

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

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

**Tuesday, January 17, 2023**

**4:30 PM**

**Room 22,  
Recreation Center**

**Members Present:**

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair  
Eloise Clark  
Councilor Robert Williams  
Art Walker  
Ken Bergman  
Lee Stanish  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate  
Brian Reilly, Alternate  
Steven Bill, Alternate (Arrived 4:36 PM, via Zoom)  
John Therriault, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

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) Election of Chair & Vice Chair**

Mr. Reilly made a motion to re-elect Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, as Chair and Councilor Andrew Madison as Vice Chair. Mr. Bergman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**3) Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 19, 2022**

Revisions: Line 21, replace the word “logged” with “carried.” Also, Mr. Bergman was incorrectly listed as absent.

A motion by Mr. Bergman to adopt the December 19, 2022 minutes as amended was duly seconded by Mr. Walker and the motion carried unanimously.

**4) Report-Outs**

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

Mr. Haynes reported that the Subcommittee met the week before this meeting and discussed what they want to accomplish this year. Last year, the Subcommittee identified 10 locations in the forest that need minor to major work. Two of those locations were the focus of the grant application submitted last year that was not awarded to the Subcommittee. Mr. Haynes said that the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities—Andy Bohannon—told him that there might be more funds available to attempt completing all 10 locations by the end of next year. With that work, most of the loop trail would be addressed. Mr. Haynes said Mr. Bohannon would let the Subcommittee know more at their February meeting, when the group would discuss signage, fieldwork, and how to organize themselves and volunteers for work in the greater forest. Next month, the Subcommittee also plans to finalize the paper maps for people to take at the trailheads.

**B) Outreach**

Mr. Haynes reported that work group did not meet last month. The Goose Pond Through the Seasons walk for the winter is scheduled with the County Forester, Matt Kelly, on Saturday, February 18; he did not say what time. More details of the walk are pending (e.g., what trailhead) but Mr. Haynes imagined there would be a focus on forest ecology. If there is snow on the ground, they can also look at wildlife tracks.

Next, Mr. Haynes noted that in this meeting's agenda packet was a flyer for the NH Drinking Water Festival, for which the Outreach work group planned to do something that has not been decided yet. They have another month to prepare those materials. Ms. Clark said she was looking at aquatic macroinvertebrates, or what she called "muck monsters." Mr. Haynes said the work group was leaning on Ms. Clark due to her long history as an environmental educator. Chair Von Plinsky said the work group should alert him if there is anything the Commission can do to help.

**C) Invasive Species**

Councilor Williams reported that there was no work because it is winter. The Garlic Mustard Challenge is on the horizon and Councilor Williams asked his fellow Commissioners to think about good locations. The past work has eliminated the invasive from the previously addressed City lots. Chair Von Plinsky said that was a good problem to have.

**D) Land Conservation**

Chair Von Plinsky said the work group met and are moving forward creating a foundation to inventory the land in Keene, with an eye toward the 30x30 challenge. He said the work group made a lot of progress and plans to reach out to various organizations for help with the priorities and to avoid reinventing the wheel. He hopes to have more to report to the Commission in the

coming months. Mr. Bergman noted that Ms. Brunner and GIS Technician, Will Schoefmann, will give the work group access to GIS data. The Chair agreed, noting that he saved one GIS file of currently conserved land in Keene to the shared Google drive. He said that data is rough and needs manipulation, but it is a starting point. Mr. Schoefmann will try to update the file.

A member of the public, Dee Robbins, asked about the Antioch University program that the work group applied for. Chair Von Plinsky said there was either a disconnect or they did not like and did not accept this project, which means the work group will have to do more of the leg work. Mr. Bergman added that someone from the Monadnock Conservancy also reached out to Antioch and learned that there is less interest from students than there used to be, but the City was unsure why.

Mr. Bergman continued, noting that the NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC) website says one of the two primary requirements of Conservation Commissions is that they should establish a land inventory. He said there is a section on the NHACC website that promises a link to information on how to do the inventory, but there are some sentences missing. So, two weeks ago, Mr. Bergman reached out to the NHACC but they had not responded. As far as Mr. Bergman knew, the City's GIS Technician and Community Development Department would have some kind of database. Still, it seemed to him that the NHACC website was referring to a specific product that Conservation Commissions are charged with developing. He wondered if the City and this Conservation Commission were out of compliance. Ms. Brunner said the City of Keene was the first in NH to establish a Conservation Commission and the City has a Natural Resource Inventory that is most likely outdated now. There are some versions of the maps on the City's website. However, because the Inventory was so long ago, Ms. Brunner said that it should probably be updated. Mr. Bergman said that Concord has a nice part written by Jeff Littleton in their Master Plan that is like a Natural Resource Inventory with some overall maps; it mentions areas that are protected but does not list specific parcels. He said it looked like a laborious pursuit. Chair Von Plinsky said that could be a steppingstone; the work group needs to identify the existing Natural Resource Inventory in order to move forward with 30x30. The Chair added that Chesterfield has a nice Inventory and he reached out to them to see how they went about it, noting that they did it with a much smaller budget than Concord.

Ms. Clark explained that the City's existing Natural Resource Inventory was written in 2009, when she was Chair of the Conservation Commission. She said that there was no written component. It was a series of maps that are included at the end of the City's 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan. She continued that those maps were assembled by Peter Throop when he was a member of City Staff. Ms. Clark continued reminding the work group that the Wildlife Action Plan includes everything they need, they just need to study it and do the work. Chair Von Plinsky agreed that the Wildlife Action Plan would be a component of the review. Ms. Clark added that when she was President of Friends of Open Space in Keene, Ms. Robbins did a wonderful job with some of the necessities to prioritize valuable land; some of that information is derived from the Monadnock Conservancy, which has a checklist to prioritize properties for conservation. Ms. Clark would try to retrieve this resource for the work group. Ms.

Robins expected that the natural resource values had not changed that much in this period, but said the work group probably needs to find what has been conserved since 2009. Chair Von Plinsky said that was helpful because the work group discussed how to prioritize valuable properties for conservation and how to weight those variables. Ms. Clark agreed that the weighting is difficult. Chair Von Plinsky will reach out to Ms. Clark and Ms. Robbins for resources. Mr. Bergman noted that the work group discussed getting a list of easements in the City and he thought that was something that Granite View could provide. Ms. Clark said the City has all of that; the Friends of Open Space worked with those physical maps all the time.

5) **Discussion Items:**

**A) Airport Proposed Wildlife Control Fence**

Chair Von Plinsky read the draft letter on behalf of the Conservation Commission to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on the topic of the proposed Airport wildlife control fence:

*To whom it may concern,  
The Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport is beginning preliminary design work to install fencing which will prevent wildlife from accessing runways and creating hazards to aircraft operations. The Keene Conservation Commission understands the need for ensuring the safety of flight operations and therefore supports this project. However, there is an obvious concern for the wetlands that surround the airport. Minimizing how this project may impact the delicate habitats in this area must be a key consideration in the planning and completion of this project. Preliminary site visits and project scoping indicate that the fencing, one installed, will have little to no impact on these wetlands. There are, however, some legitimate concerns pertaining to the construction of the fence through delicate habitat. It is our understanding that the airport is dependent on, and seeking, federal funding for this project through the FAA "Airport Improvement Program" (AIP) and that there are concerns that the funding will be apportioned in a way that would stretch the construction of the project over multiple years. This would create a worst case scenario for the delicate habitat impacted by this project. Entering into these areas for construction must be done in one action to prevent repeated damage. The Keene Conservation Commission strongly requests that the FAA fund the construction of the wildlife hazard fence at the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport so that it will be completed in a way to minimize impact to associated wetlands; we believe that this would best be accomplished by completing the project as quickly as possible.  
Thank you for your time and efforts,  
Sparky Von Plinsky, Chair  
On behalf of the Keene Conservation Commission*

Chair Von Plinsky requested feedback. Mr. Therriault said that the phrase "one installed" should be edited as "once installed." Ms. Clark suggested not using the word "delicate" twice and to replace one instance with "sensitive."

To update Ms. Stanish, Chair Von Plinsky recapped the December 2022 discussion with David Hickling, Airport Director. Mr. Hickling explained to the Commission that the FAA could choose to fund this project over several years, so that sections of the fence would be constructed each year. This is not ideal because it would funnel wildlife onto the Airport property, which is the antithesis of the fence's purpose. It would also mean disturbance of the wetland (e.g., timber mats) over several years as opposed to once. In response to Ms. Stanish, Mr. Bergman said the work would mostly be performed in the winter when vegetation is growing less actively and to avoid breeding season. Ms. Stanish asked if details about the time of year were already worked into the proposal. Mr. Bergman said there was no proposal submitted yet, but that it was an ongoing conversation with the Airport Director, who implied that commitment. Mr. Therriault added that originally, the fence was planned to run along Airport Road, but the plan was changed for the fence to be closer to the runways; this would keep from interrupting active wildlife viewing there and keep the wetland wildlife away from the runways. Mr. Bergman added that the plan is to construct the fence as far from Airport Road as possible without impinging on the safety zones required by the FAA for aircraft.

Mr. Bill said perhaps the word "quickly" was problematic given the desire to have the work completed in one cycle versus many steps; the FAA might not equate quickness with completing the project in one step. Chair Von Plinsky would edit the sentence to read "... best be accomplished by completing the project during a single fiscal year." Chair Von Plinsky thought this letter was separate from making the suggestion about time of year. Mr. Bergman recalled Mr. Hickling saying the project should last four or five months.

Mr. Bergman made a motion to approve submitting the above letter as amended to the Airport Director, David Hickling, to be included in his package to the Federal Aviation Administration. Mr. Walker seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

### **B) Conservation Commission Speaking Events**

Vice Chair Madison was not present, but Chair Von Plinsky would reach out to him about this.

### **C) Photo Library**

Chair Von Plinsky recalled that last month, the Commission discussed a way for them to cache their photos from various site visits and activities so the public can access them. He recalled mentioning that a free Flickr account could hold 1,000 photos. There was also a suggestion last month to piggyback on the Library's Flickr account. The Chair contacted the Library and was told that the person who created that Flickr account no longer works for the City; the Library Flickr had not been updated since, but it is still accessible. With that in mind, Chair Von Plinsky suggested that the Commission create their own free Flickr account for its activities and to reevaluate purchasing a pro account (\$70 per year) when it approaches 1,000 photos. He thought there was value in having photos in one place that is accessible to everyone in Keene. Chair Von Plinsky heard no objections to starting a free Flickr account. He fielded some questions.

Mr. Haynes thought it would take a few weeks to reach 1,000 photos. If and when the Commission finds another mechanism to store photos, Mr. Haynes asked whether those first 1,000 photos could be transferred from Flickr. The Chair said he could not guarantee but he was fairly sure there was a way. Mr. Haynes cautioned losing access to those photos.

Mr. Bill asked how many photos were currently on the shared Google drive. Chair Von Plinsky said just a handful. Mr. Bill thought there were several folders on the Google drive, some with large files, and he asked if those would be moved to Flickr. The Chair said that depended on how the Commission wanted to curate the Flickr account. Chair Von Plinsky suggested that Commissioners could upload photos from site visits to the Google drive and he could then move some of those to the Flickr account, to avoid filling the account quickly.

Mr. Reilly asked who would moderate the Flickr account to avoid inappropriate or duplicate photos. The Chair was happy to take that on. He did not think it was a good use of City Staff time.

Mr. Bergman noted that he is a Flickr Pro account holder and said the accounts are password protected. He noted that it allows photo albums (with captions and titles for each image), which could be used for each site visit/activity. When creating those albums, the Chair could screen for duplicates. Chair Von Plinsky would create the Flickr account and report back in a few months on how it is going.

Ms. Stanish asked if there was an expectation that these photos would be archived to maintain relevancy in 20 or 30 years. Chair Von Plinsky replied that it would be ideal if the photos remain available going forward. He cited the quarry visit as an example, stating that it would be good to have those photos 20 years from now if/when the quarry ceases operation for comparison. He hopes to keep the Flickr long-term like the Library's account, which has photos scanned from the 1800s.

#### **D) 2023 New Hampshire Drinking Water Festival**

Ms. Brunner forwarded the flyer for the NH Drinking Water Festival to the Commission and the Energy and Climate Committee. Ms. Stanish had expressed interest in helping, so Ms. Brunner recommended that she connect with the Outreach work group since they were planning something. Ms. Brunner would share contact information for the Outreach work group with Ms. Stanish.

#### **6) Scenic Road Public Hearing: February 2, 2023 at 7:00 PM**

Chair Von Plinsky said that per City Ordinance, any time Eversource trims trees on the City's scenic roads, a quorum of the Conservation Commission must attend a public hearing before the City Council to report any concerns. He said that sometimes, Commissioners visit the tree

locations that Eversource lists, which he called a little tedious. Councilors Williams and Madison would count toward that quorum. The Chair also planned to attend and said one more Commissioner was needed. Mr. Walker would attend, and Mr. Bill would try. Ms. Brunner recalled that the public hearing and presentation from Eversource would occur at the City Council Meeting on February 2 at 7:00 PM, after which the Conservation Commission would receive the details about the various trees. Eversource would come to the next Conservation Commission meeting to hear questions and deliberations. The Commission would then make a recommendation to the City Council's Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee, which will make a final recommendation to the full City Council. Ms. Brunner noted that the City Council agenda packets are posted to the City website at least 24 hours in advance. Ms. Brunner had received some materials from Eversource in response to a request from Mr. Bergman and she would share those materials with the Commission. Chair Von Plinsky agreed that the Commission should receive a list of trees for planned trimming and those trees would be marked at the sites. Mr. Bergman said the information he received from Eversource indicated that no trees were marked as they planned no felling; Eversource sent a diagram demonstrating the standard clearance. Mr. Bergman lives near to these roads and said he was concerned, noting that it can be hard to compare the diagrams to the actual trees on site.

7) **New or Other Business**

Councilor Williams noted that the topic of litter would be coming before the City Council because he wrote a letter expressing concern, particularly for the east side of Keene and around the Woodland Cemetery. He has concern for trash entering the local streams. He expected it to be a topic before the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee on Wednesday, January 25. He encouraged other Commissioners to share their thoughts.

Ms. Brunner would send a follow-up email to the Commission with the Eversource materials.

8) **Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Tuesday February 21, 2023**

There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 5:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker  
January 24, 2023

Reviewed and edited by,  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner