

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, October 19, 2015**                      **4:30 PM**                      **2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Chair Thomas P. Haynes  
Matthew Walton  
George Hansel  
Thomas Lacey  
Councilor Janis Manwaring  
Brian Reilly

**Staff Present:**

Tara Germond, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

**Others Present:**

Denise Burchsted  
Sadie Butler

**1. Call to order**

Chair Haynes called the meeting to order at 4:34 PM.

**2. Minutes – September 21, 2015**

Mr. Hansel made a motion to accept the minutes of September 21, 2015 with the following changes/corrections:

Mr. Hansel stated that Page 2, fourth full paragraph, first sentence change the word “habit” to “habitat”. He continued, stating that on Page 2, third full paragraph, third sentence change the phrase, “Kohl Property” to “Cole Property”.

Councilor Manwaring seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**3. Conservation Master Plan**

Chair Haynes noted that Ms. Germond sent out a summary of information from relevant plans (e.g. Comprehensive Master Plan, Active and Passive Recreation Management Plan, Beech Hill Land Management Plan, etc.) to the Commission members in advance of the meeting for their review. He stated that he appreciated the suggestion made at the previous meeting to review existing plans and identify opportunities to connect the goals/objectives of the Conservation Plan with those included in these existing documents.

Mr. Walton and Mr. Reilly noted that they had tried to access the example conservation plans on the NH Association of Conservation Commission website ([www.nhacc.org](http://www.nhacc.org)) but were unable to locate them. Mr. Walton questioned whether or not a username or password was needed to access these resources. Chair Haynes responded that he did not believe it was necessary to login to the membership section of the website to access these plans. He noted that there are not many conservation plans available on the website and that there are different types of plans (e.g. open space) posted.

Chair Haynes asked the group to discuss their thoughts on what they learned from the plans and studies shared in relation to the Conservation Plan. Mr. Hansel noted that he thought some of the information was directly relevant to the Commission and that some of the recommendations are already being addressed by another committee or organization. He noted that this information allowed him to identify areas where more action is needed. He suggested that the Commission select some recommendations/goals from the Comprehensive Master Plan to review in more detail. Chair Haynes asked the group to consider which recommendations should be further examined. Mr. Hansel noted that the expansion of the Ashuelot River Trail corridor along brooks such as the Black, White, and Ash Swamp has yet to be undertaken and should be considered.

Councilor Manwaring shared a study completed by Keene State College on the Keene Active and Passive Recreation Management Plan. She noted that one thing missing in the City of Keene Active and Passive Recreation Management Plan is a recommendation regarding vernal pool protection. Councilor Manwaring explained that she is concerned about protection of vernal pools and would like to see this considered in the Conservation Plan. She noted that she can contact AVEO to inquire about studies they have done and any information available that might be helpful to include in the Plan or in future NRIs. Mr. Reilly noted that he was under the impression that there are organizations in the region trying to identify the location of vernal pools; however, he is not certain there are plans to protect these resources as many are located on private lands. Chair Haynes asked if vernal pools should be addressed under the wildlife section of the Conservation Plan. Mr. Walton questioned whether vernal pools fall within the realm of regulatory protections for surface water or wetlands. Councilor Manwaring said that since they are seasonal and only present for a period of time each year they are not covered under the Surface Water Protection Ordinance. Ms. Burchsted noted that they are a unique category of surface water. Mr. Hansel noted that he has seen vernal pools identified as wetlands in some areas. Mr. Walton noted that vernal pools on City land would be protected under existing conservation easements.

Mr. Hansel noted that the Comprehensive Master Plan has a goal of continuing and expanding the work of natural resource inventories (NRIs). While some of this work has been undertaken, he feels it is important for the Commission to consider in their development of a Conservation Plan. Mr. Walton agreed with Mr. Hansel that NRIs appear to be an important recommendation; however, he questioned their utility for lands that are already protected through conservation easements. Chair Haynes noted that an NRI can establish a baseline set of data, which provides a snapshot of the types, abundance, conditions, etc. of resources present in an area at a particular time. The NRI can be used to identify and determine desired uses for the land. Councilor Manwaring noted that conducting an NRI is often a part of the easement process and that part of

the process to conserve Beech Hill is to complete an NRI. Mr. Reilly asked a similar question about the utility of NRIs. He questioned how they benefit the ability of the land owners or others to make present-day decisions. Chair Haynes explained that there are different levels of NRIs, and that an NRI can be tailored to better meet the needs of specific objectives or intended outcomes.

Mr. Walton noted that at the last meeting Mr. Lacey addressed doing a perimeter survey of the Goose Pond Natural Area. Mr. Lacey noted that this comment was part of the discussion about boundary investigations of the parcels in this area. Mr. Lacey noted that the NRIs, which were shared in advance of the meeting, provide limited description of forestland. He explained that the NRIs mostly focus on cover type and the species present, and that there is no detailed description of the composition, volume, age, value etc. of trees. He noted that it is not difficult to hire an experienced individual to obtain this type of description and information. He stated that this baseline inventory of forests is necessary to have informed discussions about the land and resources.

Mr. Lacey noted that a lot of work has been done to study the resources on City-owned lands that are in conservation. He commented that although some of this work is impressive, some is less so. However, he thinks enough work has been done to commence discussion about hiring someone to do a more comprehensive inventory. He noted that there is no excuse that the Goose Pond Natural Area has not had a forest inventory. He explained that he did a Timber Sale to the City in the 1980s on the Ministers Lot. Tom Dutton, the City Engineer at the time, was interested in forest management. The City used this sale as an opportunity to acquaint the Conservation Commission with the value of forest management. He added other cities in the state are actively managing their forestland and that there should be greater diligence at identifying the condition and description of resources on these lands.

Mr. Walton asked if it would be possible to have an educational workshop on NRIs. Chair Haynes noted that the Monadnock Conservancy held a very informative workshop on forest management in Gilsum recently. He stated that Steve Roberge, Field Specialist and Natural Resources and County Office Administrator for Cooperative Extension, conducted the workshop. Chair Haynes explained that Mr. Roberge is willing to meet with the Commission to conduct a similar workshop or walk through of forestland at no cost. Ms. Burchsted noted that it is important to have assessment of forestland. Mr. Hansel suggested that working with Mr. Roberge might be action item included in an NRI. Mr. Lacey noted that he thinks he should speak with Mr. Roberge regarding NRI work. He noted that there may be certain thresholds that he cannot cross as an employee of the University of NH Cooperative Extension. Mr. Reilly asked to be included on this communication.

Ms. Burchsted stated that she views many of the recommendations included in the plans shared as being too vague. For example, there is a goal to better align with the State Wildlife Action Plan. However, she feels more information is needed on what the strategies of the Wildlife Action Plan are and how they relate to the City. She feels that the recommendations should be more specific.

Chair Haynes noted that after further review of the maps shared at the previous meeting it became clearer to him that there are significant corridors on which the Commission should focus attention.

Chair Haynes stated that there are many blocks of land that are relevant for wildlife corridors in Keene including Goose Pond, Beech Hill, Horatio Colony, and Beaver Brook. He continued, stating that Goose Pond is the largest block of land and possibly the best spot for the Conservation Committee to focus on in terms of the Conservation Master Plan. Ms. Burchsted stated that she is worried that important wildlife corridors outside of these blocks of land will not be discussed. She continued, stating that these well-known blocks of land are important but attention needs to be given to other areas as well. Ms. Burchsted also suggested having the Conservation Master Plan be aligned with the State's Wildlife Action Plan. Mr. Hansel stated that from looking at the Keene Comprehensive Master Plan, one can see that conducting an NRI at Goose Pond is a logical action item.

Mr. Walton stated that identifying natural resource threats was previously discussed but does not align with the Keene Master Plan. Chair Haynes stated that the Master Plan broadly addresses many items and the Conservation Plan will review specifics. Councilor Manwaring stated that invasive species, which are a threat, are discussed in the Master Plan. Chair Haynes stated that water and wetlands are important topics for the Committee to discuss. Ms. Burchsted stated that water is addressed in the Master Plan on two levels: conservation values and functions, and regulations. She continued, stating that regulations may extend beyond water protection. Mr. Walton stated that the land use code deals with regulations. Mr. Hansel stated that regulations should be a low priority because the Planning Board is currently addressing this item.

Chair Haynes asked if trails should be one of the items for further discussion. Mr. Walton asked if this was covered by the Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Hansel stated that greenways incorporate more than trails and are important corridors for wildlife. Chair Haynes agreed. Chair Haynes suggested that the group focus on the topics of water quality, wildlife, NRI's, and greenways.

Mr. Walton asked about the permitting processes for wetlands and if the Committee is educated on the limitations. Chair Haynes replied that this is a question for further down the road. Mr. Lacey stated that there are many aspects to this plan that are vague. He continued, stating that he wonders what priorities would be discussed if someone was hired to conduct this work. Mr. Lacey continued asking what information the Committee would want these consultants to gather. Mr. Lacey explained that he is trying to fully understand where this Conservation Plan is headed. He continued, stating that Goose Pond borders Monadnock Conservancy land where wildlife management occurs. Mr. Lacey related this management with that of the New Hampshire Wildlife Plan and questioned how both fit together.

Chair Haynes asked if subcommittees should be formed in order to focus on the four topics. Mr. Hansel suggested each subcommittee identify two actions items to bring back to the Committee. Mr. Hansel gave an example of the NRI group determining which parcels are priorities as a potential action item. Chair Haynes asked if specific parcels should be reviewed or if it is better to become experts first and then review the parcels. Councilor Manwaring stated that the latter

would be the best option. Mr. Lacey stated that there are three distinct parcels to discuss: Goose Pond, Sterns Hill, and Beech Hill. Chair Haynes suggested looking at this item in a broad sense and then honing in on the parcels.

The Committee decided to break the members into the following subcommittees:

*Greenways:* Chair Haynes, Ms. Butler

*Wildlife:* Councilor Manwaring, Mr. Hansel

*Water Quality:* Mr. Walton, Ms. Burchsted

*Natural Resource Inventories:* Mr. Lacey, Mr. Reilly

Councilor Manwaring warned the Committee about the obstacles with subcommittees and referred to her experience with the Surface Water Protection Subcommittee. She continued, stating that 24 hour notice was needed as well as scheduling a minute taker. Mr. Walton stated that the Committees can take their own notes. Ms. Germond stated that she will contact the Clerk's office to inquire about the proper protocol.

Mr. Hansel suggested breaking into subcommittees during the Conversation Committee official meeting. Mr. Walton agreed on this idea. Chair Haynes replied, that the idea is possible. He continued, stating that all documentation would then have to come to the next meeting.

Councilor Manwaring suggested each person research their topic beforehand and decide specific items and documents to discuss with their subcommittee partner. Mr. Walton stated that members of each subcommittee can talk via email as long as decisions are not made. Ms. Germond reiterated that she will check in with the Clerk's office as to official protocols. Chair Haynes asked if Committee members are fine with Working Groups. The Committee was in agreement. Chair Haynes stated that the Committee will wait for Ms. Germond's status on the Working Group Protocols and then groups can contact each other. Ms. Germond suggested that committee members take advantage of the Planning Department's library.

Chair Haynes stated that Steve Roberge from the Cooperative Extension is willing to educate the Committee on a walk through without charge. Chair Haynes stated that he can schedule something if Committee members feel it is important. Mr. Hansel suggested this as an action step for the NRI group. Chair Haynes stated that there are likely other contacts as well.

Mr. Walton asked if the Committee will be touching upon outreach. Chair Haynes stated that when Ms. Shedd was Chair of the Committee she distributed sample conservation plans. He continued, stating that he will send this document to Ms. Germond who will distribute it to the Committee.

#### **4. Reports from Committees / Liaisons**

##### **a) SWPO Subcommittee**

Chair Haynes told the Committee that Kurt Blomquist will be attending the November Meeting.

## **5. Communications and Notifications**

### **a) Woodland Cemetery Wetlands Permit Notification**

Ms. Germond stated the site of the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund Wetland Restoration project in Woodland Cemetery has received a wetland permit from the NH Department of Environmental Services. This permit notification and associated conditions was included in the meeting packet. This item is informational.

### **b) Ashuelot River Multi-use Trail Bridge**

Ms. Germond stated that the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) has received a wetlands permit with conditions from the NH Department of Environmental Services for the multiuse bridge over NH Route 101. A condition of this permit is for NH DOT to place over \$89,000 into the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund and to conserve approximately 80 acres of land.

Mr. Lacey inquired about the location of the land and who will be receiving the \$89,000. Ms. Germond stated that funds will go towards the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund. She continued, stating that this is the same funding supporting the Woodland Cemetery wetland restoration project. Ms. Germond stated that she will let the Committee know when the next rounds of applications are due.

Mr. Hansel asked if the \$89,000 is above and beyond the expected funding of the bridge. MS. Germond replied that this is the cost of the impact to the wetlands. Mr. Hansel asked if it is an unplanned expense of the project. Mr. Lacey stated that the City is not spending any money on this project. Mr. Hansel asked if the funding is coming from the state or the city. Ms. Germond replied that it is her understanding that the funding will come from the state but will look to review if impacts to the wetlands were part of the original budget.

## **6. Commission Membership**

Chair Haynes noted that Sadie Butler and Denise Burchsted are seeking to serve on the Commission and are in the midst of the formal nomination process with the Mayor and City Council.

## **7. Staff Updates**

### **a) West Street Hydro**

No new updates at this time.

### **c) Woodland Cemetery Wetland Restoration**

Ms. Germond that the Japanese knotweed was treated by a licensed applicator on October 14, 2015, and that it will likely need a second round of treatment in the Spring.

## **8. New or Other Business**

Chair Haynes noted that the NH Association of Conservation Commission's Annual Meeting will take place on November 7, 2015 at Pembroke Academy. Ms. Germond noted that the

Cheshire Conservation District will hold their annual dinner meeting on November 5, 2015 at Keene Country Club. If members want to attend either event they should contact Lee Langella in the Planning Department or let Chair Haynes know.

**9. Adjournment** – next meeting date Monday, November 16, 2015

Chair Haynes adjourned the meeting at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Lana C. Bluege, Minute-taker  
October 19, 2015

Edited by:  
Tara Germond  
November 2, 2015