

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

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

**Monday, May 20, 2024**

**4:30 PM**

**Room 22,  
Recreation Center**

**Members Present:**

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair  
Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair (5:28 PM)  
Councilor Robert Williams  
Art Walker  
Ken Bergman  
Steven Bill  
Eloise Clark, Alternate (Voting)  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate  
John Therriault, Alternate  
Lee Stanish, Alternate (Voting)

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant  
David Hickling, Airport Director  
Brett Rusnock, Civil Engineer

**Members Not Present:**

Barbara Richter  
Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate

**1) Call to Order**

Chair Von Plinsky called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – April 15, 2024**

A motion by Mr. Bergman to adopt the April 15, 2024 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Walker. The motion carried unanimously.

**3) Report-Outs:**

**A) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee**

Mr. Haynes reported that the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee met on May 10, and discussions of signage and maps were ongoing. June 24–28 were planned as trail days—hopefully with SnowHawk LLC—including work on the Lower Drummer Trail where there are multiple ongoing projects; it could be a training week opportunity for anyone who wants to volunteer and learn how to do various parts of the trail work. The Subcommittee was waiting to learn whether there would be funding available through the Department of Parks and Recreation

for additional trail work this summer, which would be mostly allocated to work on the Mattson Trail. A workday was planned for June 1 on the Wild Things Trail for National Trails Day, focusing on some short reroutes. This summer, the Subcommittee would continue its tradition of workdays at the Park on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month—June 14, July 12, and August 9—to continue work on the Mattson Trail and anything else that arises. Mr. Haynes also reported that Steven Lamonde led a bird walk on May 18 with fewer participants than in the past, but he said it was great because it was a more intimate learning environment. Lastly, Mr. Haynes reported that the plans for a spillway bridge were likely on hold for this year; the pieces had not all come together yet.

Ms. Stanish asked if the Subcommittee’s schedule was posted somewhere. Mr. Haynes replied that he was working on getting it on the Commission’s webpage. He was also creating an email notification list for interested volunteers via Parks and Recreation. Anyone interested in being on the list can call Parks and Recreation (603-357-9829) and ask to be on the Volunteer Trails Crew List.

## **B) Invasive Species**

Councilor Williams reported on this year’s first invasive species removal event at the stone arch bridge south of town with a few regular volunteers. They accomplished a lot on this bridge, which he said was ignored compared to the beautiful stone arch bridge north of town. Despite this, he said it is a special place. The crew worked to remove a very tall and mature buckthorn tree growing from the middle of the bridge; it was the third year in a row that volunteers managed to cut it back, so he hoped its roots were weakening. If there was low water in the future, he hoped to cut it from the bottom. There was a layer of Japanese barberry under the tree and the crew cut and removed as much as possible, but it would need repeat attention. The crew also cleared some invasives closer to the river. Councilor Williams said it was frustrating that such a nice area near the river, which could have canoe access, was so overgrown. He hoped it could have the same attention as the northern stone arch bridge because he thought it would do a lot of good to transform this special place. He noted that other parks have dedicated Advisory Committees, such as the “Ashuelot River Park Advisory Committee,” and said this park could benefit from a similar committee or volunteer group solely dedicated to its upkeep.

Ms. Clark advised contacting Peter Hansel of the Keene Rotary, as their members were seeking volunteer opportunities. For example, the Rotary adopted maintenance of the pocket park on Church Street. Councilor Williams agreed, noting that he had recently spoken with Mr. Hansel about work at Ellis-Harrison Park, which is another location that is overgrown with invasives, including a wall of Japanese knotweed along Beaver Brook.

Tentatively, the next invasives event was planned for Monday, June 24 from 6:00 PM–8:00 PM, clearing knotweed at Ellis-Harrison Park with the Keene Rotary.

**C) Land Conservation**

Chair Von Plinsky reported that Ms. Richter was working on some ideas and Ms. Marcou had helped to provide details on land already conserved in Keene and to what level.

**D) Neighborhood Pollinator Garden**

Mr. Therriault reported that the Edgewood neighbors planned to start working sometime in late June, which is when Parks and Recreation would have the ability to support the effort. Part of the grant money the neighbors received for this effort would allow the City to rent a sod cutter to kick-off the project.

As Keene is a Bee City, Mr. Therriault reported that the date of this meeting was World Bee Day. May 20 was the birthday of Anton Janša, beekeeper to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who wrote the first beekeeping book in German. Mr. Therriault received confirmation from Xerces Society that they received the City's 2024 Bee City USA dues, and they shared an information packet for No Mow May to promote not mowing lawns during the month of May to support early season pollinators.

**4) Discussion Items:**

**A) Airport Proposed Wildlife Control Fence Update – Visit from David Hickling, Airport Director**

Chair Von Plinsky welcomed the Airport Director, David Hickling, who described work with engineering consultants, McFarland Johnson, on the preliminary design and environmental assessment for the proposed wildlife control fence at the Dillant Hopkins Airport.

Mr. Hickling displayed an aerial view of the airport runways. He reported that the consultants had finished the wetland delineation update on May 16–17. He explained that this project was funded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP). It could take up to one year to receive funds after executing a grant offer, delaying the project. In 2023, the City did not receive the funding in time to issue the notice to proceed to McFarland Johnson before it was too late to complete wetland delineations that year. They anticipated completing the environmental assessment by February 2025. However, Mr. Hickling could not apply for grant funding for construction—also due around February 2025—until that environmental assessment was complete. So, there was a risk of pushing the project one more year, which was frustrating. Regardless, Mr. Hickling would remain persistent in working toward the end goal.

Next, Mr. Hickling shared some takeaways from the wetland delineation that McFarland Johnson shared:

- There are expansive emergent, scrub-shrub, and forested wetlands located throughout the proposed fence project.

- The wetlands are associated with the floodplain of the Ashuelot River and the South Branch Ashuelot River, as well as an unnamed tributary of the South Branch Ashuelot River.
- FEMA-mapped 100-year floodplain in the northwestern and western edge of the project area.
- Wetlands within the 100-year floodplain boundary are NH Department of Environmental Services Priority Resource Areas.
- McFarland Johnson was evaluating alignment alternatives to minimize wetland impacts to the maximum extent practicable. It was understood that the preference of the Keene Conservation Commission and public was to avoid siting the fence along Airport Road.
- An unnamed perennial stream originates at the outlet of Wilson Pond. Ditched along the eastern edge of the Airport property, flows under Runway 2-20. Tributary to South Branch Ashuelot River. Confluence located west of the study area.

McFarland Johnson would be presenting these details to the Swanzey Conservation Commission on June 3. The Keene Commission was welcome to attend. Mr. Hickling would verify the time and share it with Ms. Brunner and the Commission.

Mr. Hickling showed the aerial view of the Airport runways with the updated wetlands delineation. He showed the outflow from Wilson Pond that flows under the runway. Mr. Hickling noted that the wetland delineation was closer to the proposed fence line than originally anticipated (from the Airport Master Plan), which would increase the wetland impacts of the project. Because the wetland impacts would be primarily during fence installation, he did not think those impacts would continue after construction. McFarland Johnson was looking at ways to adjust the fence's final layout, and the City's preference was to move the fence further from the wetlands and closer to the runway, for which the FAA will sometimes approve a variance. He said that the FAA would likely push the City to move the fence closer to Airport Road, which would block the wildlife viewing area frequented by the public. However, he thought that topography around the runways would help with the FAA request.

Mr. Hickling said that whenever there is an environmental assessment, there has to be a Plan B. In this case, the backup plan was to revert to the original fence layout along Airport Road that was proposed as the preferred alternative in the Airport Master Plan because it would have almost no environmental impacts. Mr. Hickling did not prefer that alternative because it would essentially trap all the wildlife within the fence, when the goal is to keep wildlife out for airport safety. So, he would fight against that alternative.

Mr. Bergman reiterated that siting the fence along Airport Road would be extremely unpopular as people travel from all over to view wildlife there.

Mr. Bill asked how tall the fence would be. Mr. Hickling said 8' with three strands of solid wire. He said that standard works well to keep white-tailed deer out at other Airports. Mr. Bergman

noted that at the end of the shorter runway there is a marsh and the substrate there would not lend itself to deer jumping there either.

Mr. Hickling said that McFarland Johnson understood the City's goal. While the FAA would likely favor the cheapest alternative, he would argue that from a wildlife management perspective, it would make no sense to run the fence along Airport Road. So, he felt there was an 80%–90% chance of the fence being installed along the runway. If the fence moves closer to the end of the short runway and away from Airport Road, he thought it could be possible to avoid the wetlands entirely due to the slope and topography at the end of that runway; he explained some nuances of runway visibility zones. Mr. Bergman said that would make a major difference for recreation along Airport Road, and he asked when Mr. Hickling might have an answer from the FAA about moving the fence closer to the short runway. Mr. Hickling said not until the environmental assessment is complete at the end of this year. Mr. Bergman asked if the Swanzey natural resource inventory team would be working at the airport, which was his understanding. Mr. Hickling was unaware.

Commissioners could send questions to Mr. Hickling that he would share with McFarland Johnson to include during their June 3 presentation to the Swanzey Conservation Commission.

Mr. Haynes asked if the environmental assessment included a cultural resource inventory, which is typical. Mr. Hickling said that was all in the project scope, which he would share with the Commission. Mr. Haynes said that with sandy soils, there was prime potential for finding artifacts.

Mr. Bergman recalled a previous question about whether all the construction could be completed during one season. Mr. Hickling agreed that the challenge remained to get permission to complete the work in one season, because there was a chance that the total funds would not be released at once, but over four years, which would also result in trapping the wildlife inside the fence that is meant to keep it out. Mr. Hickling would push to have the project funded in one year. First, the design had to be completed so he could seek funding, but he might also have some bipartisan infrastructure funds available.

Ms. Brunner/Ms. Marcou would send an email reminder of the June 3 presentation. At some point, there could be a joint meeting of the Keene and Swanzey Conservation Commissions.

Mr. Walker recalled a past request from the Commission to visit City properties in Roxbury. Chair Von Plinsky said he would inquire. It was noted that if a quorum of the Commission was present, it would have to be open to the public.

## **B) Keene Meadow Solar Station Project Update**

There was no update, but Ms. Brunner would keep checking.

Mr. Bergman recalled the presentation about a solar station at the Monadnock View Cemetery. Ms. Marcou said it was proposed toward the back of the cemetery. Chair Von Plinsky said a site visit would be scheduled when the project is more formalized.

**C) NH DOT Route 101 Project**

No update.

**D) Master Plan Steering Committee**

Chair Von Plinsky reminded the Commission of the City's Master Plan update. Members of the public (not just Keene residents) were welcome to learn more, complete a survey, and/or sign-up for "think tanks" at [www.KeeneMasterPlan.com](http://www.KeeneMasterPlan.com); please share widely. Ms. Brunner explained that invites were sent out to members of the community who were recommended for the think tanks, but they would be open to members of the public, who were asked to register on the website, because a meal will be offered during each half-day session: Thursday, May 30 from 5:00 PM–8:30 PM and Friday, May 31 from 9:00 AM–12:00 PM, at Keene State College Alumni Center. Ideally, registrants will be able to attend both sessions for continuity.

Ms. Clark noted that the 2010 Master Plan included a natural resource inventory and asked if that would be the same this time. Ms. Brunner did not think that was a part of the scope of updating the Master Plan, but the Plan could recommend creating a new one.

Chair Von Plinsky said that at some point, the Commission could consider hiring a consultant to create a Conservation Master Plan using the Land Use Change Tax Fund (LUCTF), which had \$134,289.79 remaining on this date and \$25,000 is added at the end of each year; expenditures must be approved by the City Council. Mr. Haynes recalled that the Commission tried to create a Conservation Master Plan many years ago, but Commissioners were stretched too thin at that time and did not realize the LUCTF was available for this purpose. Ms. Brunner said she would double check that the Fund could be used for this purpose and report back to the Commission.

**E) Outreach:**

**i) *Chronolog Update – Cheshire County Conservation District***

Chair Von Plinsky would be meeting with the Cheshire County Conservation District on May 23 and would explore the possibility of financially partnering with the Commission on a bulk rate for the Chronolog monitoring tool.

**F) Potential Land Purchase Update (Rt 9/Washington St. Ext. Properties)**

Ms. Clark stated that in the Keene Sentinel on May 3, 2024, it was reported that Hull Forest Products sold the Rt. 9 property (0 Gilsum Road, tax map #218 042 000) on the other side of Old

Concord Road from Beaver Brook Falls, to M. E. & T. L. Austin-Whippie & Mark. E. Whippie on April 30, 2024 for \$68,000. Ms. Brunner confirmed that this parcel had frontage on Route 9 and seems to have road access and was therefore developable; Mr. Haynes said it was prime development land.

Discussion ensued about whether the Commission wanted to recommend making an offer on the other parcel. Ms. Clark thought it was worth it to keep that area forested due to the steep slopes and mitigating flood issues downstream, in addition to being contiguous with Beaver Brook. Mr. Haynes agreed.

Ms. Brunner recalled that there was already a public hearing on the two initial properties, and the City Council authorized buying them for up to their assessed values (~\$75,000 for both parcels together) before they were logged. So, she said the City might be willing to offer up to the assessed value—which the City Assessor could determine—for the remaining property. She thought this would be covered by the original motion, but if not, there would need to be another public hearing.

Chair Von Plinsky recalled that the Commission authorized the purchase of an Old Gilsum Road property for \$65,000 from the LUCTF, which had \$134,289.79 remaining. He said that while the Commission had debated which of the two properties (Rt 9/Washington St. Ext. Properties) to protect, but now that was moot, and he thought that purchasing the remaining property would be an important buffer between Beaver Brook and Route 9, in addition to protecting the steep slopes. Ms. Brunner said she would consult the Community Development Director.

Councilor Williams asked if there was City water and sewer on the lot. Ms. Brunner thought it was likely, but said the property was not developable. Councilor Williams wondered whether that would still be the case with passage of the Cottage Court Overlay District. Ms. Clark and Ms. Brunner thought slopes on the property were too steep, and Ms. Brunner was unsure if access would be possible from that section of the highway. Councilor Williams said his colleagues on the City Council would like to build everywhere. Ms. Brunner said she would be surprised to find a developer to develop it because of the steep slopes.

Mr. Bergman asked how the lot that was sold could be used; was access an issue or was more logging permitted? Ms. Brunner said the property was zoned Rural, with frontage on the highway (Rt. 9) and it looks like it could potentially have access from Timberlane Drive. Mr. Haynes thought it was likely already logged to the greatest extent. Mr. Bergman asked about solar and quarrying. Ms. Brunner said that up to 20 acres of solar is allowed in the Rural District. She added the possibility of a development that would require a Building Permit, like a Conservation Subdivision.

5) **Budget**

June 30 is the end of the fiscal year. Each fiscal year, the Commission is allocated \$2,000 by the City Council, and the money returns to the General Fund if not used by the end of the fiscal year. To date in FY24, the Commission had approved expending:

- \$950 for NH Association of Conservation Commission (NHACC) dues
- \$240 for four Commissioners to attend the NHACC Annual Meeting and Conference
- \$200 donation to the Wantastiquet-Monadnock Coalition for installation of a privy at the tent site on West Hill, near the Horatio Colony Nature Preserve
- \$150 honorarium for Steven Lamonde’s bird walk at Goose Pond
- \$200 Bee City USA dues

There was \$260 remaining to be allocated before June 30.

**A) Memberships:**

**i) Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee Membership**

The Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) submitted its annual request for \$125 to support annual E. coli testing, and if spent, would leave \$135 remaining in the Commission’s budget. In the past, the Commission had exceeded ARLAC’s \$125 request and Mr. Haynes asked how additional funds could be used. Ms. Clark—ARLAC member—replied that they consistently face challenges with broken equipment, so funds could support replacement costs. Otherwise, ARLAC has no expenses because volunteers run it.

The Commission agreed to make its typical ARLAC contribution, to review a proposal from Councilor Williams at the next meeting for how the extra funds could be used for invasive species removal, and to consider making an additional donation to ARLAC with anything remaining.

A motion by Mr. Walker to approve the Conservation Commission’s \$125 annual donation to the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee was duly seconded by Mr. Bergman. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Madison arrived.

**6) New or Other Business**

**A) NHDES Standard Dredge & Fill Application: George St. Bridge Replacement Project**

Chair Von Plinsky welcomed the George Street Bridge replacement project consultant from McFarland Johnson, Samuel I. White (via Teams), who began by showing maps of the bridge location, with People’s Linen to the north and the next upstream crossing at Giffin Street. The existing bridge is a 14’ reinforced concrete deck slab founded on concrete abutments built in 1923. Per National Bridge Inspection Standards, the bridge deck and the superstructure were in poor condition (rating 4 of 9), the substructure was in serious condition (rating 3 of 9). The State



of NH considers replacing a bridge when either the superstructure, substructure, or deck is rated 4 of 9. After functioning for the City for 100 years, Mr. White said it made sense that the bridge had these ratings, which indicated that it was time to replace the bridge.

Ms. Clark asked if the 14' shown was the span over the river or the overall width. Mr. White replied that it was 14' from face of vertical abutment to face of vertical abutment.

Mr. White continued his presentation on the bridge's existing conditions, with more details about Beaver Brook, which is a perennial third order stream in the 7.51 square mile watershed. This is a Tier 3 stream crossing. McFarland Johnson completed the stream assessment and wetland delineation in October 2022 and at that time, the average measured bankfull width was 17.7'. He showed photos of a gabion wall running along the steep bank that exists today, with some vegetation on it, most of which is invasive Japanese knotweed. He also showed the existing walls on the downstream face of the bridge, with stacked masonry on both sides.

Mr. Bill asked what material the banks were, besides the gabions. Mr. White replied that where the banks were not armored by an existing vertical wall structure, they were mostly a sandy muddy silt, with some cobbles in the stream.

Mr. White showed more photos of the existing bridge. Upstream, approaching the bridge, the stream was deeply incised with vertical faces that were either man made or a result of erosion over time. The upstream wing walls approaching the bridge on the northwest side were an erosion measure to help stabilize the banks. To Mr. White's knowledge, the southeast wall on the downstream side had not been replaced over time. He showed the existing concrete footing sticking out the face of the abutment, where the stream bed is eroded off—or scoured off—of it. There was a natural channel between the two faces of the footing on the abutment. Other parts of the footing were exposed too. Looking downstream from the face of the bridge, there was a healthy Japanese knotweed stand that was starting to encroach on the stream. He showed the FEMA-Mapped 100-year floodplain and regulatory floodway.

Next, Mr. White explained that when evaluating alternatives, an important factor to keep in mind is the base flood elevation (BFE). The bridge replacement should not raise the BFE upstream of the bridge, which must be considered when sizing the new bridge opening. Currently, if there were a big storm event, Beaver Brook would theoretically overtop the George Street bridge base based off the hydraulics. Raising the profile of the road would demand a wider bridge opening.

Mr. White shared some metrics from the stream assessment that influenced the new bridge span, based on current stream crossing rules:

- Average bankfull width (Wbf): 17.7
- Average bankfull depth (Dbf): 1.8
- Average floodprone width (Wfpa): 21.3
  - $2 * \text{water depth at Wbf}$
- Entrenchment ratio: 1.21

- Wfpa / Wbf

The proposed replacement bridge would have a 22' clear span and 3-sided precast concrete rigid frame: Fully compliant span (21.4') = Wbf (17.7') \* Entrenchment ratio (1.21).

Chair Von Plinsky asked about the increase from 14' to 22' and whether the extra width would be on either side or offset. Mr. White said it would be centered on the existing thread of the stream.

Mr. White continued, showing a high-level plan view of the proposed bridge. The 22' bridge would have a 33' out-to-out width along the stream. He showed proposed improvements on the upstream and downstream ends. Widening the structure would require tapering the channel into the structure. The existing gabion wall would be relocated to meet into the new bridge face. On the other three corners, the existing vertical walls would be removed and replaced with a graded slope; to balance the limits of the grading work, there would have to be a steep slope, 1.5:1. Still, it would be an overall improvement for terrestrial wildlife and access to the stream overall, while still providing a stable bank. Additionally, over top the rip rap there would be a simulated streambed material up to the ordinary high-water level to provide a better surface for a fish passage and terrestrial wildlife. He showed the view of the three-sided rigid frame with a precast shape met by the cast in place footings.

Mr. Bill asked the relative size of the footings. Mr. White said approximately 9'. The footings follow the limit of bridge and wing walls, the latter of which are narrower; wing walls gain stability through the type of wing wall that it is, with a soil anchor.

Next, Mr. White concluded by summarizing the impacts from the wetland application. He showed bridge plans depicting temporary impacts (hatched pattern) and permanent impacts (in grey). He showed other aspects of the proposed bridge plans with wetland impacts:

- There will be permanent impacts to allow for working around the sewer manhole and connecting to the new sewer line down the road.
- There will be temporary impacts to provide a sandbag dam for a bypass pipe to manage the river during construction, with a turbidity curtain (to protect the stream against sediment coming out from excavating the slopes) to limit turbidity entering the stream and provide space to build new slopes. Grading out the new slope would provide the new, permanent gabion wall, strengthening the new bridge.

Chair Von Plinsky asked how long the dams would be in place. Mr. White said a few months. Realistically, he expected construction to take 4–6 months in total. McFarland Johnson was aware of the cold-water fisheries and native brook trout in the area, so they would institute a restriction for fish spotting so there will not be work in the water during that time frame.

Ms. Clark asked what material would be used to stabilize the steep slopes and Mr. While replied that it would be rip rap (with a simulated material over top) around the bridge that will tie into the existing slope, sort of following the area of ordinary high water.

Mr. Bergman asked whether the terrestrial wildlife shelf would be the simulated stream bed material or if it would be more permanent. Mr. White understood Mr. Bergman's concern about erosion over time. Mr. White said that the surface above the rip rap would be washed in with stone first (in the contract documents); the rip rap would be sized so that it will not move under flow. Mr. White felt confident that this material would not mobilize over time, but the theory, if this material were to mobilize, there would be more material from upstream that would come down during that flow and replace it as a part of normal sediment transport. Mr. Bergman asked whether Mr. White knew to what extent Beaver Brook was regulated by the dam created a few decades ago at the north end of Keene toward Sullivan; the dam was needed because of downtown floods from Beaver Brook. Ms. Clark said it was called 10-Mile Swamp and Mr. White said that it was well upstream of this bridge site.

Ms. Stanish asked whether the added bridge width would account for the wildlife corridor or whether it was just intended to maintain flow during flood events. Mr. White said that when determining a bridge span, it is a balancing act between hydraulics and geomorphic compatibility. Ideally, the bridge would provide flood storage and some space for the stream to meander over time and accommodate the upstream channel. While the wildlife bench would not exist on the upstream or downstream limits of the stream, it would still be an important aspect, providing space for both storage and movement of the river. Ms. Stanish said it was clear that the stream wants move. Mr. White agreed and said the intent of the armoring would be to limit that movement and to ensure the footings remain stable. He explained that, in theory, the scour depth would be at approximately the top of the footing. To ensure the bridge is secure, the consultants took a two-pronged approach by placing the footing below the scour depth and providing the armoring to ensure it all stays in place over time. Ultimately, the goal for this bridge to last 100 years or more, similar to the existing one.

Commissioners are welcome to email Mr. White with any further questions.

Chair Von Plinsky said the next step was for the Commission to make any recommendations, if needed. One of his main concerns is always accommodating a wildlife corridor, and these plans seemed to do so.

Mr. Rusnock arrived.

Councilor Williams asked how the Japanese knotweed would be managed as a part of construction. Mr. Rusnock replied that the contract would include Type 1 or Type 2 Invasive Species Management and Removal according the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) specifications; requires that the contractor—per the bid documents—develops their own invasive species management plan and submits it to NH DOT for review and approval. Historically, the

City had tried to eradicate knotweed through various projects but had not been very successful. Mr. Rusnock and City staff were willing to accept recommendations from the Conservation Commission about how to manage knotweed more effectively.

Mr. Therriault recalled that when he contacted the NH Department about knotweed, he was told that in Keene, there was a test site using a certain size wire on top of knotweed that would girdle the new shoots as they come up to keep them from regenerating over a series of 3–4 years. He was unsure where that existed in Keene. Mr. Bill thought it was along the Jonathan Daniels Trail at Ashuelot River Park, where he said the knotweed was already popping through the wire. Mr. Haynes did not think wire mesh was used at that location, rather a fabric tarp covered with wood chips. The site was being monitored to continue trying to control the knotweed. Councilor Williams said that method (i.e., tarp and wood chips) was a traditional knotweed treatment, but he thought a complication at this bridge site would be the 45-degree slope. Brief discussion ensued about the roots of knotweed, which are large balls, many inches thick, and all the roots must be removed to prevent regrowth. Mr. Bill wondered if it was prudent to excavate the whole bed of knotweed and start over. Councilor Williams thought it was possible with the amount of soil being moved for this project.

Mr. Rusnock said that on past bridge projects (e.g., Rt-12 bridge over Beaver Brook in 2018), there were associated knotweed management plans to excavate at least 5' deep in areas and all the roots, but that effort was not effective. Mr. Rusnock was not aware of any successful knotweed mitigation on City projects. Councilor Williams mentioned the attempts at knotweed mitigation at Pat Russell Park. He said multi-year plans are needed because it takes repeat efforts to eliminate the invasive enough so that native species can prosper. Mr. Rusnock agreed and noted that one of the permit requirements for Pat Russell Park prohibited the use of herbicides for knotweed removal. In 2022 and 2023, the contractor visited the site 10 times and removed knotweed manually, which is a continuing permitting requirement until 2027. Hopefully, the repeat effort over 5 years will be enough to deplete the knotweed's energy. Still, he was skeptical that it would be a permanent solution. Councilor Williams said part of the challenge is giving another species the opportunity to grow before the knotweed gets there. Mr. Therriault noted that knotweed releases chemicals that discourage other plants from growing in the area.

Mr. Bill asked for more details on the streambed of Beaver Brook. Mr. Rusnock was not completely up to date on the geotechnical borings recovered there, but he thought it was pretty typical of other areas of Keene with layers of sand and gravel underlaying a silty clay material. Mr. Rusnock noted that George Street is unique because the bedrock is much higher than at other sites: 26' below ground surface compared to lower lying 80'–100' areas in Keene.

Mr. Bill asked for details on the project timeframe. Mr. Rusnock said the goal was to finish property negotiations and permitting by fall 2024, and to put the project to bid in October–November 2024, for construction to begin summer 2025.

Mr. Bergman asked whether temporary easements would be needed to access the surrounding properties. Mr. Rusnock replied that there would be a combination of areas that need to be permanently incorporated for the bridge and drainage/utility features with permanent easements. There would also be a temporary stage and access agreement, which is negotiable. Many property owners also donate property and some request that their legal fees be paid for; it depends on each individual property owner. He said the goal is always to avoid eminent domain and takings, but it is not always possible.

Mr. Bergman asked whether there had ever been issues of releasing materials into the stream by People's Linen, a direct abutter. Mr. Rusnock replied that the business had not released anything problematic in recent decades. There is an active Groundwater Management Permit for the People's Linen site. As a part of this bridge project, he anticipated managing soil and groundwater from the western side of the bridge.

If Commissioners think of any other recommendations, they could submit them directly to the NH Wetlands Bureau.

7) **New Business**

Mr. Bill mentioned concern that a typo (100 vs. 10) in the February 20, 2024 minutes attributed to him about the septic system in the draft Conservation Commission minutes was provided to and accepted as fact by the Planning Board when reviewing the Gunn Road application. His point was that the conservation effort should be long term. It was confirmed that the typo was corrected in the adopted minutes. Chair Von Plinsky did not think there were negative consequences of the Planning Board considering that typo, noting that many members of the Planning Board were grateful for the Commission's expertise and input.

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 6:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker  
May 27, 2024

Reviewed and edited by,  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant