

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 16, 2022

4:30 PM

**Room 22,
Parks & Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Eloise Clark
Councilor Robert Williams
Art Walker
Ken Bergman (Arrived at 4:32 PM)
Thomas Haynes, Alternate
Brian Reilly, Alternate
Steven Bill, Alternate (Arrived at 4:34 PM)
John Therriault, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair

1) Call to Order

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

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – April 18, 2022

A motion by Mr. Walker to approve the April 18, 2022 minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Haynes and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Bergman and Mr. Bill were absent the vote.

3) Introduction of Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, will be taking over as Staff Liaison. Ms. Marcou will still be available; she expressed her appreciation for her time with the Commission, which led her to apply to her local Commission.

4) Guest Speaker

A) Chris Casadei, Procurement Forester, Hull Forest Products, Bennington, NH

Chair Von Plinsky welcomed Chris Casadei to speak about the recent land procurements in Keene, which the City also participated in the auction. Mr. Casadei introduced himself, stating that he had

been an active forester in Connecticut (CT) since 1999, including the Department of Environment and Energy Protection. Since Hull Forest Products had purchased two concentration yards—one in Bennington on the Antrim line and one in Bradford—he split his time between the two. Now, he lives in Claremont. Mr. Casadei continued that Sullivan and Cheshire Counties grow the finest red oak in the world and the opportunities here are endless. He said this was not the last the Commission would see of him.

Mr. Casadei stated that the properties Hull purchased in Keene are gems. He began with the smaller southern property, which Hull called Beaver Brook South. He said this is not a long-term ownership; Hull actively buys land and conserves it. This parcel abuts the river and, RT-9, and Beaver Brook North, which he identified on a map. The south parcel gets a lot of traffic and he said they would do a very conservative timber management effort. Most of what is seen and accessed from the old RT-9 would not be touched at all because of the streams, cliffs, and topography—they would keep that area as a reserve as well as what is in between Beaver Brook and the road. Hull is in negotiation with the State right now to manage that parcel and bring it out to Washington Street. They know the land history of this property and many others that were split by the new RT-9 in the 1970's. He showed an established access road they could have used to come out onto RT-9 to keep a smaller footprint. However, the State would rather they exit near to the Washington Street extension; where the topography dips and goes back up, they would create a temporary logging access. He pointed out key topographical features on the map in regard to adjacent properties.

Ms. Clark noted that the lines on the map were unclear and asked Mr. Casadei to point out where the actual logging would occur. Mr. Casadei pointed the area out on the map. Ms. Clark expressed a question and was interrupted, when Mr. Casadei said that the State might want to trade their piece to thin it for health reasons. He demonstrated on the map where the topography is very steep with streams and where the cutting would occur. He pointed out adjacent properties under contract, where they would do very strict management.

Mr. Casadei continued stating that he has spoken with Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities. Mr. Casadei stated that he told Mr. Bohannon that Hull's ownership of this parcel "would not be long-term and it's yours when the time comes." He said, "Our intention is to certainly sell this back to the City of Keene once we get it healthy and looking good." Mr. Casadei continued stating that he created a foot trail into the property, which he demonstrated on the map and called West Canyon Trail. He said Hull loves the exposure of this lot and that people would see this. He said they take a lot of pride in conservation and what they do, and it seems the more people involved with what they are doing dissuades negative perceptions of logging. He said Hull is conservation minded and this parcel would be "weeded like a garden would be." He said the timber is healthy and overstocked and this would be a light treatment.

Mr. Bergman asked where the barrier is that obstructs and ends the road you can drive on toward the falls. Mr. Casadei showed a gate on the map situated with the Washington Street Extension. He said the road is paved beautifully as a Class VI road and the gate is questionable.

Ms. Clark asked whether Mr. Casadei knew about Keene's Hillside Protection Ordinance. Mr. Casadei replied that he was familiar with all of Keene's and NH's logging regulations. Ms. Clark said that some of the area in question is very steep and—she was interrupted—Mr. Casadei stated that anything questionable and he considers inoperable, they will not touch. Ms. Clark noted that the City also has serious flooding issues, and the parcel is one of the prime flood storage areas, which was why the City wanted to buy it. Mr. Casadei said one of the things that attracted Hull to this property was that this is the last unobstructed waterway from the north into Keene, with Otter Brook and Surry Lake as Army Corps of Engineers flood control in Keene. He understood that Beaver Brook was prone to a lot of flooding problems in Keene, which is why Hull does not want to keep this property forever.

The Chairman asked whether they were only targeting the prime red oak. Mr. Casadei said the south parcel was a hemlock, pine, red oak mix. They would remove the poorly formed, suppressed, and declining, the soft maple, and the problematic beech. He said this is not a regenerative harvest but shifting the growth potential to the growing stock. He would not have huge open spots in the canopy, but would switch to the beautiful red oak, white pine, and hemlock cover type so it can grow healthily for the next 40 years.

Ms. Clark asked whether they would do a liquidation cut after that. Mr. Casadei said no, and Ms. Clark said that was good to hear. He did not think Hull Forest Products would have ownership of the parcel the next time it needs treatment, which was why he wanted to be very transparent with this Commission. Mr. Casadei said Hull is spending time and efforts on making the parcel healthy and they are therefore invested in the wise use of the land.

Councilor Williams asked what makes a healthy forest; how does clearing the trees help the ecology? Mr. Casadei replied that in the wildlife timber management process they try to mimic the natural process. He said that Mother Nature in NH will place as many trees on a piece of ground as can possibly grow. Over time, he continued that the dominant trees are established, and the other trees are suppressed, perish, and are recycled on site. In a climax type cover site like this one, he said the white pine would go and hemlock and red oak would take over. He recalled that white pine has a good life of approximately 125–150 years, hemlock up to 250 years, and red oak and sugar maple up to 450 years. He called those the climax species. Because society needs wood and we are living in this forest, forest management has evolved to mimic the natural process and keep the forest extremely healthy and growing to the best of its ability. He continued that all tree health and productivity begin in the soil. He said that suppressed trees suspect to disease are not growing to their potential and are taking some sunlight and nutrients from the dominant trees. He called preservation one thing and said there would be some at small scales, but they are after conserving resources. He called that “forestry in a nutshell.” Mr. Casadei said that logging is a part of NH history and “we're logging whether you like it or not. The key is doing it right and that's what I need to convey so we don't have comments like ‘Oh Jesus, they are up there clear cutting the wetlands again.’” Mr. Casadei still thinks logging is pretty foreign in Keene. He cited typical outreach they do in CT and said the more people they can get this message of conservation out to

the better and “if we don’t, I don’t care, we’ll just do what we do.” He called this wood lot a gem because there is a lot of traffic.

Mr. Reilly said it sounded like Hull was doing this to prepare the lot for the future rather than taking commercially viable trees out of it. Mr. Casadei replied “100%.” He said this is a single tree selection. Mr. Reilly asked what was in it for Hull if they would not own it in the future and log it. Mr. Casadei said they would get a fair amount of timber and pulp wood from this cut because there are still great sections of wood in there. He said it would not bode well for his company’s perception to clear cut this land. He said that long-term forest management is the goal on that parcel, not liquidating what is there for a timber asset.

Mr. Bill asked what wood products they would be pulling, the minimum size trees, and how many trees in a given plot. Mr. Casadei said they are saw millers and lumber people. They also export logs and manufacture lumber. They will utilize hemlock down to 8” tips and the hard wood for logs down to 10” tips. Everything below that down to a 4” tip they sell as pulp logs for paper. They would utilize the product overall down to a 4” tip. Mr. Casadei continued addressing how intensive the cut would be. He said a forester looks at basal area and how much is covered by stump base, which gives them indications of size class, etc. If it were 100% stocked, they would likely remove approximately 1/3, focused on the dangerous and declining products. Mr. Bill asked how many logging roads would be required for that scale. Mr. Casadei pointed them out on the map without indicating a number; there would be no new roads.

Mr. Bergman asked the best estimate of how long they would be operating on the south parcel. Mr. Bergman also asked whether Mr. Casadei’s assertion that he would then sell to the City of Keene was a figure of speech and Mr. Casadei replied, “Yeah, it was a figure of speech. Everything is for sale but all I said was I met with Andy.”

Mr. Bergman asked how many years this would take, and Mr. Casadei stated the whole operation would be completed this summer 2022 and negotiations could begin after that. Mr. Bergman asked whether Hull Forest Products makes any commitment to favoring public purchase. Mr. Casadei stated, “Well, I shook his hand and said we were going to do it. So, I’m going to do what I said I’m going to do. I’m not going to put this out to bid unless things go awry with you folks.” The logging job on the south portion would likely take five weeks. He said that Hull forest products owns thousands of acres in New England, and this is a small parcel that sold for less than timber value.

The Chairman recalled Mr. Casadei citing a 30–40% harvest and said that would not be uniform based on terrain. As the City, the Chairman said the Commission was trying to determine whether some portions of the parcel would be cleared more than 40%. Mr. Casadei said he did not care for the term “cleared.” He said it is a silvicultural thinning and the treatment would be selection with group selection; he, the forester may select a tree to remove or a small group of trees. Mr. Casadei said clearing is what was happening on Timberlane Drive.

Mr. Haynes asked whether this would be mechanical harvesting and Mr. Casadei said yes (track buncher, skidder, yard loader; very low impact) but there would be some chainsaw use when needed.

The Chairman asked whether Mr. Casadei would be open to walking through those woods with the Commission. Mr. Casadei replied stating he needed that as the only way this would work because the Commission's phones would be ringing off the hook. The Chairman would work on scheduling a site visit.

The Chairman continued asking whether the details were the same for the north parcel and Mr. Casadei said no. Mr. Casadei continued describing the north parcel, exhibiting the boundary line. It is a five-acre piece and he is doing a land swap. Mr. Kevin Rule and his siblings are getting a portion of the north parcel with deeded access, and Hull would receive the equal portion of the Rule property. Additionally, they would be conducting a liquidation harvest on part of the north parcel, which would be a 14' and up cut, meaning that those trees 14' in diameter and larger would be 80% removed. Mr. Casadei said that any big trees showing wildlife habitat would not be cut, and extremely large trees would be retained for carbon storage and seed. There would be large buffer zones along the Brook and vernal pools. They would be thinning the Rule property. Mr. Casadei stated that they are not clear cutting the north parcel, but are focusing on natural regeneration.

Mr. Haynes asked how large the buffers would be. Mr. Casadei said it varies. Mr. Haynes asked for a range. Mr. Casadei said it would be easier to show the Commission. The Chair asked for more specifics and Mr. Casadei said, "It just depends." He said it depends on what the ground looks like and "if we're going to leave a footprint, we're not doing it." He said this is on the highest industry standard of timber harvesting. He said he was "not beating around the bush." He is focused on growing the trees that are there, minimizing regeneration to keep a park like aesthetic and hopefully getting red oak to grow. He said the objective is to get what they can within the parameters of good health and logging to promote regeneration. Mr. Casadei said the reason why this type of harvest gets a bad name is due to an example liquidation cut to the north, where they only took what was good. He stated that Hull takes what they can but also the unhealthy growing stock so all that is left is healthy.

Ms. Clark asked where the access is for the northern site. Mr. Casadie oriented the access on a map near to Timberlane drive. There is a road that goes along their boundary line to the north.

Mr. Haynes asked whether timber harvesting would occur on adjacent parcels as well. Mr. Casadei said yes. He continued stating that he is not a consultant forester but a procurement forester and would "go after" any private parcels on the map he showed. Mr. Haynes noted there are plans to sell the south parcel and asked if the same were true of the north parcel. Mr. Casadie said of course, this is also not a long-term holding.

Mr. Bergman asked whether logging trucks would be traversing Timberlane Drive. Mr. Casadie said yes. Mr. Bergman asked whether they would be using the base or full length of the Drive. Mr.

Casadei replied that they would come down Timberlane Drive to Elm Street and turn right onto Court Street. Mr. Bergman said Court Street is busy, and Mr. Casadei replied, “Yeah, but it will get me out of town.” Unfortunately, Mr. Casadei said there would be trucks passing homes on Timberlane Drive. Mr. Casadie said, “If you want to live in the forest, we need to do some logging.”

Councilor Williams said that the City Council would hear about more potholes caused by this project. Mr. Casadie said he understood.

Mr. Bill asked how much truck traffic was anticipated and Mr. Casadie said, “It depends on how big this gets.”

The Chairman asked whether that would be the sole point for trucks from that north parcel. Mr. Casadie replied in the affirmative, stating that the State does not want them coming out onto RT-9 and, “If you can have any leeway with the State coming out onto 9-10 there, I will do it.” He said he has to have emergency vehicle access, and he is not crazy about the safety and exposure of being in the neighborhoods.

The Chairman continued and was interrupted by Mr. Casadie further explaining the exit routes out of the logging areas.

Mr. Bergman asked whether Hull Forest Product’s goal and ambitions extended outside the two parcels that were relevant to this Commission. Mr. Casadei said yes, because of the mobilization and efficiency, part of his job is meeting all adjacent landowners and trying to buy them.

The Chairman asked about the timeline. Mr. Casadei said they would do the north parcel first. The Chairman asked whether they were looking at this like a decade long process. Mr. Casadei said, “Let’s finish this meeting first and we can talk about that.”

Ms. Clark asked whether there would be a supervising forester and Mr. Casadei said he would be. Ms. Clark knew he was procuring but was unsure—she was interrupted—Mr. Casadei said the beauty of being a procurement forester is that he knows what must be done there; he is not a fan of consulting forestry.

Mr. Bill asked whether, before they begin logging, are they required to go for—he was interrupted—Mr. Casadei said it had all been permitted by the State Natural Heritage Review Board and nothing popped up there.

Mr. Bergman asked whether Mr. Casadei had seen any white oak in the area and Mr. Casadei said it was very rare, stating it does not grow well around here. Ms. Clark said that if you go to Walpole in the CT valley you can find—she was interrupted—Mr. Casadie said a couple white oaks down through there, good.

The Chairman asked whether there was anything further Mr. Casadei needed to say about the north parcel. Mr. Casadei said no, stating now that there was a full understanding of what he was doing with his parcels, the second reason he was present was because the City is an adjacent landowner. He said he is close personal friends and colleagues with Wayne Young, who manages timber in NH. Mr. Young wrote the 1991 Goose Pond Management Plan, which Mr. Casadei said he reviewed.

Mr. Haynes noted that there is a 2019 updated Greater Goose Pond Stewardship Plan as the foundation for managing the Greater Goose Pond Forest. It is a good plan that was written by the consulting forester, Jeff Littleton of Moosewood Ecological, and Swift Corwin wrote the forestry portion. Mr. Haynes said that document is available on the Conservation Commission's website and Mr. Casadei said, "I did all the homework I could, and this was all I found." Mr. Casadei asked if the Commission wanted to discuss this anymore and as Mr. Haynes suggested, the Commission agreed that Mr. Casadei needed to review the current plan first before coming back and talking to the Commission. Mr. Casadei asked if the Commission was happy with the plan and when the Commission replied in the affirmative, he said that was "not good news for me, I was hoping you had not looked at it since the 90s." He said it is remarkable forest. Mr. Bergman noted there is a management advisory committee for the whole Goose Pond area under the Conservation Commission supervision; Mr. Haynes is the Chair. Mr. Haynes said it is a small group using the stewardship plan as their base to do what they want to do—he was interrupted—Mr. Haynes was able to continue stating that they are working in partnership with Parks and Recreation as they oversee the Greater Goose Pond Forest.

The Chairman said they would stay in touch about those two parcels.

Mr. Casadei initiated a next item of discussion, stating that he was interested in putting a substation on the north parcel with windmills in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Energy Protection in CT. He had spoken with the TransAlta electricity generation company, which instructed him to work directly with Siemens and Gamesa, which owns the equipment and staffs the Antrim facility. He met with Siemens Gamesa (renewable energy company) and he said he would share notes relevant to the City of Keene because he "would not do this without a partnership, I say partnership, without working with you guys."

The Chairman asked whether he was talking about a substation—he was interrupted—Mr. Casadei said he was talking about where his log landing is on the north property, stating that it is perfect for a utility substation that would generate wind power for the City of Keene. He likes windmills because the timber underneath it can still be managed.

Mr. Bergman said he could understand a large windmill operation somewhere like North Dakota, where Mr. Casadei mentioned, because—Mr. Bergman was interrupted—Mr. Casadei said that is not the model here. Mr. Bergman said North Dakota is open plains. Mr. Casadie said it is different than here and the difference is, "No one cares, and we care."

Mr. Casadei said there is a development company that does the whole wind project and then they turn it over to Siemens, which runs it in perpetuity. He stated that the Canadian developer's priority for this site was at least 10 windmills. The developer would be paid to prospect, convene landowners, permit with the City and State, gather the wind data for approval, figure out who would buy the power, and to secure the financing for the whole project. Mr. Casadei that he already did the prospecting and more, thus he said he and the City did not need a developer to do this. If they could get enough financing together and bought and dealt directly with Siemens Gamesa, it would be much more cost effective. He asked whether the City had its own utilities and Ms. Brunner replied no, Eversource is our provider. Mr. Casadei asked if the City could have its own utilities. Ms. Brunner said the City of Keene is not interested in having its own utilities. The City is planning to start a Community Power Program, which is a community choice aggregation group buy-in program for the whole City. Ms. Brunner said she could talk to the City but—she was interrupted—Mr. Casadei said it was all up in the air.

The Chairman said that Mr. Casadei had shifted gears to above the Commission's pay grade. Mr. Casadei knew the City had 2030 energy goals. The Chairman said this was a conversation for another day, he was glad it was brought forward—he was interrupted—Mr. Casadei said they would not solve anything, and he was not looking for signatures, but these things take a lot of time and that would determine Hull's length of holding. Mr. Casadei stated, "That does not mean once it's all flowing that I will sell it back to the City of Keene." He said there were also a lot of private landowners very interested in this lucrative wind generation.

Ms. Clark said there was a study many years ago at the Transfer Station near the north parcel and they did not feel there was enough wind to justify towers there, so it seemed to her studies were needed first—she was interrupted—Mr. Casadei said absolutely and cited costs. Mr. Casadei continued stating that because there is a meteorological station only 10 miles away there was a lot of meteorological data that would be pertinent to this site. Ms. Clark said not necessarily—she was interrupted—Ms. Clark continued that the topography there is different, and they chose that site specifically because of the topography—she was interrupted.

Mr. Casadei thanked the Commission for their time and hoped these conversations would continue. The Chairman thanked him for coming—he was interrupted. While over their pay grade now, Mr. Casadei said the Conservation Commission should have a strong say in the wind power suggestion. Mr. Casadei's future correspondence with the Commission should be directed to Ms. Brunner and Mr. Bohannon.

- 5) **Informational**
 - A) **Subcommittee Reports**
 - i) ***Outreach Subcommittee***

Ms. Brunner reminded the Chairman that Outreach and ARM Fund are actually working groups and not official subcommittees like the Greater Goose Pond Stewardship Subcommittee.

The Outreach group had nothing new to report.

ii) *ARM Fund Subcommittee*

Nothing to report.

iii) *Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship*

Mr. Haynes said the group would meet again on May 20, with the goal to finalize trail signs. There are two trail maintenance workshops scheduled in June and July. Those sites are ready to begin planning with the trail person, Lew Shelley. The first workshop would be about building and maintaining trails and the second workshop would focus on water issues. These workshops would teach volunteers and participants how to take care of some primary issues around the pond. Next year, the group hopes to apply for a recreation trails grant through the Division of Parks and Recreation for some spots that need major work. A bird walk was scheduled for May 21 at 8:00 AM, meeting at the new parking lot (South Trailhead). Participants could sign-up online or by calling Parks and Recreation. Walk-ins would likely be welcome.

B) *Invasive Species*

Councilor Williams said that the Garlic Mustard Challenge went well. While there were not many participants, it was a good group that collected eight bags of the plant, which should help reduce regrowth next year.

The next event is June 20 at 5:00 PM in Woodland Cemetery to clear Japanese knotweed. This is the same date as the Commission's next meeting because the City does not observe Juneteenth. Councilor Williams will coordinate with Chair VonPlinsky after the meeting to resolve this conflict.

Ms. Clark congratulated Councilor Williams on his great coverage of the Garlic Mustard Challenge in the Sentinel.

6) Discussion Items

A) *Conservation Commission Speaking Events*

Councilor Madison was not present. There would not be a June speaking event, but the Chairman hoped for one later in the summer.

B) *Budget Discussion*

The Chairman said there was \$1,500 in the Commission budget that would run out on June 30, 2022. Of this, \$150 was already committed to Steve Lamonde's honorarium for the bird walk, and that check would have to be written by June 30. Mr. Haynes emailed him the paperwork, but Ms. Marcou had yet to receive it.

Mr. Bergman mentioned the Antioch students who sought funding and the Chairman said that was last fiscal year.

With the remaining \$1,350, the Chairman noted the dues from the NH Association for Conservation Commissions. The Commission overpaid on dues last year to make up for underpaying previous years. They seek \$774.45. Additionally, ARLAC sought their annual \$125 contribution for e-coli sampling in the watershed and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests had \$55 dues.

With the aforementioned expenses paid, the Chairman said \$395.55 remained.

Ms. Clark noted that ARLAC would always accept further assistance.

The Chairman said that this Commission does not use the NHACC services well, but the NHACC does a lot of important lobbying for Keene in Concord, which he said was vital, and he had no problem paying the dues. Mr. Bill wondered if the NHACC could negotiate a number of workshops since the City does not use the rest. The Chair said that he would be surprised as every dollar counts. He thought it would be good to reexamine what they offer and how the Commission could better utilize those services. Ms. Clark said the luncheon workshops offered are free to members and are excellent; there are two or three each fall and spring.

In response to Ms. Brunner, the Chair said most NHACC communications go to the City, but he gets notifications of the bill and some other things. All members should get NHACC updates of events.

Mr. Bergman asked about the Bee City USA dues of \$200, which Mr. Therriault replied would be due the next fiscal year in March.

The Chairman asked, if rules were no object, for what else the Commissioners saw a need for funding. Mr. Haynes said there were a few Goose Pond projects that would require more than the remaining \$395. First, he would like the Commission to co-sponsor the trail maintenance workshops with the Department of Parks and Recreation; the fee is \$600, and he hoped the Commission would contribute \$200–\$300. Second, he hoped the Commission would contribute to Peter Poanessa's trail sign costs; he hoped for a few hundred dollars. The Chairman said it made sense to try to support those efforts. Mr. Haynes wondered if they should leave some of the budget for bags and seeds for the invasives effort. The Department of Public Works has agreed to provide bags when needed. Mr. Bill suggested splitting some of these expenses between this and the next fiscal year. Mr. Haynes said the trails workshop funds were needed before June 30, but the signs could perhaps be \$100 this year and \$100 next year.

Mr. Therriault recalled the call for an endowment in the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Plan, which could make the Goose Pond work self-sustaining. Mr. Haynes said that had not happened and the catch was that without funding, that money would have to come from potential timber harvesting, which was not in the Subcommittee's purview at this point.

The Chairman suggested paying the \$125 to ARLAC, \$150 to Steve Lamonde (already allocated), \$774.45 to the NHACC, \$55 to the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, \$300 as the trail workshops co-sponsor, and the remaining \$95.55 to the trail signs work (the remainder to be paid after July 1).

Ms. Marcou needed to know before the end of June whether these checks would be written/cashed. Ms. Marcou wondered whether there could be carry-over requests, which are allowed if approved by the City Manager and Finance Director. She would investigate.

A motion by Ms. Clark for the Conservation Commission to pay the NH Association for Conservation Commissions \$774.45, the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee \$125, the Society for the Protection of NH Forests \$55, and Lew Shelley of SnowHawk, LLC., \$300 as co-sponsors of the trail maintenance workshops, was duly seconded by Mr. Therriault. The motion carried unanimously.

The remaining \$95 for trail signs would be decided next month. Steve Lamonde was not included in this motion because the Commission previously voted to approve dispensing those funds.

Mr. Haynes was grateful the Commission was supporting the Goose Pond work. The Chair said the upcoming events are great work.

C) Joint Council Meeting – Eversource Scenic Roads

The Chairman thought the Commission had discussed this already.

Councilor Williams spoke to the City Manager about the amount of red tape and number of meetings that these applicants must go through. He hoped there would be a more efficient way in the future. The Chairman suspected a line in the Statute must be deleted. Ms. Brunner said that it is actually in the City Code, which set-up this process. The City Council could have chosen for these matters to go only to the Planning Board for one public hearing. However, the City Council chose to have it come to them, which makes it go to multiple meetings and then the Conservation Commission was added to the process. The Chairman said it made sense that it was a City Ordinance. Councilor Williams has brought it up to Staff.

D) Instream Flow Program – Ashuelot River, May 17, 2022 in Surry; May 18, 2022 in Swanzey

There would be a few tests at the locations and dates listed; one in Surry off of Dort Road and one in Swanzey by the bridge at Sawyer Crossing off Matthews Road.

E) Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) Property Field Visit, May 25, 2022

The Chairman emailed Joselyn Duffy, who agreed to walk with anyone on the Commission through the three parcels: goose pond area, part of the Shaw property, and a third. Meet at 2:45 PM on May 25 at the South Trailhead at Goose Pond (new parking lot). The Chairman said Ms. Duffy mentioned an easement on the Shaw property and they were seeking help from Staff notifying the owner of that property about the visit in the later afternoon that day.

7) New or Other Business

Mr. Bergman provided a report on the potential Airport wildlife fence to protect the runways from incursions by wildlife. The original plan was for that fence to run along Airport Road, which is used heavily daily by birders, walkers, and nature lovers, who found the idea abhorrent. Mr. Bergman began communicating with the Airport Director, David Hickling, again after one year of no contact and asked for an update on the fence. There have been recent developments at the Airport like the new solar farm near the Wastewater Treatment Plant. He said the bottom line is perhaps the most important, where Director Hickling stated, “All discussions regarding this project are now still focused on the fence being located away from Airport Road, and everyone seems to agree that is the logical placement.”

Mr. Bergman recalled first walking around the runways with the Airport Director and Mr. Bergman proposed placing the fence at the end of the shorter runway facing the main marsh, which is not acceptable to the FAA because there must be sufficient clearance. Otherwise, the fence could be placed along the margins of the longer runway but would still have to go through the marsh; if they do the work in a biologically quiet time of year like winter, Mr. Bergman did not think it would be too disturbing and that once in place, different types of wildlife would adapt.

Mr. Bergman read more from Director Hickling’s letter, which stated, “No funding has been approved at this point but we have had meetings with the NH DOT to discuss the funding. We are awaiting a scope and fee proposal from our engineering firm (McFarland Johnson) for partial design, environmental and permitting. Once we have that we will submit an application for the funding of this portion of the project with the hope of receiving that funding in time to complete this phase later this year. If we are able to fund this and complete it this year, we will apply for funding for the completion of the project next summer.” Mr. Bergman said that sounded like probably putting in the fence next summer.

Mr. Therriault said that if they had not submitted for funding from the FAA yet, they would not see funds for at least 18 months. Mr. Bergman said Director Hickling was likely being optimistic. Mr. Bergman asked Mr. Hickling if they would consult during the design phase with the Commission or other user groups and the Director responded of course. Mr. Bergman was unsure if the Swanze Conservation Commission would be involved like they were with the solar farm planning that this Commission was not involved with. He said it is odd because the City owns the land, but it is in

another town. The timeline is not clear but clearly many months away; there are also other projects happening at the Airport, but this is the project of greatest relevance to the Commission.

Mr. Haynes said at this point we do not know where the fence will be yet. Mr. Bergman said we don't know exactly, the engineers will have to mediate between the FAA, Director Hickling, and the Commission. Director Hickling wants funding but to also keep people happy and he is aware of the great bird sightings occurring at the Airport. He added that water levels in the marsh are really low. He was unaware of whether there was also work going on rerouting that diversion from Wilson Pond to the Ashuelot River. Mr. Bergman wondered if there was a line for this fence in the recent City Council budget approval; Councilor Williams would need to check. The Chairman would add this to future discussion items to stay abreast.

Mr. Therriault shared pollinator books that would be donated to Keene Public Library and he would be doing a reading for children in July. May 20 is world Bee Day, per the United Nations. Pollinator Week in the United States is June 20–26. Last, he shared a photo from the Parks and Recreation Department pollinator strip at the Monadnock View Cemetery. They broke ground on the 180 square foot parcel along Park Avenue fence line; Mr. Therriault delivered the seeds to the Parks Department. Ideally vegetation will grow in three to four weeks after seeded. It could be added to each year until it ideally spans the fence line. The Chairman said that Cheshire County Conservation District is doing something for Pollinator Week and suggested reaching out to Amanda Littleton. Ms. Clark said that was a decent size plot to start with.

Ms. Clark continued that she liked this meeting room and Ms. Brunner would attempt to schedule future meetings at this location at Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Haynes recalled that an alternate needs to be moved into a regular spot and that Mr. Bill is in line to be the next regular member.

The Chairman stated that they would likely see more of Mr. Casadei and the Chairman would reach out to schedule the site visit. He encouraged everyone to list everything else they want to ask him. He called it an intense presentation and he imagined lingering questions. Mr. Bill asked if the public access to Beaver Brook Falls there would be impacted by their work and the Chairman thought that was a great question to ask Mr. Casadei. Mr. Haynes wanted to bring in Matt Kelley as a consulting forester because it seemed like a second opinion would be helpful. The Chair would reach out to Mr. Kelley and Mr. Casadei to try to coordinate. Mr. Bergman wondered if residents of Timberlane Drive were aware of this upcoming traffic. Ms. Marcou said that Mr. Casadei would have to reach out to the Assessing Department because there is an application in process just like Timberlane Drive and Drummer Hill clearing. She was unsure if the abutters would be noticed but she could look into that process. Ms. Brunner said they must file a notice to cut with the City only. There would be no public hearing or anything like that. Mr. Bergman suggested letters to the Sentinel. Mr. Haynes mentioned the Drummer Hill Association and reaching out to them. Ms. Marcou said to mention it to Charlie Ferrando, who lives on Timberlane Drive. Ms. Brunner said that neighborhood has great word of mouth. Mr. Haynes would reach out about this proposed logging.

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 6:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
May 23, 2022

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