



## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

### AGENDA

**Monday, August 19, 2024**

**4:30 PM**

**Room 22, Recreation Center**

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#### Commission Members

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair  
Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair  
Art Walker  
Councilor Robert Williams, Ex-Officio  
Steven Bill  
Kenneth Bergman  
Barbara Richter

Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate  
Thomas P. Haynes, Alternate  
John Therriault, Alternate  
Lee Stanish, Alternate  
Eloise Clark, Alternate

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 17, 2024
3. Report-outs:
  - a) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee
  - b) Invasive Species
  - c) Land Conservation
  - d) Pollinator Updates
4. Discussion Items:
  - a) Airport proposed wildlife control fence
  - b) Keene Meadow Solar Station project update
  - c) NHDOT Route 101 Project
  - d) Master Plan Update
  - e) Outreach
5. New or Other Business
6. Adjourn – Next meeting date: **Monday, September 16, 2024**

1 City of Keene  
2 New Hampshire

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4  
5 CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
6 MEETING MINUTES  
7

Monday, June 17, 2024

4:30 PM

Room 22,  
Recreation Center

**Members Present:**

Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair  
Councilor Robert Williams  
Art Walker  
Ken Bergman  
Steven Bill (via Teams; 4:48 PM–5:25 PM)  
Barbara Richter  
Eloise Clark, Alternate (voting)  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate (voting)  
Lee Stanish, Alternate  
Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant

**Members Not Present:**

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair  
John Therriault, Alternate

8  
9 **1) Call to Order**

10  
11 Vice Chair Madison called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

12  
13 **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 20, 2024**

14  
15 Revisions: lines 61 and 68, change “Elm City Rotary” to “Keene Rotary.” Lines 485–486 should  
16 refer to the streambed of Beaver Brook, not a bed of Japanese knotweed.

17  
18 A motion by Mr. Walker to adopt the May 20, 2024 minutes as amended was duly seconded by  
19 Mr. Haynes. The motion carried unanimously.

20  
21 **3) Public Hearing:**

22 A) **Acquisition of property located at 0 Washington St. Extension for**  
23 **Conservation Purposes – TMP #229-006-000: In accordance with the**  
24 **requirements of RSA 36-A:5 the Keene Conservation Commission will conduct**  
25 **a public hearing to evaluate whether to expend funds from the Conservation**

**Land Acquisition Fund for the purpose of purchasing 30 acres of forested uplands located adjacent to Beaver Brook Falls.**

26  
27  
28  
29 Vice Chair Madison opened the public hearing at 4:34 PM. With no members of the public  
30 present, he closed the public hearing at 4:35 PM. The Commission deliberated about this long strip  
31 of land along Rt-9. The Commission needed a new motion recommending purchase to the Council,  
32 as the previous recommendation included both properties that had since been logged by Hull  
33 Forest Products; one of the properties was recently sold to another entity.  
34  
35 Mr. Bergman asked if this purchase would come from the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund,  
36 and if so, whether it would be compatible with the prior limits for what the City was willing to pay.  
37 Ms. Brunner said yes, there was still \$135,000 remaining in that fund, which is the same fund that  
38 would have been used for the original bid. The Council can adjust the limit when they authorize  
39 the City Manager to negotiate the purchase. Ms. Clark asked if the Commission could recommend  
40 how much the City should spend and Ms. Brunner said yes.  
41  
42 Ms. Richter asked how the property was appraised, given the steep slopes and heavy logging. Ms.  
43 Brunner recalled that when the City had tried to purchase the 2 properties at auction, the City  
44 Council authorized the City Manager to pay up to the assessed value, and they sold to Hull Forest  
45 Products for more than that. The second attempt at purchase last year fell through because the  
46 owner asked for more money than the City Manager was authorized to spend. The Council might  
47 choose to authorize up to the assessed value again.  
48  
49 Ms. Clark thought it might fall through again, because she did not think the owners would accept  
50 the assessed value. Mr. Bergman agreed given that the owners rejected the assessed value before.  
51 Ms. Richter added that “assessed” is different than “appraised,” and properties commonly sell for  
52 more than the assessed value. Keene does update its assessments annually. Ms. Richter cautioned  
53 against going above the appraised value because it could provide a private benefit to the landowner  
54 by paying above fair market value. Ms. Clark thought the owner was asking for fair market value.  
55 Ms. Richter thought that was correct, but still cautioned against offering more than the appraised  
56 value. She said it is challenging because not everyone understands the nuances of this parcel, with  
57 timber already harvested, very steep slopes, and no access road. So, Ms. Richter did not think the  
58 parcel could be developed. Discussion ensued briefly about the owner restoring the berm at the  
59 access point that was used during logging. It was also noted that there is a well drilled onsite in an  
60 area where various types of vegetation are growing.  
61  
62 Discussion ensued about the procedure for making this recommendation to City Council. Vice  
63 Chair Madison was comfortable making a recommendation during this meeting, given how many  
64 times the Commission had discussed this. He cautioned against recommending a price to the  
65 Council, because they like to keep what they are willing to pay private until negotiated.  
66

67 Mr. Haynes motioned to recommend that the City Council authorize the City Manager to negotiate  
68 a price and purchase and sale agreement with the owner of this lot, Hull Forest Products: TMP  
69 #229-006-000. Mr. Walker seconded the motion. Discussion continued.

70  
71 Ms. Clark thought it would be important for the Council to understand the importance of this  
72 property because it is contiguous with Beaver Brook Falls, has steep slopes, and provides  
73 watershed protection because Beaver Brook is prone to flooding, making it important to keep these  
74 slopes forested. When Ms. Clark and Mr. Haynes hiked to the site, they found that most of the  
75 steeper slopes were not logged and the viewshed was still intact. Vice Chair Madison said he  
76 would highlight the flood protection in his letter to the Council, and he and Councilor Williams  
77 would be present to advocate.

78  
79 Mr. Haynes also thought the letter to Council should highlight recreational opportunities. Despite  
80 the steep slopes, there are portions of the parcel that could be developed as hiking and biking trails.  
81 Vice Chair Madison agreed.

82  
83 Mr. Bergman asked where Beaver Brook is in relation to the property across the Washington Street  
84 Extension from the parcel in question. The property Mr. Bergman referred to also included steep  
85 slopes and ravines. The Commission reviewed a map of the property, confirming that the City  
86 owns the property he referred to, and finding that Beaver Brook runs along the roadway. The  
87 Commission reviewed other surrounding properties on the map; the gated entrance into the  
88 Extension is before the power lines. Mr. Bergman also asked if the City Council could place a limit  
89 on what the City Manager is allowed to negotiate and Vice Chair Madison said yes, that would  
90 happen in a non-public session.

91  
92 Mr. Bill arrived via Teams (non-voting).

93  
94 The motion to recommend to authorize the City Manager to negotiate a price and purchase and  
95 sale agreement with the owner the property in question: TMP #229-006-000 carried unanimously.

96  
97 **4) Report-Outs:**

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

99  
100 Mr. Haynes reported that the Subcommittee had not met recently as a group, and moving forward,  
101 they would likely meet at the park for trail work. On June 14, four members of the Subcommittee  
102 had a workday on the Mattson Trail, an extension of the Loop Trail. On June 15, two members  
103 worked to complete water bars there. The Mattson Trail is steep and there is some erosion,  
104 particularly with springtime snow melt, so the water bars would help divert some of that water  
105 away from the trail.

106  
107 Mr. Haynes also reported that June 1 was National Trails Day, when six volunteers worked on the  
108 2–3 re-routes of the Wild Things Trail. The week of June 24 would be Goose Pond Trail Days,  
109 with volunteers led by Lew Shelley of SnowHawk LLC working on the Lower Drummer Trail.

110 The Department of Parks & Recreation had all of the information to advertise the Goose Pond  
111 Trail Days.

112

113 **B) Invasive Species**

114

115 Councilor Williams reported that the next invasives event would be Monday, June 24 at 6:00 PM  
116 at Ellis Harrison Park to address Japanese knotweed along Beaver Brook. Ms. Clark agreed that  
117 between Ellis Harrison Park and the new proposed George Street Bridge, there is a corridor of  
118 knotweed.

119

120 Ms. Richter asked if there were any plans for the knotweed in Pat Russell Park because the  
121 knotweed was regrowing along Beaver Brook; this is a challenge because the invasive also covers  
122 the entire bank of Beaver Brook across the stream from the Park. Councilor Williams said no, his  
123 understanding was that the City’s contractor for the Russell Park project should be responsible for  
124 5 visits to conduct that management (possibly for 1 year, but he was not positive). Ms. Richter saw  
125 landscapers working there in the flat landscaped area. Ms. Richter and Councilor Williams agreed  
126 that knotweed requires multiple years of effort to eradicate, which is why Ms. Richter was pointing  
127 it out now, before it spreads further from the lower bank.

128

129 Ms. Stanish mentioned wanting to talk to a neighbor about the knotweed in their yard, and asked if  
130 the Commission had any resources she could share. Ms. Clark appreciated Ms. Stanish’s focus.

131 Ms. Clark agreed that it is great to address invasives like knotweed on public lands, but said there  
132 will not be substantial change if private landowners ignore the invasives, allowing them to spread  
133 further throughout the City. Ms. Clark thought there was a great opportunity for an educational  
134 campaign and Councilor Williams agreed. Vice Chair Madison thought the Commission’s  
135 invasives efforts over the past few years were making headway on public lands, but he recalled  
136 that it requires a focused, long-term effort. Having resources to share with new homeowners, for  
137 example, would be ideal. Realtors might be willing to share the resources too. The Commission  
138 encouraged Ms. Stanish to develop a proposal. She would seek input on the draft from the  
139 Commission before sharing it.

140

141 Ms. Marcou recalled that in the past, Ms. Clark would create educational resources, called “Nature  
142 Nuggets,” that staff would share on the City’s social media accounts. If the Commission would  
143 like to do that with Ms. Stanish’s resources, Ms. Marcou would share them with the Audio/Visual  
144 Staff to post on social media. The Commission supported this effort. Councilor Williams noted  
145 that the Library might be helpful in developing and sharing these resources with the community  
146 too.

147

148 **C) Land Conservation**

149

150 Chair Von Plinsky was not present to report.

151

152 **D) Pollinator Updates**

153  
154 Mr. Therriault was not present to report. Vice Chair Madison shared that there would be a  
155 Pollinator Palooza & Plant Sale, to support the Cheshire County Conservation District, on  
156 Tuesday, June 25 from 11:00 AM–2:00 PM at Ashuelot River Park.  
157  
158 **5) Discussion Items**  
159 **A) Airport Proposed Wildlife Control Fence**  
160  
161 Mr. Bergman reported on his attendance at the Swanzey Conservation Commission meeting two  
162 weeks before this meeting, when the Dillant Hopkins Airport Director, David Hickling, presented  
163 on the proposed wildlife control fence. The environmental consultant from McFarland Johnson  
164 was also present to answer questions. Mr. Bergman’s impression was that not many Swanzey  
165 Commissioners had been following this project. Much of the discussion was about a 3-way  
166 balancing of interests: (1) aviation safety, (2) wetlands protection, and (3) public recreation and  
167 wildlife viewing along Airport Road. He referred to the secondary, angled runway (not the one that  
168 parallels Rt-32), and said that when driving down Airport Road, past the Airport terminal, and  
169 down to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, on the left side of the road there is a very large marsh  
170 and on the right side there are wet meadows and a swamp. That whole area is within the 100-year  
171 floodplain, is the highest priority wetland status, and will thus require mandatory attention.  
172  
173 Mr. Bergman continued, explaining that the project consultants had just delineated the wetlands  
174 and found them to be larger than previously estimated in the Airport Master Plan. Mr. Bergman  
175 said the real crux of this issue is that the City—via Mr. Hickling—rejected the original plan to run  
176 the fence all the way down Airport road. This would be problematic because: (1) it would contain  
177 the habitat and wildlife within the fence and Airport property, which is the antithesis of the  
178 intention to keep wildlife off the runways; (2) it would interfere with public support for Airport  
179 projects because people use the area for recreation and wildlife viewing daily. So, Mr. Hickling  
180 proposed an alternative to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) through the NH Department  
181 of Transportation (DOT) consultants to confine the fence as close and parallel to the runways as  
182 possible. The wetland impacts from this option would mostly be during construction, which would  
183 occur during winter, non-breeding time for important species.  
184  
185 One problem with moving the fence close to the shorter runway is that the fence must be 500’  
186 wide, centered on the midline of the runway, and extend downstream from the runway over the  
187 marsh; the grade descends down to the water. Mr. Bergman said the fence must be 8’ tall with  
188 razor wire at the top. The FAA was resisting a suggestion to move the fence to the nearby grassy  
189 slope, because their priority is airplane safety. Mr. Hickling and the consultant believed they could  
190 seek a waiver that might require extending the fence into that marshland. A brook runs from the  
191 entry of Airport Road (runway side), parallel to it, from the Edgewood neighborhood, and enters  
192 the Airport property before feeding into the marsh. It was still unclear how close to the runways  
193 the FAA might allow the fence.  
194

195 Mr. Bergman continued, recalling that Mr. Hickling’s goal to complete fence construction during  
196 one season, as constructing throughout multiple seasons would have a greater impact on the  
197 wetlands and contain wildlife within the fence. At this time, it seemed unlikely that the FAA  
198 would approve funding the construction in one year. One question raised by the Swanzey  
199 Conservation Commission was who would be paying for the fence. Mr. Bergman recalled that  
200 95% of the project would be funded by the FAA (or a similar public fund) and the remaining 5%  
201 funded by the City of Keene (i.e., the taxpayers). There would be no impact on the Swanzey  
202 taxpayers. One Swanzey Commissioner questioned whether there could be a gap at the bottom of  
203 the fence if it runs through the marsh to allow small wildlife through (precluding deer). There was  
204 a discussion about anchoring the fence in the marsh’s mucky soil, and whether it would interfere  
205 with beavers, muskrats, fish, frogs, and more. In some locations, fences must extend underground  
206 with burrowing shields to exclude small animals, like foxes. Mr. Bergman mentioned that the  
207 Swanzey Commission’s Chair, Cheri Domina, is an avid birder and pointed out grassland bird  
208 issues at the Airport. She said that all wildlife resources within the fenced area must be assessed  
209 for hazards and species of special concern. Mr. Bergman said it was unclear how comprehensive  
210 the wildlife survey would be. Mr. Bergman mentioned just a few of many species of concern in the  
211 area (bird sightings are tracked by eBird): grassland sparrows, bobolinks, and vesper sparrows, in  
212 addition to reptiles, amphibians, and plants.

213  
214 NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) would be a part of the wetlands evaluation and  
215 is the entity that would grant the necessary waivers for engaging in wetlands impacts. The National  
216 Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) also requires an environmental assessment review by wildlife  
217 specialists; this work would occur in the near future after this meeting. The wildlife specialist  
218 advised Mr. Hickling to collaborate with the directors of the Concord and Manchester airports as  
219 well as the Pease Air National Guard base to understand how they established their well-known  
220 populations of grassland birds, including a mowing regiment to protect them and keep them away  
221 from the runways. Mr. Hickling noted that in addition to animals like deer and coyote on the  
222 runways, Airport staff regularly have to remove snapping turtles.

223  
224 Mr. Bergman recalled that the fence plan called for some tree cutting, mostly small saplings and  
225 bushy growth; Mr. Hickling did not think the project would require too much cutting. Mr.  
226 Bergman asked if Mr. Hickling was willing to stake out the lateral margins of the proposed fence  
227 at the end of the runway facing Airport Road—either in the runway area, on the grassy banks, or  
228 the road itself—so it would be easier to visualize if the FAA requires the fence closer to Airport  
229 Road; some cutting could be required to the right of that area, where there is a lot of swampy,  
230 bushy, and woody wetland vegetation. Keeping the fence away from that area is among the listed  
231 project priorities. Mr. Bergman did not state how Mr. Hickling replied about staking the lateral  
232 margins of the proposed fence. Mr. Hickling would meet with the Keene Conservation  
233 Commission in the near future either individually or jointly with the Swanzey Commission. He  
234 was asked to speak with the Swanzey Planning Board, to which he responded that is not required,  
235 but the Swanzey Town Manager encouraged him to do so because it would be good politically.

236

237 Mr. Walker asked the purpose of the razor wire. Mr. Bergman thought it might be more to  
238 discourage people than animals. He said deer could easily jump over a 10' high barrier, but he did  
239 not think that would be as possible on the soft substrate of a swamp or marsh. He recalled another  
240 suggestion to seek a waiver for the fence height at the far end of the runway; if the fence was in the  
241 marsh, deer could only get to the fence through the marsh. He was unsure if it was proven that  
242 razor wire deters deer.

243  
244 Ms. Richter asked if the primary wildlife concerns were deer and coyotes. Mr. Bergman said yes,  
245 primarily. Deer are widely present and there had been aircraft impacts. Canada geese are also a  
246 problem at many airports. He imagined other wildlife in the area like river otters, beavers, and  
247 muskrats, which would be impeded if the fence is extended to Airport Road. Mr. Bergman's  
248 impression was that Mr. Hickling was very open to hearing concerns. Ms. Richter noted that  
249 Lebanon and Concord both have wildlife management plans for their airports; Mr. Bergman added  
250 that Boston Logan Airport has a serious problem with deer, raptors, geese, and snowy owls.

251  
252 The Commission would continue following this project.

253

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

255

256 No update.

257

258 **C) NH DOT Route 101 Project**

259

260 No update.

261

262 **D) Master Plan Steering Committee**

263

264 Ms. Brunner shared some details from the City's Master Plan update. The week of this meeting,  
265 there were several public visioning sessions (same information at all sessions). Community Night  
266 was scheduled for June 18 and the Master Plan consultant would be there to gather input. If unable  
267 to attend any of the visioning sessions, Ms. Brunner said that the consultants were training City  
268 staff and volunteers to lead similar sessions with community groups throughout July. Also, the  
269 presentation slides from the think tank workshop (i.e., scenario planning) that occurred in May  
270 were available on the project website: [www.KeeneMasterPlan.com](http://www.KeeneMasterPlan.com). The visioning sessions were  
271 intended to test and validate the outcomes of the think tank. Ms. Brunner added that the  
272 community survey had closed, and the results were available on the project website. There, a data  
273 visualization portal is available to see how people responded to each question; the questions on  
274 land use are very relevant to this Commission. She recalled that the Conservation Commission is  
275 an advisory body to the Planning Board for land use issues and the Master Plan. This phase of the  
276 Master Plan update is to update the Community Vision. In August/September, the project will  
277 move into Phase 2, when the Master Plan Steering Committee will identify "strategic pillars," or  
278 the key focus areas of the Master Plan. Then, a focus group will be formed for each pillar  
279 identified, before a community forum on Saturday, October 5.



280 Vice Chair Madison mentioned the importance of trying to schedule some of these public sessions  
281 in the evenings or on weekends, when more could attend.

282  
283 Ms. Clark reported on her participation in the two think tank sessions. The group identified a lot of  
284 areas of concern and importance. She focused on Keene's future adaptations to climate change.  
285 She was disappointed by some of the conversations she heard, and that the environment/climate  
286 was in one of the lower categories, with very little interest from the other participants. She agreed  
287 with Chair Von Plinsky that voices for conservation in the community are really important.

288  
289 **E) Outreach**

290  
291 No updates.

292  
293 **F) Budget**

294  
295 Councilor Williams was asked to bring a proposal for using remaining funds in the budget (\$135)  
296 for invasive species eradication efforts. He felt it was not an ideal time to acquire shrubs to plant  
297 where invasives have been removed because of the imminent high summer heat. When he visited  
298 Fassett Farm Nursery in Jaffrey (which he recommended visiting), he found a promising yellow  
299 birch sapling for \$25 that he hoped could be useful in shading out an area of knotweed at Ellis  
300 Harrison Park; he would work to keep the tree alive in the heat. He also realized that the  
301 Commission has not donated to support the Edgewood neighborhood pollinator garden project, so  
302 he recommended donating toward the seeds they plan to purchase this fall. Discussion ensued  
303 about the financial support for the pollinator garden. Ms. Clark thought they received a \$2,500  
304 grant from the Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD), who did not recommend seeding,  
305 but using whole plants that were already established. She said in her experience, seeding was not  
306 as successful. Councilor Williams cited his recent conversation with the Edgewood neighbors, who  
307 indicated that they might do seeds in the fall and shrubs in the spring. Then, he recalled the  
308 Commission's intention to donate anything remaining in the budget to the Ashuelot River Local  
309 Advisory Committee. Mr. Bergman checked the past minutes and recalled that the CCCD grant  
310 was to rent a sod cutter. Councilor Williams said that had occurred and he thought finances were  
311 the reason they were waiting to purchase shrubs.

312  
313 Councilor Williams made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Walker. The  
314 Conservation Commission unanimously approved spending \$25 on a yellow birch sapling,  
315 donating \$50 to the Edgewood neighborhood pollinator garden for seeds, and donating \$60 to the  
316 Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee.

317  
318 **6) New or Other Business**

319  
320 None presented.

321  
322 **7) Adjournment**

323

324 There being no further business, Vice Chair Madison adjourned the meeting at 5:28 PM.

325

326 Respectfully submitted by,

327 Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker

328 June 19, 2024

329

330 Reviewed and edited by,

331 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner