

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 20, 2023

4:30 PM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair
Eloise Clark
Councilor Robert Williams
Art Walker
Ken Bergman (via Zoom)
Steven Bill
Thomas Haynes, Alternate
Lee Stanish, Alternate
Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation, and Facilities

Members Not Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Brian Reilly, Alternate
John Therriault, Alternate

1) Call to Order

Vice Chair Madison called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call ensued, and Mr. Bergman stated that he was alone in the room where he was calling from. The Vice Chair welcomed a guest, Charles Ferrando, who is a member of the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Committee.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2023

A motion by Mr. Walker to adopt the February 21, 2023 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Bill. The motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote.

3) Keene Meadow Solar Station

The group of presenters introduced themselves: Ari Jackson (Director of Development – Glenvale Solar), Tyler Holmquist (Senior Project Development Manager – Glenvale Solar), Eli Leino (Attorney at Bernstein Shur in Manchester, NH), Amanda Dupuis (Bernstein Shur), Tracy

Tarr (Wetland Scientist with GZA GeoEnvironmental), and Amy Sanders (Civil Engineer with Fuss and O'Neill).

Mr. Jackson led the presentation. He recalled a meeting with Ms. Brunner and other City Staff in December 2022. At today's meeting, the goal was to present this project to both the Conservation Commission and the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Committee, and to answer any questions. He said that Glenvale Solar is an independent solar developer focused on affordable solar and energy storage projects in New England; they have a larger scale focus on developing affordable clean energy for the region. As an early-stage developer, Glenvale Solar works to find the best sites for these solar projects, works with the communities that host the projects, works on the local/state/federal permitting processes, and works with the local utility and grid operator. Mr. Jackson said that his team's experience dates back 15 years and includes 500 megawatts (MW) (the New England peak energy consumption is approximately 38 gigawatts [GW]) of projects around New England. He said the goal of this project is to generate clean, affordable energy, and to have a positive impact on the communities that host these projects. To achieve "quality over quantity," Mr. Jackson said Glenvale Solar works on a small number of projects and pursues them with a high level of commitment, in collaboration with local experts.

Mr. Jackson provided an overview of this project. Glenvale proposed 50 MW of ground mounted photovoltaic modules and 50 MW of battery electric storage. The project would be sited on 240 acres across two undeveloped lots, which collectively total more than 480 acres. He said there was a long list of site characteristics that Glenvale explores when trying to identify sites. One characteristic is the existing electric infrastructure. He said these properties sit at the intersection of two high voltage transmission corridors, one of which is owned by Eversource and the other by National Grid. He said that once the electricity on the property is identified, they consider other factors including: whether the site has suitable dry acreage and sloping to support solar development and how it is zoned (they try to keep projects remote to avoid potential abutter concerns). They avoid farmland. Glenvale often works on sites in active forestry, which is the case for these two properties in question. In addition to timber harvesting, Mr. Jackson said these two parcels have other uses including maintained hiking, mountain biking, and snowmobile trails. He said that access to this site is from Old Gilsum Road.

Mr. Jackson continued explaining that in practical terms, 50 MW of solar would power approximately 14,000 NH homes annually—average energy consumption in NH is just under 600 kilowatt hours per month. He said that this solar array would have an annual carbon dioxide offset that would be approximately 88,000 acres of forest or 15,000 passenger vehicles (according to the Energy Information Agency). Mr. Jackson said the design of the solar array was dictated by avoiding natural resources, specifically wetlands and vernal pools. He added that all stormwater runoff would be managed onsite. At the end of its life, this project would be fully decommissioned in accordance with NH state law; the modules would be removed and the site would be returned to its natural condition. Mr. Jackson said there were benefits from being a

significant taxpayer locally, as well as requiring very few municipal services. The project is anticipated to create 125 construction jobs.

Next, Mr. Jackson described the design considerations. He showed the initial conceptual design, with more details on wetlands, vernal pools, and abutters, as well as where the panels and converters would be located. The project is designed around vernal pools and streams, and to minimize direct wetland impacts. There are limited areas where the proposal is to convert from forested wetland to scrub-shrub wetland. At construction, pollinator habitat would be established with a meadow condition. Game fencing would be used so small animals could pass through the project and connectivity would be maintained through the main wetland complex at the center of the project. Mr. Jackson said the project would have minimal visual impacts and would not create noise and odors, and there would be minimal traffic during operation, though there would be traffic during construction.

Mr. Jackson continued describing the project timeline. During spring 2022, there was a vernal pool and wetland assessment, which was the basis for the current design. The lease agreement for one of the two properties was completed during summer 2022. To have the project approved and understand the electrical impact on the grid, a queue position with the regional grid operator was established in fall 2022. In April 2023, the project would be presented to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for variances, particularly due to the size of the project. Construction is planned to begin in 2026. Between now and when construction begins, all of the necessary permitting would be handled, Glenvale would pursue interconnection studies with the Grid Operator to understand impacts on the grid (a slow process), and they would seek a contract to sell the energy. Ms. Brunner had introduced Mr. Jackson and Bob Hayden, the representative from Standard Power who is managing Keene's Community Power Program. Mr. Jackson said there had been initial discussions about how this project could align with that program, but Glenvale's project is further down the road. Still, Mr. Jackson said that if there was a process for Glenvale to bid energy, they could do so competitively, which is part of their reason for working on larger sites. Mr. Jackson welcomed questions.

Mr. Bill asked what the letters on the plan represented. Mr. Jackson replied those were just for ease of referring to a particular area. Mr. Bill asked if all those lettered areas would have solar. Mr. Jackson said yes and that the solar panels would be in rows, with space between the rows, and space under the panels to establish a meadow condition. The lettered areas would have the modules, the inverters, and stormwater management.

Councilor Williams asked if the plan displayed was indicative of the density of the panels. Mr. Jackson said yes, that it was an illustration and not a technical drawing, but it was approximately to scale. He said the width between the panels is approximately the width of the actual panels.

Discussion ensued about whether a motion was needed from the Commission on this project. Ms. Brunner said the presentation was informational at this point, but the Commission would receive and make recommendations on any NH wetland referrals for this project, as well as any local

surface water conditional use permits needed. Ms. Brunner added that there would be further opportunities for public comment. Mr. Jackson agreed that there would be site plan approval and public information sessions.

Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities, Andy Bohannon, noted that there are many trails on these privately owned properties, and he asked if there was plan from the property owners to reroute or allow those trails to continue existing on the property. Mr. Jackson said yes, the plan is to reroute any impacted trails, and if that is not possible, work with the community to offset their displacement elsewhere. Mr. Bohannon noted that the proposal takes the project up the Old Gilsum Road on the western side by Timberlane Drive, which would create a lot of traffic. He asked if there was consideration of utilizing the opposite side of Old Gilsum Road. Mr. Jackson said they had not explored that option. He continued that there would be traffic during construction but that during commercial operation, the traffic would be minimal. Mr. Jackson said he was willing to explore alternate access if that was preferred. Mr. Bohannon recalled that Old Gilsum Road is a Class VI road, and the property owners have a right to use Old Gilsum Road to access their properties. Still, Mr. Bohannon said there had been a lot of work on that road in recent years and more traffic is not ideal. He said that if Glenvale plans to use the road for access, they should have a pedestrian plan because the road is used extensively for hiking and mountain biking.

Mr. Ferrando lives near the lower part of the forest. He said that Old Gilsum Road gets very wet, which he said that Eversource did a lot to try to mediate. He had no issue with the solar installation, but wondered if there was a plan to take care of the road and not create new runoff issues. Mr. Jackson said the wetlands survey looked at the road as well and if there was a need for stormwater buffers or road improvements, that was possible. Mr. Leino agreed that Old Gilsum Road is a Class VI highway and there are certain City rules pertaining to site access and there are state laws that allow landowners—like the ones Glenvale is leasing from—to ask for permission to fix the road for things like drainage. So, as the project moves forward and engineering plans continue, Mr. Leino said roadway management was not out of the question to secure the project's safety and so that other users of this road are not hurt by this activity. Mr. Ferrando said he saw the surveyors and asked what they were measuring. Ms. Sanders replied that the surveyors were looking at the right-of-way. Mr. Ferrando agreed that Old Gilsum Road is heavily used, especially on the weekends.

Mr. Bill asked what type of construction equipment would be brought on site. Mr. Jackson said that early on, the site would need to be cleared with typical forestry equipment (e.g., skidder). He said there is very little impervious surface (i.e., cement) for the battery storage and substation. Otherwise, you're looking at bringing in trucks to carry in the equipment and the modules themselves. Mr. Bill said the modules appear to be substantial units and asked if they would be rotated. Mr. Jackson said that most of the modules would be on trackers that rotate with the position of the sun and on steeper parts of the site, there is a "fixed tilt." Mr. Jackson said that one module is 8' by 4'. The trackers are approximately 9.5' high and the fixed tilt modules are approximately 12.5' high.

Ms. Clark was disappointed that two organizations were not notified and invited to this presentation: 1) the Monadnock Conservancy, who is an abutter to this project, and 2) the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (she suggested contacting Brian Hotz and/or Jack Savage), who oversees the conservation easement for the Goose Pond forest. Ms. Clark invited members of both organizations. Pete Throop of the Monadnock Conservancy was present at this meeting, though he said he was there as a citizen and not as a representative of the Conservancy. Mr. Throop and Ms. Clark agreed that the Monadnock Conservancy should be informed of this work. Mr. Leino mentioned that for the Zoning Board application the Monadnock Conservancy would be notified as an abutter.

Ms. Clark continued noting that this is an industrial application for a large, forested tract in the middle of the Rural District. Thus, she asked Ms. Brunner what process this would have to go through to have a fair hearing. Ms. Brunner replied that large scale solar is allowed in the rural district with a conditional use permit, but it is limited to 20 acres maximum size, which means this project requires a variance from the Zoning Board at their April 3 meeting. Also, because this parcel only has frontage on a Class VI road, they need permission from the City Council to get a building permit on that road. Additionally, this project would have to undergo a site plan review that considers surface waters, hillsides, and conditional use permits with the Planning Board. Other variances could be required depending on the final design. Ms. Brunner said that impacts proposed to wetlands would require a NH Wetlands Permit, and an alteration of terrain would be needed. Ms. Clark asked how many of the aforementioned steps would include opportunities for the public to comment. Ms. Brunner said the public should have a chance to comment at all the steps she listed, but she was unsure whether that was the case for the City Council review. Councilor Madison added that the City Council would probably refer the matter to the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee, which would also have public input. Mr. Bill asked when these hearings would occur. Mr. Jackson said that the variance would affect the design, so once the variance is received, they would proceed with the other items like the conditional use permit.

Mr. Bergman asked the expected lifespan for the solar operation; he assumed that Glenvale would be the owner and operator of the facility although the land is leased. Mr. Jackson said they expected a minimum lifespan of 30–40 years and potentially as long as 70 years, which is how long the lease is for. He said Glenvale Solar is a small team of 14 people, which is why it is ideal for them to find sites that work well and do the permitting. They are less well suited to managing the construction or to be the long-term owner of the project. Glenvale would solicit feedback from the community and ensure that their values and concerns are observed by any future owner. Mr. Bergman said that Glenvale is a planner and designer but not a long-term owner or operator, and Mr. Jackson agreed. Mr. Jackson said a typical long-term owner for a project like this is, for example, managing a pension fund and seeking a stable return over a long period of time.

Ms. Stanish asked for more details on the batteries. Mr. Jackson referred to the plans and pointed out an area adjacent to the utility corridor, where the larger of two areas would be used as a substation and the other is for the battery storage. Currently, Mr. Jackson said the market favors

lithium-ion batteries, which come in metal storage containers. He said the fire protection is all managed internally and they can be trucked in and out for easy replacement. Mr. Jackson noted that the batteries provide a number of services to the grid locally: reliability, reduce costs, relieve congestion, and provide energy during peak times. Ms. Stanish asked the life span of the lithium-ion batteries compared to the solar panels. Mr. Jackson replied that they degrade at 1–2% annually and they would be replaced as the project continues to operate. He would find the exact lifespan and report back to the Commission.

Mr. Haynes strongly suggested using the east side of Old Gilsum Road as the entrance point. He said that if investing a lot of money in rehabilitating Old Gilsum Road, it might be more cost effective coming from the east side. Mr. Haynes thought using the west side would be more disruptive to recreation on the road. He added that roads and wildlife are not a good combination, and he encouraged the planners to think about Old Gilsum Road as a wildlife corridor for larger animals.

Mr. Throop noted that the properties on both sides of Old Gilsum Road are conservation lands with high wildlife values, which he said should be considered when determining an access corridor. Mr. Throop said he thought there had already been disturbance and improvements to the access from Court Street, which he said was something to consider. He mentioned that he was a former Keene City Planner and focused a lot on Goose Pond and the many development proposals along RT-10. He said there was a lot of potential to disturb that Goose Pond landscape, which should be taken into consideration. While he did not see impacts to the steep slopes, he said they were important to consider as well. Mr. Throop also expressed concern about stormwater management. Mr. Ferrando and Mr. Bohannon agreed that the access from Court Street does not connect all the way up to Old Gilsum Road, but Mr. Ferrando said [Eversource] made improvements to Old Gilsum Road. Mr. Throop added that it would be worth looking at whether any portion of Old Gilsum Road from Belvedere Road was discontinued; he was unsure whether any part of the Class VI road was in Gilsum.

Mr. Bill asked what was known about the biodiversity of this area and whether species had been surveyed. Mr. Jackson replied that there had been a vernal pool survey and a preliminary wetland assessment. Ms. Tarr said GZA GeoEnvironmental was retained for a wildlife assessment and studies were underway. For a project like this, she liaises with NH Fish and Game. There is a pre-application meeting to mitigate impacts that could include conservation easements or other projects the City is interested in GZA pursuing. Wildlife was at the forefront of mitigating any impacts.

Councilor Williams asked if there were other examples of projects of similar scale and type like this in New England that the Commission could look into. Mr. Jackson said yes and referred the Commission to the project page on [Glenvale Solar's website](#). He said that Maine had seen more solar development than NH, with projects 50%–100% larger than this one, as well as projects of similar size and smaller. He cited two similar size developments in Fitzwilliam and Hinsdale, NH.

Mr. Leino asked Mr. Jackson to speak about the efficiency of doing a larger project like this versus the same amount of coverage across several smaller projects. Mr. Jackson said that a founding principle for Glenvale Solar is that they do not want it to be a tradeoff between affordable energy and clean energy. He said they have had many smaller projects, but that bulk energy can be provided in a cost-effective way. He continued that one large project versus the same energy across many smaller projects allows them to be much more competitive in a bidding process to supply homeowners and business owners with electricity.

Ms. Clark wanted to know how well the representatives understood the tradeoffs of a project of this scale in the midst of one of the most robust and diverse wildlife habitats in Keene and Cheshire County. She said that the Cheshire County Forester, Matt Kelly, says that the red oaks in Cheshire and Sullivan Counties are some of the finest qualities in the world. She continued saying that underlaying those red oaks are prime forestland soils that this project would be bulldozing, pulling up all the stumps, and turning the area into a meadow. Ms. Clark said a meadow could sound great but when the soil biota is disturbed to the extent proposed for this project, she said there would not be creatures left to use the vernal pools. She said the wildlife biologist should know that. Ms. Tarr replied that vernal pools are her specialty. Ms. Tarr continued stating that she did not think it was accurate to characterize this project as “bulldozing.” She mentioned installation methods and how wetland soils are preserved. Ms. Clark said they would not be leaving the tree stumps to resprout. Mr. Jackson said in the wetlands, yes, where they proposed the conversion of forested wetland to scrub-shrub, the panels themselves would be several feet off the ground at the lowest point. He said there would be vegetation management twice annually. Mr. Jackson said the intent is to preserve as many of the wetland functions and values as possible, and said it was very different from [the response was cut off]. Ms. Clark said she was speaking beyond wetlands and about the landscape of the red oak forest and the flora and fauna that depend on those trees. She said those oaks would be essentially wiped out with an industrial scale development in the middle of the Rural District. Mr. Jackson said he understood there were tradeoffs and this would be one of them. He continued stating that his team thought there was a strong case for clean energy generation and that they work with people like Ms. Tarr to protect as many natural resources as possible. In light of these tradeoffs, he said they thought a site like this was very well suited for this type of development. He added that it would be decommissioned at the end of its life.

Mr. Bergman wondered if anyone planned to, or had surveyed, the use of the vernal pools by amphibians, which live in the woods and migrate to the vernal pools. Ms. Tarr said Gove Environmental Services documented two vernal pools in the northern portion of the property. She will assess the vernal pools this spring, after which she would provide more information to the Commission.

Mr. Bill asked if all the areas shown in grey on the plans would be clear cut. Mr. Jackson said yes. Mr. Throop asked if the areas shown would be the extent of the cutting, and Mr. Jackson said yes, it is approximately 240 acres. Mr. Ferrando stated his understanding that a lot of this

site had already been forested/cut. Mr. Jackson said both properties had active forestry as recently as 2014.

Mr. Bergman said he heard the phrase “vegetation management,” which he assumed referred in part to the new grassland areas around the solar units, and he asked the method for managing that vegetation. Mr. Jackson replied that they would not use herbicides unless there was a compelling case for managing an invasive species. He said that they would trim the vegetation mechanically twice per year.

Ms. Clark asked for more information on the fencing and the mention of allowing certain wildlife through; she asked what sizes of wildlife would be able to access the site, noting that there are many wildlife corridors through this area. Mr. Jackson said the fence would not encircle the entire project area as shown on the plan. He said fencing is required along the northwestern portion and he mentioned another area but did not specify the location. He said it would be game fencing, which has clearance at the base that allows smaller animals to pass through but not deer or moose. Wildlife would also be able to pass through the wetland area that is between the two arrays, which he demonstrated on the plan. He said the game fencing would also be around the substation and battery storage, which are required to have barbed wire at the top per the National Electric Code.

Mr. Haynes asked about the plan for Old Gilsum Road, where the solar array seems to be near to the road, and asked whether there would be any buffer. Mr. Jackson said yes, at that location the solar panels would be visible from Old Gilsum Road. Mr. Haynes asked if trees could be left to mask the arrays from those using Old Gilsum Road for recreation. Mr. Jackson replied that a buffer is required around the whole property. Mr. Leino recalled that these are preliminary drawings until the Zoning Board hearing. Mr. Haynes suggested considering that buffer from Old Gilsum Road for those who want to enjoy the forest.

Mr. Bill asked if there were ways to have wildlife corridors between the lettered parcels of solar panels shown on the plans. Mr. Jackson was unsure. He suspected it would be difficult but would look into it.

Mr. Bergman asked for more details about stormwater runoff management. Ms. Sanders said the project must meet the requirements for the alteration of terrain permit and the City of Keene. She will be looking at peak flows, treatments of the gravel surfaces, and trying to create low impact development with bioretention areas. She said infiltration is always a great way to treat and reduce the volume of runoff. She said it might be a series of detention ponds, infiltration, buffers for treatment, etc. She said it would evolve as the design progresses, but they would be held to those criteria.

Mr. Throop referred to the variable topography on the map and to the sections marked “H” and “E”, where he said there appeared to be steep slopes that should be considered. He said he knew of prior development proposals for this property and said there are thin soils where the bedrock is

close to the surface. Mr. Throop said that prior development did not work out in part because of the steep slopes and in part because they could not manage the wastewater and stormwater. These were all things that he said this solar development would need to consider. Mr. Throop added that he uses this area for recreation, especially along Old Gilsum Road, which gets a lot of traffic. He said that a visual barrier between the solar panels and Old Gilsum Road would be beneficial to the citizens of Keene who use this area. Mr. Throop also talked about the density of the panels and mentioned how much space stormwater management takes and he was unsure where all that infrastructure would go on the site; he did not want to see an increase in the forested area being cut to accommodate the treatment. Mr. Jackson said there would be a soil survey and geotechnical analysis done on site. He continued that the limit of clearing also includes several acres for stormwater management. Ms. Sanders agreed and said the limit of clearing included shade for the panels, the stormwater management, the roadways, and the panels themselves. Mr. Jackson said the plans were conceptual and did not perfectly depict the buffer around the project and between the rows.

Vice Chair Madison asked where this site is in relation to the watershed boundaries between Beaver Brook and Goose Pond. Mr. Jackson said he would have to follow up on that and confirm. The Vice Chair said his concern would be with not wanting any of these stormwater runoff structures sending water into the surrounding watersheds.

Ms. Clark asked what type of roadways would be on site and Mr. Jackson said gravel. Ms. Clark asked if the roads would be raised. Mr. Jackson said no and referred to the stormwater management system. Ms. Clark asked if the gravel roads would be a part of that management system. Ms. Sanders said there would most likely be a gravel road with ditches and swales on either side to carry the water off the roadway and into a buffer or some other type of stormwater management system. Ms. Clark asked about the water shed from the solar panels. Ms. Sanders said it would be tricky.

Ms. Stanish asked if any lighting would be installed. Mr. Jackson said there would only be one low watt, downcast security light near the battery storage area.

Mr. Bill asked what percentage of the area would be covered by solar panels. Mr. Jackson said that if looking straight down at the site from an aerial perspective and all the space between the rows and around the roads was eliminated, it would be approximately 75 acres of panels.

4) Report-Outs

A) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee

Mr. Haynes said that the Subcommittee met last month and worked on a final draft of the paper map handouts to be available at trailheads. The week before this meeting, Mr. Haynes and others began hanging trail signs and would continue. The Subcommittee had worked on a scope of work for the loop trail maintenance and they would walk the loop trail with contractors on March 30 so they can understand the work needed. The Subcommittee would begin evaluating those

contractor applications mid-April. Mr. Haynes hoped that the work would be approved to begin by mid-May after it is reviewed through the City Council's Committee process.

Mr. Haynes said that when the Subcommittee meets next month, they would begin organizing some more volunteer workdays. He wondered if the Commission should have a booth to share information and recruit volunteers at Green Up Keene on April 23. Ms. Brunner noted that Green Up Keene no longer has materials pick-up at Railroad Square but has a drive through process at Public Works. Instead, she said the Commission could have a booth at the Earth Day Festival, where the Energy and Climate Committee would have a table and she could check to see if they would include Conservation Commission materials at their booth. Councilor Williams said that in the past, the Commission had included information on invasives volunteering in the bags of information Green Up Keene participants get at Public Works. Ms. Clark said there is a good opportunity for engaging with the public at the Earth Day Festival and the Commission agreed to pursue that opportunity.

Vice Chair Madison also suggested pop-up outreach, which he used to do with the Park's Service. He said they could set-up a table on the weekends in the parking lot at Goose Pond to solicit volunteers while they are there hiking. Mr. Haynes liked this idea.

B) Outreach

Mr. Haynes said the work group did not meet last month. He said that Ms. Clark registered the Commission for the elementary school NH state water festival that is in Keene this year on Wednesday, May 10. Mr. Haynes would be there to help Ms. Clark and Ms. Stanish should be able to help as well. Anyone else on the Commission is welcome to come. Mr. Haynes concluded the work group report by reminding the Commission of the spring Goose Pond Through the Seasons bird walk on May 28 from 8:00 AM–10:00 AM; Mr. Haynes would submit the press release soon.

C) Invasive Species

Councilor Williams said he was waiting to finalize an invasives schedule until he finds out the Council's schedule of special meetings for the downtown infrastructure project. In general, he said he learned last year that there tends to be better participation on weekday evenings, particularly on holidays like Indigenous Peoples Day.

Mr. Haynes asked if Councilor Williams had a flyer/information to share with the Green Up Keene materials. Councilor Williams said he included information on the Garlic Mustard Challenge in past years but there was no new location identified for that event this year. Mr. Haynes suggested a flyer on invasives that people can find in their yards and how to remove them. Councilor Williams wants to also encourage people to pull invasives along the Rail Trail. The Councilor hoped to finalize some dates for this year's invasives activities before Green Up

Keene and would create something to include with those materials. My. Haynes said he would look into some of the University of NH Cooperative Extension's invasives resources.

Vice Chair Madison recognized a Keene resident who said she recently reached out to her neighbors in east Keene about why the City or neighborhood had not done anything about the bittersweet that is prominent along waterways. She cited Victoria Avenue as an example where the bittersweet is too thick for wildlife to traverse. She wanted to know if private citizens could cut invasives on public property. Councilor Williams said he usually works with City Staff so that they know where the cutting is happening and they help to haul away bags of the invasives. He said that the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities, Andy Bohannon, would be best to contact for work in parks and the Public Works Director, Kürt Blomquist, would be better for roadsides. Councilor Williams thought he was the member of the public's ward Councilor and offered to speak with her more to ensure the right people are advised.

Mr. Bergman said he believed the railbed and the buffer zone on either side on the embankments are owned by the state but that the City has some permission to use it for recreation or other purposes. He said the state periodically chops things down along the railbed but he was unsure who supervises or decides that. He mentioned the railbed near Monadnock Marketplace where there are a lot of wet areas that had been chopped down but he was unsure by whom. Vice Chair Madison thought it was likely that the City was doing that clearing.

D) Land Conservation

This work group had not met since the last meeting.

5) Discussion Items:

A) Airport Proposed Wildlife Control Fence Update

Ms. Brunner had no updates. Mr. Bergman had no updates but would reach out to Airport Director Hickling before the next meeting for an update.

B) Conservation Commission Speaking Events

Vice Chair Madison reported that he had a good conversation with John Therriault about doing an event on pollinators for the Pollinator Palooza in June.

C) 2023 NH Drinking Water Festival

Vice Chair Madison is an organizer and would be a judge this year. He recommended that everyone attend. Ms. LeBlanc asked what the festival was. Vice Chair Madison described it as a big science fair on water for kids.

6) **New or Other Business**

Councilor Williams told the Commission about proposed changes to the Fireworks Ordinance that would be going through the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee in April. The changes would remove the restrictions on fireworks so that fireworks would no longer have to go through a permitting process any longer. He had a lot of concern about this change for the environment in terms of fireworks scaring wildlife and impacting habitats, in addition to air quality issues, and chemicals and particulates entering water supplies.

Ms. Brunner mentioned a communication she received from Rowland Russell, who works for Antioch University New England, about a presentation to the Conservation Commission on food security. Ms. Brunner would put this on next month's agenda.

Ms. Clark noted that the Joint Planning Board-Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee sent the Ordinance proposing to change the minimum lot size in the rural district from five-to-two acres forward to the City Council. This would likely be heard by the Council at their first meeting in May and there would be an opportunity for public comment.

7) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Vice Chair Madison adjourned the meeting at 5:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker
March 27, 2023

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner