



CONSERVATION COMMISSION

AGENDA

Monday, December 16, 2024

4:30 PM

Room 22, Recreation Center

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

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes** – November 18, 2024
- 3. Report-outs:**
 - a) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee
 - b) Invasive Species
 - c) Land Conservation
 - d) Pollinator Updates
- 4. Discussion Items:**
 - a) Citywide approach/strategy for invasive species management
 - b) Airport wildlife control fence
 - c) Keene Meadow Solar Station project update
 - d) NHDOT Route 101 Project
 - e) Master Plan Update
 - f) Outreach
- 5. NH Association of Conservation Commission Dues Request**
- 6. Membership Update**
- 7. Adoption of 2025 Meeting Schedule**
- 8. New or Other Business**
- 9. Adjourn** – Next meeting date: **Tuesday**, January 16, 2024

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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4
5 CONSERVATION COMMISSION
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, November 18, 2024

4:30 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair
Councilor Robert Williams
Art Walker
Ken Bergman
Steven Bill
Barbara Richter
Thomas Haynes, Alternate
Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager,
Director of Facilities (left early)
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks &
Recreation (left early)

Members Not Present:

John Therriault, Alternate

8
9 **SITE VISIT: At 3:30 PM, before the meeting, a quorum of the Conservation Commission**
10 **conducted a site visit to the property at 0 Court Street (TMP #228-016-000).**

11
12 **1) Call to Order**

13
14 Chair Von Plinsky called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

15
16 Members of the public were present: John Noonan from Fieldstone Land Consultants, Gary
17 Flaherty, Mike Guitard, Eloise Clark, and Kevin Thatcher.

18
19 **2) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – October 21, 2024**

20
21 A motion by Vice Chair Madison to adopt the October 21, 2024 minutes was duly seconded by
22 Mr. Walker and the motion carried unanimously.

23
24 **3) Advice and Comment – Fieldstone Land Consultants, on behalf of owner Guitard**
25 **Homes LLC, is seeking input from the Commission regarding a potential Cottage**
26 **Court Development & Surface Water Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The parcel is**
27 **located at 0 Court Street (TMP #228-016-000) in the Low Density District.**
28

29 Chair Von Plinsky welcomed John Noonan of Fieldstone Land Consultants, on behalf of the
30 applicant, Mike Guitard and Guitard Homes. Mr. Noonan explained this plan for 31 units at 0
31 Court Street under the City’s new Cottage Court Overlay zoning. Mr. Noonan showed the plans
32 for the three phases of the project, including a wetland crossing in Phase 1. He recalled walking
33 the site with Commissioners and showing where the larger channel would be in phase one. He
34 showed where the smaller channel would be toward the top near the trail along the back portion
35 of the property in Phase 2. In Phase3, he showed where the houses would be more spread out to
36 target families with children compared to the higher density below. Phase 1 would connect to the
37 Genesis HealthCare site. He pointed out where the water, sewer, and parking services would
38 begin, end, or be extended on site; there would be a new curb cut and ultimately, water and
39 sewer would be extended up to the rear of the lot. He showed an aerial view of the main wetland
40 channel and a location that would be either a bridge or box culvert. He showed where there
41 would be a much smaller second crossing toward the back of the site. He also showed a road that
42 would go into Phase 3—where the group stood during the site visit—where the trail crosses.
43

44 Mr. Noonan continued, explaining that the project was in the preliminary stage, and the applicant
45 had met with the Planning Board (PB) and the Community Development Department to discuss
46 the layout and how to use the Cottage Court Overlay to maximize the site for as many houses as
47 possible. At this time, the applicant was seeking preliminary feedback and comments from the
48 Commission that could be addressed moving forward as the site was designed; they sought the
49 same input from the PB. He also explained that instead of seeking a blanket reduction of the
50 wetland buffer, the applicant would be asking for a reduction only in the areas with houses
51 implemented in the buffer (and the wetland crossings) and not for the entire site, because they
52 anticipate meeting the wetland buffer requirement for much of the site without any impact. They
53 sought the Commission’s feedback on this plan in addition to the wetland crossings. In addition
54 to the City’s permitting, there would be State permitting for sewer connections, Alteration of
55 Terrain, and for the Wetlands Bureau. As a part of the Alteration of Terrain, they would also be
56 submitting to the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) because the work will be
57 within ¼-mile of the Ashuelot River.
58

59 Chair Von Plinsky thanked the applicant for seeking the Commission’s advice in advance, which
60 was not always the case. Similarly, he appreciated that the applicant was trying to design around
61 the wetland buffer, which he said was also not always the case.
62

63 Mr. Bill asked what the minimum wetland buffer would be. Mr. Noonan said 30 feet would be
64 maintained as much as possible. He said the wetland crossings would have a buffer impact and
65 although they had not yet designed the stormwater management systems, those would likely
66 impact some of the buffer too. He said that in all areas possible, they would try to maintain 30
67 feet.
68

69 Vice Chair Madison asked if there was any concern for stormwater runoff from the hill to the
70 northeast and if so, what plans there were to mitigate. Mr. Noonan said that these are substantial
71 watersheds, so between the stormwater and crossing designs, the applicant would have to

72 demonstrate plans on the mapping for this significant runoff from the higher grounds down to the
73 crossings. Councilor Madison asked what storm event they were planning for. Mr. Noonan said
74 it would be for two-, 10-, and 50-year storm events. In addition, the wetland crossings must pass
75 a 100-year event for the Wetland Permit.

76

77 Chair Von Plinsky said he appreciated the plan to apply for individual impacts to the wetland
78 buffer vs. a blanket impact because he thought it would be easier to keep everything in context.
79 Mr. Noonan appreciated the feedback.

80

81 Ms. Clark said she had some concerns about the steepness of the drop-off on the bottom right
82 area. Mr. Noonan indicated an area on the map where some sheds were portrayed to demonstrate
83 that during the design, some of the homes would be rotated and pulled away from the steeper
84 edge.

85

86 Mr. Bill said that—given the vagrancies of climate—he encouraged the applicant to consider
87 higher storm recurrence intervals of at least 100 years, given what was unknown at this point.
88 Chair Von Plinsky agreed that any time it is possible to plan for a bigger event, it is better. Vice
89 Chair Madison knew that a 100-year event was required for the permit but said that 100-year
90 events were starting to occur annually or biannually.

91

92 Mr. Noonan concluded his presentation by showing photos of the three styles of single-family
93 homes they planned to build to meet the Cottage Court Overlay (shown in the meeting packet).
94 All would be under 1,250 feet of average gross floor size, with options for garages or sheds.

95

96 Chair Von Plinsky thanked the guests for the presentation.

97

98 Mr. Noonan, Mr. Guitard, and Mr. Thatcher left the meeting.

99

100 **4) Discussion Items:**

101 **A) Citywide Approach/Strategy for Invasive Species Management**

102

103 Chair Von Plinsky led a discussion on the letter he drafted based on the Commission's
104 discussion and decision to communication with the City Council about a Citywide approach to
105 invasive species management. He welcomed Deputy City Manager, Andy Bohannon, and the
106 Director of Parks & Recreation, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey. The Chair said his goal in the letter was
107 to outline concerns (e.g., infrastructure deterioration and the need for staff training) the
108 Commission detailed during their October 21, 2024 meeting, as shown in their adopted minutes.
109 He said the Commission was not asking the Council to write a blank check on this issue, and the
110 Commission was trying to provide some legitimate solutions to face this problem that would
111 involve the public and would be less costly for the City. Chair Von Plinsky asked for any
112 suggested revisions.

113

114 Mr. Bill advised replacing the word “suggestion” with “recommendation.”

115 Chair Von Plinsky asked if the staff members had any advice. Mr. Bohannon reminded the
116 Commission that what they were looking for would have a budget impact. He said he had early
117 conversations with Ms. Fisk-Hennessey and the Public Works Director, Don Lussier, about
118 where this could fall in the City’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and how it would be
119 managed. He recalled that in the past, the City had a “Tree Warden,” which was a stipend
120 position identified in the City’s budget. A few years ago, the City eliminated all stipend
121 positions, so that dedicated focus on trees went away and now, the City needed to determine how
122 to incorporate those functions into an existing staff job description; early conversations
123 considered housing this function in the Public Works Department. Mr. Bohannon agreed that
124 these tree challenges were prevalent, and the City could not continue hiring contractor-after-
125 contractor to address these issues. Mr. Bohannon also agreed with Chair Von Plinsky’s letter that
126 recent work on Beaver Brook did not occur properly, so he agreed that greater City staff
127 education would be the biggest piece of this puzzle. He emphasized that invasives education
128 would be critical for the public as well (i.e., identification and management), which the Public
129 Works Director was considering. So, Mr. Bohannon said he thought this letter to the Council
130 would push City staff to identify something through the budget process and see if it aligns with
131 what the Conservation Commission is looking for. Ms. Brunner would be a part of those
132 conversations and Councilors Williams and Madison could be as well.

133
134 Chair Von Plinsky said one thing he worked into the letter that the Commission hoped would be
135 helpful budgetarily was the concept of organizing citizen volunteers whom the City could
136 educate and empower to be a part of the invasives solution on public lands. He recalled the
137 lengthy discussion about this concept with a Keene resident, master gardener, and invasives
138 expert, Bob Milliken, at the Commission’s October 21, 2024 meeting, as described in those
139 adopted minutes. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said that a similar concept had worked well with the
140 Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park (non-profit), whose master gardeners take
141 initiative to identify invasives and eradicate as much as they can, usually by hand. She thought it
142 was a model that could be adopted in other proper spaces with well-informed volunteers.

143
144 Mr. Bohannon thought there was a potential grant the City could apply for from Volunteer NH
145 focused on volunteer training and education. He recalled that a few years ago, there was an
146 organic pesticide initiative (approximately \$2,000) for City and Keene State College staff and
147 interested members of the public, specifically about how ball fields and parks were being treated.
148 He said it was very well received but noted that changing to organic for athletic fields is a time
149 consuming and challenging shift. He added that South Portland, ME, had been the national
150 leader in that shift. While learning more would take time, he thought the City’s Superintendent
151 of Maintenance, Pepper Anderson, would be open to these ideas and considering new practices.
152 Mr. Bohannon also hoped that pursuing this Volunteer NH grant would be an opportunity for
153 more education.

154
155 Mr. Bill asked how much training about invasives City staff had at this time. Ms. Fisk-
156 Hennessey said “medium,” and that they were primarily aware of Japanese knotweed. In terms of
157 actual training, Mr. Bohannon said that at this time, City staff received no specific training on

158 invasives. Mr. Bill thought that training would be a good place to start, noting that the University
159 of NH Cooperative Extension might be willing to provide a low-cost session. Chair Von Plinsky
160 thought the goal of this letter was to move in that direction and have the City partner with the
161 Commission in this effort.

162
163 Councilor Williams asked if anyone on City staff was licensed for pesticide application. Mr.
164 Bohannon and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey confirmed that two staff members were licensed at this time.
165 Councilor Williams said that was one goal of this effort, as well as to consider the City's
166 processes. For example, when is the best time for the City to mow knotweed so volunteers can
167 go later in the year and pull the rest? He hoped to see a coordinating mechanism.

168
169 Ms. LeBlanc noted how many different invasive species there are and asked if the City provided
170 any educational resources for citizens. Chair Von Plinsky said he wanted to focus on that in the
171 letter too. Councilor Williams thought that coordination between the Commission, City, and
172 perhaps the UNH Extension could lead to some citizen training. Councilor Williams had spoken
173 with people who were interested in having their own group to take care of an invasive in their
174 neighborhood but were unsure if they were allowed to or how. So, he imagined a course on a
175 weekend afternoon to educate citizen volunteers and coordinate locations on City property. He
176 thought an effort like that in Keene would help. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said there were "baby
177 steps" happening. She referred to a citizen in the East Keene Group who contacted her directly
178 asking for a full list of invasives in Russell Park and for permission to pull them; Ms. Fisk-
179 Hennessey gave permission and the resident left big piles for the Parks crews to pick up.
180 Councilor Williams said it would be significant to publicize that the City was doing that.

181
182 Mr. Bill suggested that the Keene Public Library would be an ideal location to have information
183 available to citizens on invasives because the information could be clearly laid out. If possible,
184 Ms. Richter also suggested links from the City's website to the many resources available on the
185 UNH website and the Department of Agriculture website. She also suggested encouraging a few
186 more citizens to attend the Invasives Academy as Councilor Williams had; instructors from the
187 Invasives Academy might be willing to come and present in Keene for a day if there was a good
188 group here.

189
190 Chair Von Plinsky thought it would be important to have a clear statement from the City of what
191 would be allowed: what, when, and where. He had spoken to people who really wanted to help
192 but were unsure where they could.

193
194 Mr. Bill asked about having a contact person and if it would be difficult to arrange. Ms. Fisk-
195 Hennessey thought that might have been a part of the Public Works Director's consideration, but
196 she said that would be a very significant challenge for the Parks and Recreation Department at
197 this time.

198
199 Councilor Williams recalled Mr. Bohannon mentioning a past budget for a Tree Warden, which
200 seemed like an appropriate way to approach this to the Councilor. Councilor Williams asked if

201 what that stipend was approximately. Mr. Bohannon thought it was fairly minimal, like
202 \$5,000/year. He thought the Public Works Director was trying to get creative with the team he
203 was trying to build and his vision, so Mr. Bohannon thought it might get addressed that way.
204 Otherwise, he thought there might be a way to bring the Invasives Academy to Keene as Ms.
205 Richter mentioned, and he said he would work with Ms. Fisk-Hennessey to execute some more
206 ideas.

207
208 A motion by Councilor Williams to approve the invasive species letter as written by Chair Von
209 Plinsky was duly seconded by Vice Chair Madison. The motion carried unanimously.

210
211 Discussion ensued about where the letter could go after the City Council. Councilor Williams
212 hoped the Mayor would forward it to the Council's Municipal Services, Facilities, &
213 Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee for a valuable public conversation about the issue before
214 forwarding it to City staff. Vice Chair Madison said he and Councilor Williams could both email
215 the Mayor in advance specifically asking him to forward it to MSFI, after which the procedure
216 would be for it to go back to the City Council and then on to City staff. The Vice Chair agreed
217 that MSFI would give the issue a public forum with staff and Councilors present, which Chair
218 Von Plinsky said was his goal. Vice Chair Madison confirmed that his hope would be for staff to
219 report back to MSFI with ideas in a few months, potentially January.

220
221 **B) Red Pine Scale and Future Impacts to City Parklands (Andy Bohannon)**

222
223 Chair Von Plinsky said this item would be addressed by Mr. Bohannon and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey
224 again. Mr. Bohannon recalled that prior to Ms. Fisk-Hennessey joining the City, he had a
225 conversation with Steve Roberge from the UNH Cooperative Extension about the future impacts
226 of red pine scale on the City. At that time, red pine scale had devastated Bear Brook Forest and
227 other areas on the seacoast. Given the amount of red pine in Keene, there was concern for the
228 pest coming to Keene eventually. When developing the City's Capital Improvement Program
229 (CIP) in the last two years, staff decided it was time to assess the City's red pine monoculture;
230 with the help of a consultant, the City developed a flexible dollar figure.

231
232 Earlier in 2024, the UNH Extension contacted the City about the extent to which the red pine
233 scale had devastated the Yale Forest in Swanzey, two miles from Keene. The wind carries the
234 red pine scale insect up to one mile. The UNH Extension was in the process of writing a column
235 in the Keene Sentinel alerting readers to this invasive species that would be published after City
236 staff present this issue to the City Council's MSFI Committee; staff asked them to wait to
237 publish until after the public presentation. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey shared photos of other locations
238 red pine scale had been detected throughout NH. The invasive pest gets under the bark and
239 pierces the tree, sucking the life from it, and killing it from the bottom of the crown to the top,
240 usually within six months of the pest being found. This is concerning because of the red pine
241 monocultures in Keene.

242

243 Ms. Fisk-Hennessey explained that forestry experts from the UNH Extension and NH Division
244 of Forests & Lands visited the City (less than two weeks before this meeting), provided a lot of
245 education, and went on a site visit of Ladies' Wildwood Park. During conversations, she said the
246 experts expressed the most concern for Wheelock Park and Dinsmoor Woods because the
247 invasive would completely change the view of both parks. They were less concerned for Ladies'
248 Wildwood Park and Robin Hood Park because they do not have the same extensive
249 monocultures of red pines.

250
251 Many ideas came from these conversations. For example, if the red pines are harvested alive, the
252 timber could have value. The experts were very clear that no stand of red pine infested with red
253 pine scale had ever survived it. Once these monocultures of red pine die from the infestation, Ms.
254 Fisk-Hennessey said the City would have to pay to harvest them at a significant cost. One
255 consultant from the UNH Extension suggested taking out one tract of three rows of red pine by
256 the youth baseball fields at Wheelock Park as a pilot experiment to show the community what it
257 would look like while the City works on what will have to be very thoughtful reforestation. A
258 mix of deciduous and coniferous trees could be replanted to ensure a significant canopy in the
259 future to help grow the City's parks back differently. Chair Von Plinsky said the City would
260 need to learn from its monoculture mistakes of the past and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey agreed, noting
261 that was the biggest takeaway from her conversation with these forestry experts. That red pine
262 response to the 1938 hurricane had reached its life expectancy and this invasive could speed it up
263 even more.

264
265 Mr. Bergman commented on how losing those stands of red pine would drastically change the
266 appearance of Maple Avenue. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey agreed but shared a positive: there was a lot
267 of undergrowth in that area, so once the red pines are gone, the undergrowth would be able to
268 thrive.

269
270 Mr. Bergman asked if this was also a threat to white pine and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said no.

271
272 Chair Von Plinsky asked about the next step. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said it would be this pilot
273 program to remove the three rows of red pines at Wheelock Park. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said she
274 learned about a machine called a "forest mulcher" that—once the red pines are removed—would
275 dig down six inches to completely eradicate the roots as well. The experts suggested a
276 demonstration day to eliminate the stumps and get the community excited about what the
277 machine can do. Eradicating those roots would provide a great foundation for planting new trees.
278 Mr. Bergman asked if the time of year would matter for this culling, and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey
279 said she was unsure, but the experts suggested taking the trees down in winter.

280
281 Mr. Haynes said it sounded like this could be a possible educational event with potential income
282 from harvesting the trees. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey agreed.

283
284 Ms. Richter asked why Dinsmoor Woods was not considered as a site, since it seemed like time
285 was a limitation. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that site had not been evidenced yet, but the City

286 knew the invasive was coming. Ms. Richter noted how close Dinsmoor is to Wheelock and that it
287 could be a lot more challenging to plan for, so in her opinion, it would also make sense to
288 remove some trees there sooner than later. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey noted that a few years ago, the
289 City removed 150 trees there. Mr. Bergman mentioned the knotweed growing in Dinsmoor
290 Woods too.

291
292 Mr. Bohannon said the tree experts also recognized that in addition to educational sessions on the
293 invasive species, it would be ideal to invite the public on site at Wheelock Park to understand
294 and imagine both the process and what the site would be like after the harvest. Fortunately, the
295 experts said they would be willing to come back and assist the City in these efforts, including
296 helping to write the scope of work, particularly as the public often gets anxious about removing
297 trees. Mr. Bill thought that drier conditions would be a fire hazard for those thick trees, which
298 might be one way to sell the proposed change to the public.

299
300 Mr. Haynes asked what was needed from the Commission at this time. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said
301 she is hopeful for this effort to spread awareness, in addition to the upcoming Sentinel article and
302 MSFI presentation. Mr. Bohannon said some of the tree experts would attend the MSFI meeting,
303 noting that they were equally concerned for the entire region. Mr. Haynes said he liked the
304 educational approach because the insect had not reached the City yet. Mr. Bohannon said that
305 only one year ago, it was still anticipated to be several years before the red pine scale would
306 reach Keene. Mr. Bergman did note that there were red pines on private land in the City that the
307 City/Commission could not be sure were not infected at this time. Mr. Bohannon said that the
308 City had actually already cut down a lot of red pine already. He said a challenge with red pines is
309 their shallow root system because—like other monocultures—once they are infected with
310 anything, they die.

311
312 Councilor Williams said removing these trees seemed necessary. He wondered whether the trees
313 would have to be replaced with more forest or if there could be another use of the land. For
314 example, he said Keene was lacking meadow space (to only mow once annually) or other
315 alternate habitats that could add diversity. Mr. Bohannon agreed, noting that the Commission
316 would be seeing different management practices coming forward for Ladies' Wildwood Park,
317 which Councilor Williams said would be great.

318
319 Mr. Bergman referred to a big gully with hemlock and a wet swampy area in Wheelock Park. He
320 asked if there was a Park property line there or if the whole parcel was being managed as the
321 Park. Mr. Bohannon said no, throughout that area is Tenant Swamp and Wheelock Park is sort of
322 defined on the bank. Mr. Bergman said that aside from the power company, there was still a lot
323 of coniferous, swampy, wet, mossy, woodland there that was full of wildlife.

324
325 Chair Von Plinsky and the Commission thanked Mr. Bohannon and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey for this
326 presentation and staying ahead of this invasive species. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey welcomed questions
327 from the Commission at any time and said that Ms. Brunner would be a part of conversations
328 moving forward.

329
330 Mr. Flaherty left the meeting.

331
332 **C) Airport Wildlife Control Fence – Letter of Support for Preferred Alternative**

333
334 Mr. Bergman provided an update on the proposed wildlife control fence at the Dillant-Hopkins
335 Airport and the letter he drafted (in the meeting packet) on behalf of the Commission in
336 consultation with the environmental analyst consultant, McFarland Johnson, and the Airport
337 Director, David Hickling. The Swanzey Conservation Commission was also submitting a letter
338 for their jurisdiction. Initially, the letter was to be addressed to the to the NH Department of
339 Environmental Services (DES) but ultimately, it was recommended to be included as a part of a
340 bigger package, so it was addressed to Mr. Hickling to be included with the next request for
341 consideration. In the most fundamental sense, DES was trying to protect the wetlands, but Mr.
342 Bergman recalled that the perspective of the Airport administration, consultants, and most of the
343 Conservation Commission was to take a more holistic view regarding the wild lands there to best
344 preserve their inherent values.

345
346 Mr. Bergman showed various maps of the Airport property—specifically the two runways and
347 surrounding wetlands. Mr. Bergman used the maps to remind the Commission of the history of
348 the situation that had been described in the Commission’s minutes over time, particularly that
349 there was community concern for the DES’ request to site the needed wildlife control fence
350 along Airport Road, further from the Airport runways, which would inhibit the public’s active
351 wildlife viewing from Airport Road, among other factors. There was a lengthy discussion with
352 the Airport Director at the Commission’s October 21, 2024 meeting, as documented in those
353 adopted minutes. He showed photos of the picnic tables along Airport Road that are used for this
354 recreation.

355
356 Mr. Bergman showed the various options for the fence locations at this time that Mr. Hickling
357 had described in detail at the October meeting. He recalled that one alternative was to site the
358 fence within the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) runway object free area (ROFA),
359 which has a series of different zones with clearances required. He showed the ROFA on one map
360 to indicate the Airport Director’s goal at this time to have the FAA approve siting the fence in
361 the ROFA, much closer to the end of the shorter runway where the terrain descends to lower
362 elevations, which might allow the necessary clearances to keep the fence that close to the
363 runway. Still, Mr. Bergman said this option would impinge on the wetlands some, and he
364 recalled that one concern had been identifying and defining the wetland modifications that would
365 occur and distinguishing the temporary impacts from construction vs. the permanent impacts.

366
367 Mr. Bergman directed the Commission’s attention to Wilson Pond, which drains under the
368 highway and leads to a few places, one of which is an underground pipe/channel that goes a
369 considerable distance under the runway and drains into the swampy woods and the river. The
370 City land extends all the way up to the river for a considerable distance.

371

372 Mr. Bergman showed a map of the wetlands, which had been restudied and redefined. He
373 showed another map of the NH Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) habitat. He showed that the highest
374 WAP category of prioritized wetland as well as grassland ran all the way around the Airport,
375 which would include grassland nesting birds like sparrows. Mr. Bergman said that this whole
376 area around the Airport was one continuous grouping of habitats that merged, between which
377 energy and wildlife could move. He said these prioritized wildlife corridors would have
378 considerable value. For example, near the entrance to the Airport, there is jack pine, which is an
379 interesting species for this area. Mr. Bergman also showed a map of the highest priority habitats
380 to preserve in Keene, one of which would be fragmented by a fence along Airport Road. He also
381 showed the active wildlife corridors that would be fragmented if the fence was placed along
382 Airport Road.

383
384 Mr. Bergman reiterated that the Airport Director's, Conservation Commission's, consultant's,
385 and community's preferred alternative—long-term—had been to site the fence in the ROFA and
386 *not* along Airport Road. However, DES had been pushing back against that alternative because
387 of the wetland impacts, which Mr. Bergman said the Conservation Commission should be
388 sensitive to.

389
390 Ms. Richter asked if DES preferred the fence location that Mr. Bergman displayed on the maps
391 in red, and Mr. Bergman said yes, compared to Mr. Hickling and the Commission's preferred
392 location shown in black. Mr. Bergman said the DES had pushed back on this through several
393 rounds of appeals, which he said was not surprising when taking a microscopic view of what
394 protecting wetlands means. He said the consulting environmental analyst from McFarland
395 Johnson (the City's consultant) explained that fragmenting the habitats by cutting off the
396 wetlands and removing the connection to the adjacent wetlands and forests would impact them in
397 a more permanent way. As explained in the report, if the fence was sited along Airport Road,
398 there would be 135 additional acres of wildlife habitat enclosed within the fence on the Airport
399 property, which from the consulting environmental analyst's perspective, would impact the
400 wetland by depriving continuity.

401
402 Mr. Bergman explained that he did revise a portion of his draft letter because the consultant
403 indicated that the permanent impacts of the fence on the wetland would be restricted to the
404 construction phase and limited to approximately one square foot for each fence post, which
405 would be every 10 feet along the length of the fence; he pointed out some discrepancies to the
406 consultant between the table and text in the report provided. Mr. Bergman said the consultant felt
407 that the alternative to site the fence along Airport Road would be much worse. So, in the letter,
408 Mr. Bergman tried to provide a holistic view of the wild lands and their values and functions,
409 and to emphasize that the temporary effects would be from construction and longer term impacts
410 would be from placing the fence along the roadway and impeding public enjoyment, recreation,
411 and educational value, in addition to the continuity and functional attributes of the wetlands. Mr.
412 Hickling and the consultants reviewed the draft letter and were comfortable with it, so Mr.
413 Bergman sought the Commission's input. This letter and the Commission's October 2024
414 minutes would strongly indicate the preferences for Mr. Hickling to make the case to the FAA

415 and DES. Mr. Bergman recalled Mr. Hickling mentioning that if the fence was not approved in
416 the ROFA, he would consider canceling the project entirely, which would mean losing the costs
417 invested in the project to date and Mr. Bergman said potentially losing credibility with the FAA
418 and Department of Transportation (DOT) by backtracking on a proposed plan.

419
420 Vice Chair Madison thought the FAA supported the fence shown in black that would be in the
421 ROFA. Mr. Bergman said that is correct due to the lower grade at the end of the runway. Further,
422 he said that jets rarely use that shorter runway, and the issue is more so the fence required along
423 the sides of the runway. At that location, Mr. Bergman said there was approximately 800 linear
424 feet of wetland and there would be fence posts every 10 feet; each post would be roughly one
425 circular foot of permanent impact, which would not impede the flow of water, energy,
426 vegetation, aquatic creatures, and plants.

427
428 To illustrate that this was not a trivial issue, Mr. Bergman showed a photo of a C&S jet that hit a
429 deer and incurred damage. He added that the FAA was not usually willing to issue grants and
430 concede on things like these elevation changes for the fence relocation unless they feel their
431 safety standards have not been met. Unfortunately, the NH DES to date had consistently objected
432 to anything other than the roadway plan, so Mr. Hickling and the consultants were planning to
433 appeal again and share these letters symbolizing the public interest and concern.

434
435 Councilor Madison asked if the Commission was effectively issuing a letter of support for the
436 fence closer to the runway. Mr. Bergman said yes, both Mr. Hickling and the consultant had
437 reviewed the letter and approved it.

438
439 Ms. Richter recalled a past recommendation from DES to move the fence far out of the wetland
440 that would have to be approved by the FAA. Mr. Bergman said it should be clear that at the end
441 of the shorter runway, there would still be some permanent impact on the wetland, but the greater
442 concern would be on upper edge of the long runway. Ms. Richter thought the DES
443 recommendation was to move the fence more than five feet out of the wetlands. Mr. Bergman
444 said the irony was that there were regulations about fence clearances and shoulders of public
445 roads so that if the fence was moved to Airport Road, it would have to be moved away from the
446 edge of the pavement—because there is no shoulder—and would have to avoid the existing
447 utility poles along the roadway. This could place it in the wetland.

448
449 A motion by Vice Chair Madison to approve the letter drafted by Mr. Bergman on behalf of the
450 Conservation Commission to the Airport Director, David Hickling, about the Airport Proposed
451 Wildlife Control Fence, was duly seconded by Mr. Bill.

452
453 Mr. Bill said he thought it was a great letter. He suggested changing the first line from
454 “committed to protecting” to “committed to protect.” Mr. Bergman felt that “protecting”
455 anticipated the future. The Commission agreed to leave that language in Mr. Bergman’s hands.
456 Mr. Bergman thought it was key for the Commission to not indicate that it thought the DES was

457 wrong about wetland protection, but rather that the Commission hopes the DES will consider the
458 different levels and scales of wetland impact.

459
460 Mr. Haynes suggested replacing the word “radical” with “intrusive.” The Commission agreed.

461
462 The Commission thanked Mr. Bergman for his efforts.

463
464 The motion to approve the letter carried with the two suggestions. Mr. Bergman abstained.

465

466 **D) Keene Meadow Solar Station Project Update**

467

468 Chair Von Plinsky said there was no update.

469

470 **E) NHDOT Route 101 Project**

471

472 Chair Von Plinsky said he checked the project website, and it looked like the next opportunity
473 for public comment would be early 2025.

474

475 **F) Master Plan Update**

476

477 Mari Brunner, the City’s Senior Planner, shared an update on the City’s Master Plan Update. The
478 project’s [online discussion boards](#) for the Plan’s six pillars launched the day of this meeting; at
479 this time, the first two pillars had launched: livable housing and thriving economy. This provides
480 the community an opportunity to learn more (i.e., history, macrotrends, snapshot highlights,
481 consultant insights, and potential tradeoffs) and add to the discussion. The data gathered would
482 help the Task Forces and Steering Committee to develop the Implementation Plan. For those
483 who do not use computers, Planning Staff would be available in the Keene Public Library on
484 December 11–13, 10:00 AM–4:30 PM, to assist members of the public in registering their
485 comments. Chair Von Plinsky encouraged Commissioners to participate so that conservation
486 would remain a priority in the Master Plan.

487

488 **G) Outreach**

489

490 Chair Von Plinsky thought that Mr. Bohannon and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey outlined the
491 Commission’s opportunity for outreach in terms of preparing the community for the loss of red
492 pines. Mr. Bill asked if there would be a public hearing at some point. Chair Von Plinsky said
493 ultimately yes, and he imagined there would be an announcement, but he thought the Wheelock
494 Park effort would be the first opportunity.

495

496 **5) Report-Outs:**

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

498

499

500 Mr. Haynes reported that since the last meeting, the Subcommittee had two workdays, which
501 included:

- 502 ▪ Finished the last of the proposed water bars on the Rope Tow Trail.
- 503 ▪ Hung approximately one dozen signs on the Rope Tow Trail and connecting trails.
- 504 ▪ Completed general maintenance—mostly cleaning out water bars—on the Rope Tow
505 Trail and connecting trails to prepare for winter.
- 506 ▪ Cleaned out water bars on the Loop Trail and Mattson Trail.

507

508 Next, Mr. Haynes said the Subcommittee would start planning for 2025. Mr. Haynes, Mr.
509 Walker, and Mr. Bill welcomed thoughts, suggestions, or concerns for the Subcommittee’s
510 progress.

511

512 Mr. Bill led a Goose Pond Through the Seasons walk about geology on Saturday, November 9,
513 with 10 enthusiastic participants.

514

515 Mr. Haynes also shared some data. Since May 2024, the Subcommittee had: 18 scheduled
516 workdays (more unscheduled), installed two new bridges, created four short new reroutes,
517 created over two dozen water bars on various trails (mostly Lower Drummer, Mattson, Rope
518 Tow, and Wild Things), added a new kiosk to the North Trailhead, and a lot of general
519 maintenance on the Loop Trail and connecting trails. In addition, the Subcommittee had outreach
520 efforts with the Goose Pond Through the Seasons walks, the Spring Bird Walk, and the Summer
521 Trails Less Traveled hike. The Subcommittee participated in Green Up Keene this year and
522 collected trash on the Loop Trail. Chair Von Plinsky thanked the Subcommittee, calling this a
523 success story for the Commission.

524

525 Mr. Bergman asked when the “No Swimming” signs were removed around Goose Pond. Mr.
526 Haynes was unsure, noting that it is technically not allowed because of the liability without a
527 lifeguard. Ms. LeBlanc said someone had recently asked her about the signs as well. Mr.
528 Bergman wondered where that restriction was written. Mr. Haynes thought it was posted at the
529 North Trailhead sign, but he was unsure it had been posted at the new South Trailhead, so he said
530 he would look into it.

531

532 Ms. LeBlanc wondered if the Subcommittee had considered paper maps at the kiosks, noting that
533 people regularly mentioned getting lost to her. Mr. Haynes said it had been on the
534 Subcommittee’s list for a long time, so they would discuss it again. He said it was a good point
535 that many members of the public still prefer to use paper, and the map was still hard to access on
536 the City website. Ms. LeBlanc said she used the AllTrails app and when she checked it the week
537 of this meeting, the only trail available was the Loop Trail. Mr. Haynes said it was a good point
538 to try to have other trails be more visible. At this time, he said there were maps at all the
539 trailheads and all the main walking trails had signage (not blazing). Mr. Bill had bought maps for
540 that area and to be available at the Recreation Center in the past and Mr. Haynes said the current
541 map in use was created by the New England Mountain Bike Association because it was the most
542 accurate and the City had not created one. Ms. LeBlanc agreed that more blazing would be

543 helpful as well, particularly if each trail was a different color. Mr. Haynes agreed that the
544 Subcommittee discussed blazing, in addition to leaf blowing.

545

546 **B) Invasive Species**

547

548 Councilor Williams reported on the final invasive species event of the season on November 11
549 along the Rail Trail at Eastern Avenue with approximately 10 volunteers pulling some
550 bittersweet vines and predominantly some fruiting autumn olive. The Commission thanked
551 Councilor Williams for his efforts.

552

553 **C) Land Conservation**

554

555 Chair Von Plinsky reported that he met with Ms. LeBlanc at City Hall a few weeks before this
556 meeting to review the easement monitoring process. Ms. LeBlanc had agreed to take on this
557 effort—with help from the rest of the Commission as needed—to help bring the monitoring back
558 into compliance. She said that so far it had been difficult to find updated/current ways to
559 communicate with the landowners. Chair Von Plinsky and Ms. Richter said they would help.

560

561 **D) Pollinator Updates**

562

563 Mr. Therriault was not present to provide an update.

564

565 **6) New or Other Business**

566

567 Ms. Clark said that the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) would be meeting
568 on November 19 to review two interesting items of business, and she invited the public to
569 attend. First, a Clean Water Revolving Fund application from the City of Keene to upgrade
570 approximately 165 sewer manholes on the east side of Keene. Receiving this grant would allow
571 for applying an epoxy to the inside of the old brick sewer systems that were leaking water into
572 the sewers and adding to the flow. Second, ARLAC was reviewing an Alteration of Terrain
573 permit for the Monadnock Conservancy's new building in the empty lot right next to the
574 Ashuelot River Park. Mr. Bergman noted that a large, single donation was the reason for
575 building there, and Ms. Richter added that the land was donated too. Mr. Bergman said the
576 Conservancy was still raising money.

577

578 Chair Von Plinsky announced Cheshire County's Conservation Commission Potluck at
579 Stonewall Farm also on November 19 featuring Josh Megyesy from NH Fish & Game talking
580 about identifying critical road crossings for turtles. It would be the beginning of a big project
581 and community involvement was welcome. Mr. Bergman asked if the Antioch University New
582 England faculty who studied wood turtles was still local, and Ms. Richter said she would check,
583 noting that there would likely be an opportunity to hire a natural resource consultant to help
584 identify a few sites.

585

586 Discussion ensued to confirm that the City had officially purchased the Washington Street
587 Extension property near Beaver Brook from Hull Forest Products for \$55,000. This property
588 had been a long-term interest of the Commission. Councilor Williams said the Council
589 discussed it in a private session. Mr. Haynes said it was a reasonable price compared to the
590 previous ask. The Commission was pleased that their recommended purchase to conserve the
591 parcel was successful.

592

593 7) **Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Monday, December 16, 2024**

594

595 There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 6:09 PM.

596

597 Respectfully submitted by,
598 Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker
599 November 25, 2024

600

601 Reviewed and edited by,
602 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner



New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

SERVING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES SINCE 1970
54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301 | (603) 224-7867 | www.nhacc.org

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October 1, 2024

Dear Keene Conservation Commission,

New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC) works to ensure that all conservation commissions remain strong and relevant within their communities, making NH a healthy, desirable place to live and work. We understand how important our local conservation commissions are in protecting natural resources. We need your conservation commission to renew your NHACC membership so we can continue to provide technical assistance and strong leadership.

Your annual dues provide so much more than simply access to expert advice. **Your support of NHACC helps build a stronger NH conservation community.** We work diligently to make sure your voice is heard in the state legislature and on state-wide commissions; providing strength in unity. Please renew your NHACC membership for 2025 to help us provide education and advocacy to our members.

Last year your dues helped NHACC host field training programs on wetlands ecology and conservation easement monitoring for our members. With your support we tracked state legislation, providing testimony on bills impacting natural resources and legislative updates to our members. We presented another online Lunch & Learn series making our programs more accessible to our members. We collaborated on Wildlife Webinars with the *Taking Action for Wildlife* team; NHACC, UNH Extension, and NH Fish & Game.

Remember, the benefits of membership include:

- Discounted rate at our **Annual Conference to be held on November 2nd**;
- Access to the NHACC Members Resource Library on our website;
- Educational opportunities focused on what matters to our members: wetland permit review, land management, and wildlife habitat protection;
- Networking opportunities including roundtables, hikes, and potluck gatherings;
- Up-to-date publications from our E-newsletter and Legislative Updates.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to be part of a connected conservation community: renew your membership for 2025. Feel free to contact me at Barbara@NHACC.org or call 224-7867 if you have any questions or need assistance. We look forward to working with you again this year.

Sincerely,

Barbara Richter, Executive Director

INVOICE

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Conservation Commis
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+1 (603) 224-7867
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Bill to

Keene Conservation Commission
3 Washington St
Keene, NH 03431-3124

Invoice details

Invoice no.: 2854
Invoice date: 09/24/2024
Due date: 01/31/2025

#	Date	Product or service	Description	Qty	Rate	Amount
1.		2025 Membership Dues		1	\$950.00	\$950.00
					Total	\$950.00

Note to customer

Thank you for your support. We look forward to working with you in the coming year.



CONSERVATION COMMISSION

2025 Meeting Schedule

Meetings are generally held on the 3rd Monday of each month at 5:00PM

Site Visit(s), if needed, generally held at 4:00PM on the same day as the meeting

TUESDAY, January 21 (Monday Holiday)

TUESDAY, February 18 (Monday Holiday)

Monday, March 17

Monday, April 21

Monday, May 19

Monday, June 16

Monday, July 21

Monday, August 18

Monday, September 15

Monday, October 20

Monday, November 17

Monday, December 15