

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

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

**Monday, August 19, 2024**

**4:30 PM**

**Room 22,  
Recreation Center**

**Members Present:**

Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair  
Councilor Robert Williams (arrived at  
approx. 4:40 PM)  
Art Walker  
Ken Bergman  
Steven Bill  
Barbara Richter  
Eloise Clark, Alternate  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate  
John Therriault, Alternate  
Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair  
Lee Stanish, Alternate

**1) Call to Order**

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

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 17, 2024**

Revisions: Lines 185–186, change “fence” to “fenced-in area.” Line 211, replace “grasslands” with “grasshopper.” Line 102, “an extension of the Loop Trail” should be changed to “near the junction of the Loop Trail.”

A motion by Mr. Walker to adopt the June 17, 2024 meeting minutes as amended was duly seconded by Mr. Bill and the motion carried unanimously.

**3) Report-Outs:**

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

Mr. Haynes reported that at the end of June, there was one good week of work with trail builder, Lew Shelley, focused on the Lower Drummer Trail: reroutes, water bars, pruning, and closing

off a trail. Additionally, the Subcommittee worked to build a new kiosk at the North Trailhead. In July, the Subcommittee had two scheduled workdays and two non-scheduled workdays, predominantly focused on the Lower Mattson Trail (e.g., water bars and reroutes). To date in August, Mr. Haynes reported that the Subcommittee's scheduled workday was canceled due to rain, so instead, they met with the City's new Director of Parks and Recreation, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, and Frank "Pepper" Anderson, the Parks and Recreation Superintendent, to discuss the Stewardship Subcommittee's work and goals. Mr. Walker and Mr. Bill agreed that both staff members were very open to and supportive of the Subcommittee's ideas, including the concept of a bridge over the lower end of the spillway.

Councilor Williams arrived.

Mr. Haynes also reported that last Saturday the Subcommittee had a scheduled workday with volunteers on the Mattson Trail; one more day of work on this lower section of the trail would likely complete the Subcommittee's summer 2024 goals for that section. Once that section is complete, work would shift to the Drummer Road Trailhead, which Mr. Haynes noted needs a lot of work.

Mr. Haynes continued, reporting that last Sunday he led a Goose Pond Through the Seasons walk. He took the group on trails that are less commonly used, calling it an adventure and good fun.

Ms. Clark asked where the Subcommittee was sourcing volunteers. Mr. Haynes replied that the Subcommittee meets for work on the second Friday of each month, though some volunteers are invited. Workdays are on the third Saturday of the month, and he emails a list volunteers (~ 14–15) to invite any who are available. He is happy to add anyone else to the email list.

## **B) Invasive Species**

Councilor Williams reported on two successful invasive species events that were held since the last meeting. First, volunteers worked on the large area of Japanese knotweed between Beaver Brook and Ellis Harrison Park for the second year in a row; a lot pulled from the first year had regrown, but it is easier to pull the second year. The area of knotweed pulled was expanded this second year in preparation for a third year. The crew planted two birch trees (one funded by the Conservation Commission and one from Councilor Williams' yard) in the area where knotweed was removed. Councilor Williams would like to revisit the site in the fall to clear out other things that might be growing and to do some seeding. He had noticed at a different location that orange jewelweed competes well with knotweed once the top layer of knotweed is removed. So, he planned to scatter orange jewelweed seeds in Ellis Harrison Park. He recalled that part of the Conservation Commission's goal in this invasive species technique is to find native species that replace the knotweed and prosper.

Councilor Williams also reported that in July, volunteers worked on knotweed in the Woodland Cemetery for the third year in a row. It was clearly visible where the effort had made an impact over time, making it feel less hopeless, which is possible with this challenging invasive. He plans to continue at this location in future years.

There was no invasive event planned for August. The next event would be in September (date TBD).

Mr. Therriault noted that jewelweed is a good source of pollen and nectar for native bumblebees. He added that in his research on knotweed eradication, he learned that glyphosate herbicide can be useful (a version of the common Roundup; there is also a lower concentration version called Rodeo recommended by the Department of Agriculture). After the first frost, the knotweed should be cut to 4–5” above the ground and ends are painted with the glyphosate (within 30 minutes after cutting), which is absorbed into the roots, killing the plant. According to the studies he read, it seemed to be a measured use of herbicide with proven effectiveness with less regrowth and labor the second year. Councilor Williams was interested in using this technique in locations outside of watersheds but noted that NH law requires such application on public lands to be performed by a certified professional and he was unsure whether there was someone certified on City staff.

Mr. Bill asked if the strategy was to keep cutting the tops off the knotweed to weaken the root systems enough that they would ultimately fail. Councilor Williams said yes. Mr. Bill asked if knotweed has very long roots. Councilor Williams said it is less about the length of the roots and more that they are big/chunky, so weakening them makes them easier to pull out.

Mr. Bergman mentioned the area where volunteers had removed water chestnut from the creek along Airport Road (just past the Terminal), noting that it was pretty clear of the invasive this year. Councilor Williams said that was positive news, as that work was a few years ago.

Mr. Bergman recalled a past question from Ms. Stanish on educating the public about eradicating knotweed on private property, and whether educational materials existed. He asked if anyone had worked on that effort. Ms. Richter thought she might have offered to help, so she said she would revisit available resources from the Department of Agriculture and the University of NH Cooperative Extension. The Commission agreed that posting resources on its City webpage would be helpful to the public; the webpage already linked to the NH Guide to Upland Invasive Species. Ms. Clark said she would resend links to various resources.

Ms. Richter added that she learned that the beetles that control purple loosestrife had been very successful, to the extent that beetles no longer have to be released; the beetles only feed on the loosestrife, not other plants.

### **C) Land Conservation**

No updates.

There were also no updates on the acquisition of the property along the Washington Street extension. The City Manager was involved in that ongoing effort.

**D) Pollinator Updates**

Mr. Therriault reported that there were no updates on the Edgewood neighborhood pollinator garden; they continue working on their plan. He mentioned that the early goldenrods were out. He noted feeling strongly about knotweed both ways: it is a good source of nectar for pollinators in the fall, but it is a challenging invasive. He thought asters would appear soon, toward September 1. He thought Keene had a good environment for pollinators and that there had been good weather for pollinators, despite the humidity. Mr. Bill asked if the pollinator populations were doing well. Mr. Therriault replied that it was hard to measure, and he could only judge observations in his yard, where he had seen several varieties of bumblebees, which indicates fairly healthy populations (including honeybees, with minimal infestation of mites).

Mr. Bergman asked if honeybees compete with native bees. Mr. Therriault said yes. Mr. Bergman asked about impacts on native species due to the widespread use of honeybees for agriculture, for example. Mr. Therriault replied that because there is minimal industrial beekeeping (i.e., keepers with 150+ hives) in this small region—there are only about two dozen beekeepers in Keene—there would not be a significant impact from those honeybees as in other parts of the nation.

**4) Discussion Items:**

**A) Airport Proposed Wildlife Control Fence**

No updates.

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

No updates.

**C) NHDOT Route 101 Project**

No updates.

**D) Master Plan Update**

The Master Plan update was moving forward and was still in Phase 1 to develop the community vision. Ms. Brunner reported that at the Master Plan Steering Committee's most recent meeting on August 6, the group identified the key themes for the Master Plan, and they would continue working on that at their next meeting on September 3 at Heberton Hall (guests are welcome for

the workshop-style session). On Saturday, October 5 (9:00 AM–12:00 PM), there would be a “Future Summit” to unveil the Master Plan vision and transition to Phase 2; she invited Commissioners to this Summit as a great way to get involved (with no further commitment implied).

Mr. Bergman recalled that housing is an obvious issue of concern for the Master Plan. He asked whether the general mission and other goals of the Conservation Commission would be highlighted in this Master Plan. Ms. Brunner replied that through the community survey, community members felt very strongly on that topic. Of the 600+ responses of what people like about Keene, the second highest response was the natural environment. That community input is summarized on the [Master Plan website](#). Because Chair Von Plinksy had been traveling, the voice of the Commission might not have been as strongly present at the past few Master Plan Steering Committee meetings. Vice Chair Madison added that it is important for Commissioners to attend these community meetings not just representing this Commission’s interests, but as concerned community members.

Mr. Bill asked if it would be logical to have a joint meeting with the Master Plan Steering Committee for more direct interaction. Because the Master Plan Steering Committee has 16 members, Ms. Brunner thought it would make the most sense for the Commission to attend a Master Plan Steering Committee meeting (first Tuesday monthly at 6:00 PM, usually in Council Chambers).

#### **E) Outreach**

No updates.

#### **5) New or Other Business**

Discussion ensued about the George Street Bridge and a document that was distributed to the Commission via email. Mr. Bergman said it seemed like there were many issues to be addressed before there would be approval, including a lot of engineering analysis and reporting. He asked if the Commission would hear a follow-up on this, given that the Commission chose to not deny the waiver. Ms. Brunner did not think any further action was required, but she was unsure whether the NH Department of Environmental Services would send the permit back to the Commission for its review again. Vice Chair Madison was also unsure. Ms. Clark’s experience with the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee was that they would not get to revisit the issue, but would be kept informed.

Discussion on the George Street Bridge continued. Vice Chair Madison thought it would be reasonable to ask the Public Works Director to report back to the Commission at the October meeting (close to the 60 days) with an update on the status of the permit if there are substantial changes. If there are not substantial changes, the Vice Chair thought it was reasonable for the Commission to receive a communication indicating that all issues were addressed. Mr. Bergman

mentioned feeling ill-equipped to ensure the Commission is not missing anything and did its due diligence. Mr. Bill also mentioned things like typos in the report, or a legend missing from a map. The Vice Chair clarified that the Commission's role was to make advisory recommendations as conservation expert representatives of the citizens of Keene, not to point out things like typos in the report, which City staff and the hired contractors would be focused on.

While reviewing issues related to the George Street Bridge, Ms. Richter looked at the Beaver Brook Restoration Plan, which indicated that the George Street Bridge is substantially smaller than the natural bankfull channel. She quoted, "*When the bridge requires replacement, a single span open bottom bridge wide enough to accommodate the bankfull channel and active floodplains along both sides is recommended.*" She wondered if that was something this Commission or the City needed to consider. Mr. Bergman thought he recalled that the proposal was for a longer bridge and thus, a wider span across the channel. Vice Chair Madison's recollection was that it would be longer than full bank width. Ms. Richter also noticed that NH Fish and Game found wild brook trout upstream and downstream, making it particularly critical to ensure this remains an aquatic passage for brook trout.

Mr. Haynes recalled that in the past, there was a requirement for the Conservation Commission to annually monitor the lands it oversees, and he asked if that was still the custom. Vice Chair Madison said that organizations like the Monadnock Conservancy oversee parcels for which they have easements, but those were not the properties Mr. Haynes was referring to. Ms. Clark said the City itself holds conservation easements on several (approximately 3–5) small properties; landowners had donated these parcels to the City over time. In that case, Ms. Brunner did think the Commission was responsible for annual monitoring to ensure the easements are being upheld. Ms. Richter recalled that she had been working with Chair Von Plinsky on a comprehensive list of City conservation lands—whether owned by the City, perceived as owned by the City, conservation easements, public parks, etc. That work is challenging and ongoing, but having that list will help to guide any regular monitoring required. She wondered if anyone on City staff could help.

On the topic of property monitoring, Ms. Brunner suggested an upcoming opportunity to submit a proposal for graduate student projects at Antioch University New England or undergraduate internships at Keene State College, the latter of which has a new Sustainability Coordinator, Kate Witte. The Commission agreed that this could be a great student project, and Ms. Brunner would connect Ms. Richter with Ms. Witte. This year, Ms. Brunner also suggested submitting more than one Antioch proposal as it depends on student interests in a given year. Mr. Bergman recalled the goal/need to have an inventory of conserved lands in Keene, but it had been hard to compile that inventory with the bits of data different formats across various lists. Ms. Richter said the City had a general spreadsheet, but it was challenging and time consuming to sift through. Ms. Richter offered to prepare a write-up for soliciting KSC interns. The Antioch projects require a more formal proposal; if selected, costs like travel or equipment would be required. Mr. Bill recalled that there are also junior/senior seminars at KSC in the Sustainability

program that could potentially have related student projects as well. Mr. Bergman and Mr. Bill offered to help Ms. Richter and Chair Von Plinsky with this effort as needed.

Vice Chair Madison suggested tabling the topic of property monitoring for now and to review it again in September.

Mr. Bergman asked—if the City’s purchase of the Washington Street Extension property is successful—whether it would have an easement placed on it. Ms. Richter suggested a deed restriction for conservation for the benefit of the public to be managed by the Conservation Commission (or City); this would provide a level of protection in posterity, especially if purchased with the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund. Vice Chair Madison thought the deed restriction would be automatic by using that Fund to purchase the property. Ms. Richter said to be safe, it can be good to clarify when transferring the deed. She added that there could also be a conservation easement, like Goose Pond has with the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, with associated fees.

**6) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Monday, September 16, 2024**

There being no further business, Vice Chair Madison adjourned the meeting at 5:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker  
August 26, 2024

Reviewed and edited by,  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner