canaan Fire Department, said that he has spoken with Steve, and that Steve would like to see his pond reclaimed. Brent said that projects of that nature are on the fire department's radar, but not a priority at this time.
- Louis Shelzi said that due to flood damage, he replaced the culvert at the bottom of his Tuttle Hill driveway and has re-graveled the area. He said he installed a larger culvert for better mitigation. He said that if there was another heavy rainstorm before the area road ditching was not done, he was concerned about the results to the work he has done. Since Remacle's equipment is already on site, he would like to have them do 50 feet of ditching on the town road in proximity to his driveway, and include the customary trap rock. Scott Sanborn said he was in favor of the request but that he was waiting to hear if the flood event was being declared a FEMA disaster before committing town monies. He was pretty sure there was going to be a declaration, but wanted to be completely sure before starting town-wide reclamation work. After discussion, it was agreed that Louis could have the contractors do the ditching at his cost and be reimbursed for the town's part if and when the FEMA disaster has been formerly declared.
- The Board was in receipt of the letter from Governor Sununu to President Trump requesting a FEMA disaster be declared. Dorothy said there is no timeline for President Trump to act on it. She thanked Doug and Trish Weekes for being able to furnish the precise weather observations from their weather station on Tug Mountain during the storm, data which was used in the governor's letter. Doug said that the National Weather Service from Gray, Maine felt their data indicated they were in a "micro-climate" and were furnishing them with a more advanced weather observation system.

- The Board was in receipt of summary of Orange Brook observations from the NH Department of Environmental Services. Dorothy asked that Sandi forward this to Scott, Doug, Aaron, Skip Smith, and Mike Sampson.
- Dorothy read the letter given to the town by the NH DOT District 2 workers, who wrote in appreciation of the residents' cooperation during the repairs to Cardigan Mountain Road. This will be included in the 2019 town report.
- A debriefing meeting to discuss how the Orange Emergency Operations Plan worked was scheduled for October 22. Dorothy will submit to Sandi, the individuals and committees who will be asked to attend. The public is invited to participate.
- Dorothy asked Sandi to write a courtesy letter to a nonresident who owns property on Eastman Road, informing him of the flood event in proximity to the structure on his land.
- Beth DiFrancesco expressed concern about a nonresident's home on New Colony being inaccessible because of the flood. She question what would happen if emergency vehicles needed access. Issue such as these will be discussed at the October 22 meeting. Aaron stated that he has been in contact with the nonresidents that had their driveway washed out and that an arrangement was made to have Bobby Senter remedy it.

Oath of Office: The Board signed the oath of office for the appointment of Amy Tirpaeck as town clerk. This was requested by the State.

Treasurer's report: The Board reviewed the July treasurer's report and Select Board reconciliation. The reconciliation was on target and the Chair signed the report.

Other:

- A notice was received by the State that they have deposited \$9,103.50 into the town account for the July Block Grant.
- A notice was received by the State that the final Block Grant amount for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019 is \$30,344.99. This will be forwarded to the Budget Committee.
- The Board received information from the NH Office of Strategic Initiatives about the National Flood Insurance Program. Due to the official flood zones as mapped out by the State, this is inapplicable.
- Dorothy will be unable to attend the August 27 Select Board meeting.

Secretary's report:

- Financial figures from Orange were submitted to the auditor who is doing the audit of the Mascoma School District.
- A Workman's Comp "bill" was received; the amount due is still being offset by a "holiday premium."
- A Primex claim sheet was received. They will pay up to \$50,000 toward flood damages if a FEMA declaration is not declared.

Reports from other boards and committees:

- Dorothy said the Conservation Commission will meet on September 25 at 6 PM.

- Tamara said the Historical Commission’s next meeting is September 9 at 7 PM. The town-wide barbeque, townspeople photo, and school house program is scheduled for August 17 at the Stacy and Collins residences.

Public comment:

- Brent commended Gary Hamel for the work he did on collecting artifacts from a historical kiln found after the flood, and for the great display of the those artifacts at the town house. The audience gave Gary a round of applause.
- Dorothy commended Tam on the new cemetery signs, which were also on display. They will be placed at the cemeteries in the near future.

Bills and vouchers were reviewed and signed.

Meeting adjourned 7:15 PM.

Dorothy Behlen Heinrichs

Robert Ells

Tamara Fairbank