



City of Keene, New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Monday, June 21, 2021

4:30 PM

City Council Chambers

Commission Members

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Eloise Clark, Vice Chair
Kenneth Bergman
Art Walker
Andrew Madison

Councilor Robert Williams
Brian Reilly, Alternate
Thomas P. Haynes, Alternate
Steven Bill, Alternate
John Therriault, Alternate

TO JOIN THE MEETING:

The public may join the meeting online or at City Hall Council Chambers. To join the meeting online, please visit www.zoom.us/join or call (888) 475-4499 (toll-free) and enter the Meeting ID: **868 3840 7352**. More info on how to access this meeting on Zoom is available on the Conservation Commission webpage at <https://ci.keene.nh.us/conservation-commission>. If you encounter any issues accessing this meeting online, please call 603-209-4697 during the meeting.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 17, 2020
3. Informational
 - a. Subcommittee reports
 - Outreach Subcommittee
 - Arm Fund Subcommittee-Non Public Session
4. Discussion Items
 - a. NHDOT Roadway Rehabilitation Project No. 43057 Route 9
 - b. Greater Goose Pond Forest Management Stewardship Committee
 - c. Conservation Commission speaking events
 - d. Multiyear Pollinator Census results for Cheshire County
 - e. Powers, Duties and Guidelines/Mission Statement
5. New or Other Business
6. Adjournment – Next meeting date **Monday, July 19, 2021**

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 CONSERVATION COMMISSION
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

8 **Monday, May 17, 2021**

4:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Eloise Clark, Vice Chair
Councilor Robert Williams
Councilor Andrew Madison
Art Walker
Ken Bergman
Steven Bill
John Therriault, Alternate (Voting)
Brian Reilly, Alternate
Tom Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director/Assistant City Manager
Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant

Members Not Present:

All Present

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11 **1) Call to Order**
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13 Chair Von Plinsky read the executive order authorizing a remote meeting: Emergency Order #12,
14 issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04.
15 Pursuant to this order, The Chairman called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM and members
16 present stated their locations and whether calling alone.
17

18 **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – April 19, 2021**
19

20 Mr. Therriault moved to approve the April 19, 2021 meeting minutes, which Mr. Bergman
21 seconded, and the motion passed on a unanimous roll call vote.
22

23 **3) Communication and Notifications**

24 **a. NHDOT Roadway Rehabilitation Project No. 43057 Route 9**
25

26 Mr. Lamb explained that the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) notifies communities
27 usually in advance of road rehabilitation projects. This notification, which was included in the
28 [meeting packet](#), was sent to the City Council, Staff, and the Planning Board, requesting review
29 and input from the Conservation Commission as NH DOT moves forward with their

30 rehabilitation of **RT-9 from the Chesterfield town line to the roundabout at Base Hill Road**. Mr.
31 Lamb understood this to be pavement rehabilitation, with no widening of the roadway, unless
32 smaller-scale improvements are needed for shoulders or drainage issues. For such projects, the
33 Conservation Commission comments typically on natural resource issues of concern, to which
34 the NH DOT should be attentive.

35
36 Vice Chair Clark questioned how this would relate to the NH DOT's other habitat creation
37 mediation responsibility on a parcel adjacent to RT-9. Mr. Lamb recalled that when the major
38 highway project occurred in the **mid-2000s**, NH DOT used approximately **19 acre-feet** of fill and
39 they committed to compensating for that fill within the same floodplain by removing the same
40 amount for flood storage. Mr. Lamb said that project was between the intersection near the State
41 Police barracks and the Winchester Street roundabout and he understood to have ended west of
42 the area under consideration in the current letter. He did not think the current road rehabilitation
43 would overlap with the previous project.

44
45 Mr. Bergman wondered whether there was a deadline for the Commission to comment. The
46 Chairman saw a tentative date for the project going to bid in 2022 and therefore thought the
47 Commission could take some time. Mr. Lamb agreed that that Commissioners could use the next
48 month to visit the location, prepare comments, and then offer any suggestions to NH DOT at the
49 June meeting.

50
51 Mr. Therriault wanted NH DOT to consider replanting any disturbed verges or medians with a
52 native wildflower mix on behalf of Keene's Bee City.

53
54 This item would be agendized for further discussion in June.

55

56 **4) Informational**

57 **a. Subcommittee Reports**

58 **i. *Outreach Subcommittee***

59

60 Mr. Haynes reported that he met with Vice Chair Clark and Mr. Reilly during the previous
61 month to discuss outreach as Covid-19 restrictions are lifting. First, he contacted the three
62 individuals who were slotted to lead another quarterly Goose Pond through the Seasons walk
63 before Covid-19 to determine their continued availability and interest. Those individuals were
64 still in agreement and this would stay on their agendas to revisit in August, when the
65 Subcommittee would determine whether Covid-19 guidance at that time would allow for
66 scheduling a walk in October, and if not then in spring 2022. Mr. Bill was also willing to lead a
67 Goose Pond walk on geology this fall. Mr. Haynes and Vice Chair Clark reported other ideas
68 discussed by the Outreach Subcommittee and other Commissioners shared ideas, though no
69 summer events had been scheduled yet:

- 70
 - Mountain biking community
 - 71 - School/youth groups such as the Scouts, 4H, or others. An event could include building
 - 72 wood duck nesting boxes for winter, for example.

- 73 ▪ Visit to Keene’s Solid Waste Transfer Station, so people know where their trash goes
- 74 after they drop it off.
- 75 ▪ Determine if Jeff Littleton is still interested/available for a spring Goose Pond walk on
- 76 vernal pools and ecology.
- 77 ▪ Determine if Jeff Littleton is still interested/available to lead the Commission on a walk
- 78 to where timber harvesting was suggested in the Goose Pond Forest Management Plan.
- 79 ▪ Continue events engaging the community on invasive species removal.
- 80 ▪ A birding presentation at the Airport, where there is a lot of out-of-town activity to
- 81 experience birds there.
- 82 ▪ Reach out to the new Cheshire County Forester beginning at the end of July. Steve
- 83 Roberge is now a supervisor at the State level.

84
85 **ii. ARM Fund Subcommittee**

86
87 The Chairman met with Mr. Haynes and Mr. Bergman at Robin Hood Park since the last meeting
88 and they had a great conversation that would continue until the June meeting, when the
89 Chairman would request a non-public session to discuss the ARM Fund Subcommittee’s goals.

90
91 **5) Discussion Items**

92 **a. Garlic Mustard Challenge**

93 *[*Note: The Chairman heard the item out-of-order, after discussion of the Greater*
94 *Goose Pond Forest Management Stewardship Committee.]*

95
96 Councilor Williams reported on two successful Garlic Mustard Challenge (GMC) events that
97 occurred the week of May 10, with community involvement of 10-12 people at each event and a
98 spirit of socialization after Covid-19 isolation. The events were also successful because
99 participants shared interest in and contacts for future events, which he thought could occur a few
100 more times this summer, though no third event had been scheduled yet. Councilor Williams said
101 that he identified a large patch of garlic mustard along Main Street that he and the Chairman
102 intended to remove. Councilor Williams thanked the Commission for their support in making
103 this a success. The Chairman said it was a great success and he was pleased to see a starting
104 point from which the Commission could grow the challenge and attend to other invasives. The
105 Chairman was also viewed this as an extension of something the Commission does well, which is
106 to foster individual Commissioners following their passions, like the GMC, Bee City, or Nature
107 Nuggets. If individual Commissioners would like to pursue something they are passionate about
108 they should not hesitate to bring those ideas to the Commission.

109
110 Mr. Bill asked how the second GMC event was scheduled and advertised. Councilor Williams
111 said the events occurred on May 11 and May 15, both were advertised on Facebook and Nature
112 Groupie (recruited one out-of-town participant), and additional flyers were shared at Green Up
113 Keene and posted throughout City buildings. Mr. Bill also asked about garlic mustard disposal.
114 Councilor Williams said that invasives were gathered into black trash bags that were still onsite
115 pending disposal by the City once the plants had sufficient time to decompose.

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b. Greater Goose Pond Forest Management Stewardship Committee

*[*Note: The Chairman heard this item out-of-order, before discussion of the Garlic Mustard Challenge.]*

The Chairman cited the previous month’s conversation with Mayor Hansel, who wanted to see this proposed group begin as a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission. In February 2021, the Commission voted affirmatively on a motion to City Council requesting their creation of this public body. Chair Von Plinsky reviewed that motion, which included a list of suggested membership to represent the various stakeholders in the Forest. He thought representatives could be solicited to act as advisors on forestry, outreach, and conservation – versus full-time subcommittee members – to the Commissioners that would serve on the subcommittee. The subcommittee could have no more than three Commissioners assigned or else a quorum of the full Commission would occur; Mr. Lamb would consult the City Attorney to determine how alternates to the Commission could interact with the Subcommittee and report back in June. He thought the Chair of the subcommittee should be a Commissioner. He asked if Mr. Haynes wanted to take that lead and while Mr. Haynes wanted to be on the Subcommittee certainly to help steward the plan and though he had not intended to lead, he was willing to take the role of Chair if no one else wanted.

Mr. Haynes agreed to serve as Chairman of the subcommittee, with Mr. Walker and Mr. Bill volunteering to fill the two other Commissioner roles.

In response to questions about the role of Staff on/with the subcommittee, Mr. Lamb said that he would be available to advise as Staff, as would Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation, & Facilities, who would be the one in charge of implementing the Management Plan and actions of the Subcommittee. Staff should not serve as regular or ex-officio members of the subcommittee.

The Chairman suggested that other individuals could be solicited as advisers to the subcommittee following the list suggested in the February motion: New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA), an abutter, a forester, and a local school representative. The Chairman said that a former Commissioner, Denise Burchsted, was interested in serving the subcommittee and her expertise would be beneficial. Mr. Bergman was willing to advise on wildlife as a zoologist but was hesitant to serve the subcommittee full-time due to other commitments; he offered to search for a 20-year-old Goose Pond wildlife tracking report.

Next, Mr. Lamb would facilitate a Zoom meeting with the new subcommittee members before the June meeting to discuss other membership options. Mr. Lamb said they did not have to follow the membership outlined in the February motion, and he advised strongly having three actual subcommittee members in addition to the three Commissioners, which was a common subcommittee membership size. In particular, he urged having members representing the three stakeholder groups of foresters, abutters, and NEMBA. The subcommittee would discuss and

159 seek specific individuals to recruit for those three roles before the June meeting, when the
160 Commission would vote on a motion to create the subcommittee with those specific members, so
161 the group can begin working as soon as possible.

162

163 **c. Conservation Commission Speaking Events**

164

165 The Chairman welcomed Councilor Madison to discuss this idea. The Councilor said that he
166 sought to organize a bi-monthly or quarterly speaking series to occur around town at different
167 establishments and/or outside for one hour, with three speakers invited to present for 15 minutes
168 each on a topic and participate in questions/answers on various topics, such as an earlier
169 suggestion about solid waste disposal. Mr. Bergman also suggested the topic of environmental
170 justice. Commissioners expressed support and agreed it was best for Councilor Madison to take
171 the lead as several other Commissioners were committed to other projects already. The Chairman
172 agreed there were many topics to cover in a speaker series and that such frequent events,
173 combined with the others underway, would benefit the Conservation Commission's profile in
174 town and result in nearly one Commission event per month during the next year.

175

176 With the Commission's support, Councilor Madison would move forward planning a first event
177 for late July and he would reach out to Brewbakers to gauge their willingness. Councilor
178 Williams also encouraged Councilor Madison to consider open spaces in the Keene Public
179 Library, with plenty of venues and technology; Councilor Williams was happy to facilitate as the
180 new City Council liaison to the Library Board of Trustees. Councilor Madison said he only
181 planned approximately four events annually and that would not compete with the seasonal Goose
182 Pond hikes. The Chairman suggested that the Commission consider having a small part of their
183 budget allocated to compensating invited speakers for gas and/or lunch; Mr. Bill and Councilor
184 Williams agreed from their experiences that it would be a nice and appreciated gesture. This
185 would be assigned for Councilor Madison to share more planning details at the June meeting.

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187 **d. Multiyear Pollinator Census Results for Cheshire County**

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189 Mr. Therriault noted that he was asked by Jeff and Amanda Littleton of the Cheshire County
190 Conservation District to move his hive of honeybees from the Keene end of Base Hill Road so
191 that it would not influence their County-wide (not site specific) average pollinator census, and
192 Mr. Therriault complied. He asked Mr. and Ms. Littleton to share – as a courtesy to the
193 Commission – a report from a few years ago, to which they agreed, and Mr. Therriault would
194 report on that data at the June meeting. The Chairman said he had noticed fewer pollinators
195 around certain plants at this home, which he hoped was an aberration. Mr. Therriault replied that
196 Keene was a moderate drought region of NH last fall, which he believed influenced pollinators'
197 overwintering success. University of NH data showed a 32% of honeybee colonies lost two
198 winters ago. Preliminary results from the annual NH honeybee survival survey show that last
199 winter, Cheshire and Sullivan Counties lost 50% of honeybee colonies. Mr. Therriault
200 participates in a bumblebee watch program for participants to capture photos of bumblebees on a
201 flower and report the siting, plant, and location on the website, where they can get help

202 identifying the bee if needed. So far this year, he had only seen common eastern bumblebees,
203 when he would have seen others by this time in previous years.

204
205 Mr. Therriault recalled suggesting a citizen science event at the Ashuelot River Park during the
206 annual national Pollinator Week, June 21-27. He suggested an event on Saturday, June 19. He
207 would advertise in the Monadnock Shopper and through Nature Groupie, with Councilor
208 Williams' help. He hoped for a small number of people and to work out kinks for next year. He
209 imagined following the GMC blueprint to establish this event too. Discussion of this event would
210 be agendized next month and Mr. Therriault could send materials to Ms. Marcou for advertising
211 on the City's Facebook pages.

212

213 **6) New or Other Business**

214

215 Mr. Haynes reported that the Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park, with help from
216 the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board (ARPAB), sought to install a pollinator garden in the
217 park and they hoped for Conservation Commission support. With Mr. Therriault's permission
218 and enthusiasm, Mr. Haynes would share his contact with the organizer of this effort Dian
219 Matthews, member of the Friends and ARPAB.

220

221 Mr. Bergman expressed appreciation that the Community Development Department's mission
222 statement on the City website had been corrected. However, Mr. Bergman also had concerns for
223 the wording of the Conservation Commission mission statement, which is described currently as
224 existing primarily for the development of natural resources, and he suggested modifying the
225 statement with more nuance to be more conservation inclined. Mr. Haynes agreed that the
226 current statement was problematic, and he recalled the Commission discussing revisions to that
227 mission statement; Ms. Marcou, Mr. Haynes, and Mr. Bergman would search past meeting
228 minutes for that discussion. This issue would be agendized in June if there is sufficient time, or
229 in July, and Commissioners should come prepared with suggestions.

230

231 The Chairman recalled the ongoing membership issue and said that Mr. Lamb reported to him
232 that it is a challenge for other Committees as well right now.

233

234 Ms. Marcou reported that the [Beaver Brook Restoration Plan](#) was available on the Commission's
235 webpage and that the formatting should improve shortly after this meeting.

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237 **7) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date Monday, June 21, 2021**

238

239 There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 4:34 PM.

240

241 Respectfully submitted by,
242 Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker
243 May 23, 2021

Sec. 2-774. - Powers, duties and guidelines.

In accordance with the provisions of applicable law, the powers, duties and guidelines in this section are hereby established for the conduct of the conservation commission. The commission shall:

- (1) Promote the stewardship of natural resources in the city and the protection of watershed resources of the city.
- (2) Preserve the best of the city's physical and natural resources, while welcoming well-planned expansion or redevelopment.
- (3) Regard land as an extremely important asset, whose use should be consistent with the long-range community values.
- (4) Maintain an index and develop land management plans for city conservation lands and open areas to prevent a drastic alteration of natural topography, drainage, and scenery.
- (5) Ensure sound commission practices by providing adequate open space, accesses, wooded areas, meadows, swamps, ponds, trails, paths and brooks in keeping with constructive property management.
- (6) Conduct research into the city's local land areas and seek to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which in its judgment it deems necessary for its work.
- (7) Receive gifts of money or property, both real and personal, in the name of the city with the prior approval of the city council. Such gifts are to be managed and controlled by the commission for the purposes of this subsection. The commission may acquire, with the approval of the city council, by gift, purchase, grant, bequest, devise, lease, or otherwise, the fee in such land or water rights, or any lesser interest, development right, easement, covenant, or other contractual right, including conveyances with conditions, limitations or reversions, as may be necessary to acquire, improve, protect, limit the future use of, or otherwise conserve and properly utilize open spaces and other land and water areas within the city, and it shall manage and control such. The city shall not have the right to condemn property for these purposes, except insofar as permitted by other statutes.
- (8) Receive appropriations from the city council for establishing and maintaining the conservation commission to promote the development and better utilization of our natural resources. The whole or any part of money appropriated by the city council in any year may be placed in a commission fund and allowed to accumulate with interest, from year to year. All funds of the commission shall be accounted for by the city through the finance director and the trustees of trust funds. Money may be expended from such fund for the purpose of this division by the commission, with the approval of the city council.
- (9) Hear citizen comments about the operation of the commission and the matters in the office

of the community development director concerned with commission practices.

- (10) Advise the city manager, community development director and city council in all matters in accordance with this chapter.
- (11) Inform the public about commission programs and areas of concern .
- (12) Have charge and general management over the commission functions in the city as far as is consistent with the Charter, this Code, and state statutes.
- (13) Assist in developing and stating objectives and goals for community improvement.
- (14) Pursue the means for achieving the determined goals for improvement.
- (15) Designate a member of the commission to appear before other boards or city council committees to testify on matters of concern to the commission.
- (16) Develop active regional cooperation on commission programs.
- (17) Support and promote the goals outlined in the city's climate action planning documents and the comprehensive master plan as they relate to land use.
- (18) Study and recommend methods of financing proposed improvements in the commission functions of the city.
- (19) Advise city council on matters pertaining to the city's interest at the state and federal level in conservation/wetlands law and policy.
- (20) Maintain and oversee the monitoring of any city-held conservation easements within the city.
- (21) Perform such other related functions as required by the city council or requested by the city manager.

(Ord. No. O-2019-01, 2-21-2019)

State Law reference— Powers and duties, RSA 36-A:1.