

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

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

**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*

**1) Call to Order**

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

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

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

**3) Communication and Notifications**

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

Mr. Lamb explained that the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) notifies communities usually in advance of road rehabilitation projects. This notification, which was included in the [meeting packet](#), was sent to the City Council, Staff, and the Planning Board, requesting review and input from the Conservation Commission as NH DOT moves forward with their rehabilitation of RT-9

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

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

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

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

This item would be agendaized for further discussion in June.

#### **4) Informational**

##### **a. Subcommittee Reports**

##### **i. *Outreach Subcommittee***

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

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

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

## **ii. *ARM Fund Subcommittee***

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

## **5) Discussion Items**

### **a. Garlic Mustard Challenge**

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

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

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

**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 seek specific individuals to recruit for those three roles before the June meeting, when the Commission

would vote on a motion to create the subcommittee with those specific members, so the group can begin working as soon as possible.

**c. Conservation Commission Speaking Events**

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

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

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

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

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

**6) New or Other Business**

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

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

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

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

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

There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 5:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katrina Kibler, Minute Taker  
May 23, 2021

Edits submitted by Rhett Lamb, Community Development Director