



City of Keene, New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

4:30 PM

ZOOM

Commission Members

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Eloise Clark, Vice Chair
Kenneth Bergman
Art Walker
Andrew Madison

Councilor Robert Williams
Brian Reilly, Alternate
Thomas P. Haynes, Alternate
Steven Bill, Alternate
John Therriault, Alternate

- This meeting will be conducted using the online meeting platform, Zoom. The public may view the meeting online by visiting www.zoom.us/join and enter the Meeting ID: **868 3840 7352**.*
- More info on how to access this meeting is available on the Conservation Commission webpage at <https://ci.keene.nh.us/conservation-commission>
- If you encounter any issues accessing this meeting, please call **(603) 209-4697** during the meeting.

1. Call to Order
2. Vote for Chair and Vice Chair – 2021
3. Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 21, 2020
4. Communication and Notifications
NHACC Donation request – December 1, 2020
5. Informational
 - a. Subcommittee reports
 - Outreach Subcommittee
 - Arm Fund Subcommittee
6. Discussion Items
 - a. Continued discussion – Invasive Species Management
 - b. Continued discussion – Greater Goose Pond Forest Management Plan
 - c. Update – Bee City designation
7. New or Other Business
8. Adjournment – Next meeting date **Tuesday, February 16, 2021**

**In Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04, which declared a COVID-19 State of Emergency, the requirement that a quorum of a public body be physically present at the meeting location under RSA 91-A:2, III(b), and the requirement that each part of a meeting of a public body be audible or otherwise discernible to the public at the meeting location under RSA 91-A:2, III(c), have been waived. Public participation may be provided through telephonic and other electronic means.*

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 CONSERVATION COMMISSION
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

8 **Monday, December 21, 2020**

4:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Eloise Clark, Vice Chair
Councilor Robert Williams
Art Walker
Ken Bergman
Steven Bill
Brian Reilly
Andrew Madison
John Therriault, Alternate
Tom Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director/Assistant City Manager
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation and Facilities
Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant

Members Not Present:

9
10 **1) Call to Order**

11
12 Chair Von Plinsky called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM and read the Executive Order
13 authorizing a remote meeting: Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New
14 Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04. Pursuant to this order, members present stated
15 their locations and whether calling alone.
16

17 **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – November 16, 2020**

18
19 Mr. Madison moved to approve the minutes of November 16, 2020, which Mr. Walker seconded,
20 and the motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote in favor.
21

22 **3) Communication and Notifications**

23 **a. NH DES Letter – November 25, 2020**
24

25 Mr. Lamb cited this letter in the meeting packet that is a standard request for information from
26 the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) for a Wetlands Permit application for Ash
27 Brook Court in Keene. He said DES was asking the applicant to change from the expedited
28 minimum impact application to a standard dredge and fill minor project application, citing rules

29 on wetlands impacts being within 10' of an adjacent property. This was simply a notification to
30 the Commission that DES requested this information.

31

32 **4) Informational**

33 **a. Subcommittee Reports**

34 **i. Outreach Subcommittee**

35

36 Vice Chair Clark continues sending environmental education posts to Ms. Marcou on a regular
37 basis, who posts them to the City website and Community Development Department Facebook.
38 The Chairman shares the Facebook posts with his network and encourages others to as well.

39

40 **ii. ARM Fund Subcommittee**

41

42 The Chairman hoped to meet with Mr. Bergman and anyone else interested after the holidays.

43

44 **5) Discussion Items**

45 **a. Continued Discussion – Invasive Species Management**

46

47 The Chairman reported researching the Garlic Mustard Challenge, which he thought could be an
48 event at the cemetery given how easy it is to identify and pick without being expensive or time
49 consuming. The ideal time is early May, climate change notwithstanding. Mr. Bohannon would
50 have more information to report in January. Councilor Williams agreed that the Garlic Mustard
51 Challenge was a good possibility and envisioned Commissioners identifying City land with
52 garlic mustard in advance to on social media with a map and how to participate.

53

54 Councilor Williams continued explaining that he toured Woodland cemetery recently with a
55 landscape architect and discussed various issues including buckthorn and knotweed. They
56 realized how pervasive a problem knotweed is in the cemetery and therefore there are other
57 projects meriting attention first that are less expensive; he said the knotweed there could be
58 insurmountable. At the cemetery, Councilor Williams suggested that it was feasible to address
59 buckthorn with volunteers if the Parks Department marks areas in advance. The Councilor
60 continued discussing the Russell Park (former Carpenter Field) project and cited the expansive
61 knotweed problem on both banks of Black Brook, where he said exciting work was happening on
62 the City-owned side to enhance flood storage. If the property owners on the opposite bank were
63 amenable, he asked what would be required to remove the invasives at that scale, assuming a
64 substantial budget, pesticide application, and long-term volunteer maintenance.

65

66 Councilor Williams referenced an email from Vice Chair Clark on an invasive species training
67 that he attended previously and recommended. In particular, he thought it would be a valuable
68 training for City Staff as well, and suggested that the Commission's budget could fund the \$35
69 registration fee for interested practitioners working in land management. The Chairman
70 supported the idea of the Commission doing what is possible to ensure people take the class,
71 adding that the walking tour with Vice Chair Clark was illuminating.

72 Mr. Madison said he had been paying attention to the plans for Russell Park because he has
73 worked along that portion of Beaver Brook and agreed that the knotweed is pervasive on both
74 sides and he hoped it would be addressed in any future plan for the park – not just removal, but
75 long-term maintenance as well. He said that plan must include replacing the knotweed with
76 native vegetation to stabilize the steep streambanks. Mr. Lamb said both alternatives being
77 considered included interesting streambank modifications that would likely mitigate those steep
78 slopes and promote a more natural future stream. While Mr. Lamb was unsure how the plans
79 addressed specifically long-term invasive species management, he said such care is a standard
80 component of City contracts that involve invasives.

81
82 Mr. Bergman recalled the pervasive knotweed problem at Ladies Wildwood Park that he thought
83 might be more accessible for management; he cited local community support for that park as
84 well. Mr. Bohannon toured Ladies Wildwood Park recently with a forester and invasives were a
85 high in that conversation.

86
87 Mr. Bohannon continued referring those interested to www.keeneparks.com, where there are
88 links to the design alternatives, information on repurposing the greenspace, and a 30-minute
89 video of the landscape designer narrating the two designs for Russell Park. He appreciated
90 Councilor Williams initiating discussion of this project. In response to Mr. Madison, Mr.
91 Bohannon said that all vegetation on the east streambank would be replaced with native
92 vegetation and discussions were ongoing with the west bank landowners because as others
93 indicated, eradication on one bank is fruitless if not performed on the other. He was happy to
94 present details on the plans for Russell Park at a future meeting. Barring significant permitting
95 delays, Mr. Bohannon said the goal is to start the project in August/September 2021.

96
97 The Chairman asked whether the western streambank owner would have to pay for removal or
98 was a partnership possible. Mr. Bohannon said he was hopeful to find a grant to facilitate. Mr.
99 Lamb said the City funded dredging the section of Beaver Brook in question in 2014 with an
100 objective to return the stream profile for flood mitigation. There are three or four owners on that
101 bank with whom to negotiate.

102
103 Vice Chair Clark said knotweed removal at this location could be a potential Aquatic Resource
104 Mitigation (ARM) Fund project, especially if returning function and value to the Brook, and Mr.
105 Lamb agreed. Vice Chair Clark would familiarize herself with the plans for Russell Park to
106 support a meeting of the ARM Fund Subcommittee on the topic. Mr. Bohannon thought extra
107 funding might be available to fund consultant assistance with the ARM Fund application.

108
109 The Chairman questioned if the western streambank owners would be interested in selling those
110 banks to the City for incorporation into the park. Mr. Lamb thought it was a creative idea but not
111 possible within the park schedule.

112

113 On the subject of garlic mustard, Mr. Madison said that before Covid-19, the head chef at
114 Machina Arts Restaurant held a dinner featuring knotweed and might consider creating some
115 recipes with garlic mustard to help draw attention to the issue.

116
117 Mr. Bohannon described an upcoming program at the Ashuelot River Park resulting from its
118 master plan. A large group of 30-50 kids would be volunteering in the park over the course of
119 one week in April as a part of the Interact program through the local Rotary Clubs. This is in lieu
120 of their annual volunteer trip to El Salvador. Covid-19 precautions would be followed strictly.
121 Part of that project could be invasive species removal. Mr. Bohannon would try to incorporate
122 Conservation Commission priorities as much as possible.

123
124 **b. Continued Discussion – Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Plan**

125
126 Mr. Lamb led discussion based on feedback and the last meeting indicating that the stewardship
127 plan needs championing. He said that the thorough plan was adopted in 2018 as the result of ad
128 hoc committee work that did not shy from managing conflicting challenges in a park of this
129 magnitude. The plan is too large to transmit electronically but can be found on the City website
130 and he encouraged members to review the plan before the next meeting. A primary
131 recommendation of the plan was to establish a stewardship committee. Additionally, the plan had
132 stewardship recommendations for community outreach and education (e.g., self-guided tours and
133 natural/cultural history walks), wildlife habitat and forest stewardship (e.g., timber harvesting to
134 fund future park improvements), and recreational trails stewardship (e.g., signage, trail blazing,
135 and improved access). He said there was much more in the plan beyond timber management that
136 deserves focus and so a forest stewardship committee could be established with those foci in
137 mind. He agreed with the Chairman that part of developing this committee would be to
138 determine whether it reports to the Conservation Commission or to City Council directly. The
139 Chairman thought it best for the Commission to have input in establishing the committee but for
140 it to report ultimately to City Council. He fears the Commission being spread too thin.

141
142 Mr. Haynes recalled that an Outreach Subcommittee had begun a series of seasonal educational
143 walks in Goose Pond Forest that were interrupted by Covid-19. He encouraged moving forward
144 calling it a stewardship plan as intended versus a management plan. Mr. Haynes asked for Mr.
145 Bohannon's opinion. Mr. Bohannon replied that establishing a stewardship committee was a
146 good idea because all the components outlined in the plan can cumulatively educate the
147 community on how to manage a forest properly and he did not want the plan to collect dust. He
148 cited some tasks outlined in the plan that were accomplished already including a new trailhead,
149 parking lot, and kiosk as a byproduct of the dam project, a second kiosk at the end of the dike
150 road, and early discussions with Peter Poanessa to develop trail signs. Mr. Bohannon is in favor
151 of working with Mr. Lamb and anyone else to move the plan forward. A request for proposals
152 process was underway with County Forester Steve Roberge for the timber management aspect.

153
154 Mr. Bill wondered if marking boundary lines should precede other tasks in the plan and Mr.
155 Bohannon said that the cost of boundary surveying was too much to prioritize it first.

156
157 Whether the Commission serves as a conduit for the stewardship committee, Mr. Bergman said it
158 would be valuable for the Commission to remain apprised of the committee's process and have
159 opportunity to comment.

160
161 The Chairman recalled representation on the steering Committee that could guide composing the
162 stewardship committee including one/two Conservation Commission members, Keene State
163 College and Antioch University environmental studies students, representatives of the New
164 England Mountain Bike Association, and a local faculty member, among others. There were
165 recommendations to also include an abutter and a member of a local conservation organization
166 like the Monadnock Conservancy, Harris Center, or Society for the Protection of New
167 Hampshire Forests. Councilor Williams suggested fellow Councilor Kate Bosley as an abutter.
168 Mr. Bill wondered if a Parks Department Staff person would be valuable on the stewardship
169 committee and Mr. Lamb said that that the Staff liaison(s) to the committee would be available
170 for advice and recommendation when the membership has questions. Mr. Lamb thought that
171 depending on how the Commission asks Council to set-up the stewardship committee, it could be
172 possible to include members that are not Keene residents, which might be the case for
173 representatives of regional groups like the Harris Center. The Ashuelot River Park Advisory
174 Board could serve as a "template" for this stewardship committee. Mr. Haynes suggested
175 including a member of the Antioch Bird Club because timber harvesting benefits certain species.
176 Mr. Haynes added that he was the Conservation Commission Chairman throughout developing
177 the plan and wanted to be considered as a member for the stewardship committee; the Chairman
178 and others indicated support. Mr. Lamb would review the steering committee's composition,
179 which could also help guide the number of members to solicit; likely five to ten members.

180
181 Mr. Bergman suggested that an important role of the stewardship committee would be to keep
182 the public apprised of future timber harvesting and the Chairman agreed that an important reason
183 to establish the committee sooner is to keep the public aware of all activities in the park, not just
184 those that might be perceived as negative.

185
186 Before the January meeting, the Chairman, Mr. Lamb, and Mr. Bohannon agreed to draft a
187 charge for the stewardship committee. The Chairman asked everyone to review the plan in
188 advance of that discussion.

189
190 **c. Update – Bee City Designation**

191
192 The draft Resolution was included in the meeting packet. The Commission already
193 recommended forwarding it to Council and so no further vote was needed. The language
194 provided by the Xerces Society was modified to represent Keene and would be forwarded to the
195 Society for review before a final draft is sent to City Council. Once adopted, Mr. Bohannon
196 would inform the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board to guide their actions as well.

197
198 **6) New or Other Business**

199 **a. 2021 Calendar**

200
201 Mr. Bergman moved to adopt the 2021 meeting calendar as amended to read January *19* instead
202 of *12*, which Mr. Bill seconded, and the motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote in favor.

203
204 Mr. Lamb agreed to share information on airport related meetings with Mr. Bergman. Mr. Lamb
205 would also agendize an airport discussion for next month.

206
207 Commissioners thanked Mr. Reilly for his years of service as a regular member and for
208 continuing to serve as an alternate member. One does not need to be a Commissioner to
209 participate in these public meetings.

210
211 **7) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021**

212
213 There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 5:48 PM.

214
215 Respectfully submitted by,
216 Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
217 December 23, 2020