



CONSERVATION COMMISSION

AGENDA

Monday, October 16, 2023

4:30 PM

Room 22, Recreation Center

Commission Members

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair
Art Walker
Councilor Robert Williams, Ex-Officio
Eloise Clark
Steven Bill
Kenneth Bergman

Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate
Thomas P. Haynes, Alternate
John Therriault, Alternate
Brian Reilly, Alternate
Lee Stanish, Alternate

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 18, 2023
3. Report-outs
 - 1) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee
 - 2) Outreach
 - 3) Invasive Species
 - 4) Land Conservation
4. NH Association of Conservation Commissions: Request for Annual Dues and Invitation to Annual Meeting & Conference on November 4, 2023
5. Discussion Items:
 - a) Keene Meadow Solar Station project update.
 - b) Potential Land Purchase Update (Rt 9/Washington St. Ext. properties).
 - c) Airport proposed wildlife control fence update.
 - d) Conservation Commission speaking events.
 - e) Wantastiquet-Monadnock Coalition – Request for Commission assistance with construction of a bathroom along the Wantastiquet-Monadnock trail.
 - f) Neighborhood Pollinator Garden update
 - g) Antioch University CSI proposal
 - h) NHDOT Floodplain Compensatory Storage Project (Route 101)
6. New or Other Business
7. Adjourn – Next meeting date: **Monday, November 20, 2023**

1 **City of Keene**
2 **New Hampshire**

3
4
5 **CONSERVATION COMMISSION**
6 **MEETING MINUTES**
7

Monday, September 18, 2023

4:30 PM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair
Councilor Robert Williams
Art Walker
Ken Bergman
Thomas Haynes, Alternate (Voting)
Brian Reilly, Alternate (Voting)
Deborah LeBlanc, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Eloise Clark
Steven Bill
John Therriault, Alternate
Lee Stanish, Alternate

8
9 **1) Call to Order**

10
11 Vice Chair Madison called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM.

12
13 **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2023**

14
15 Revisions: Steven Bill should be listed as a regular member. On line 65 and 66, change
16 references to “knotweed” to “purple loosestrife.” On line 173, change references to “Liberty
17 elms” to “elms.”

18
19 A motion by Mr. Haynes to adopt the August 21, 2023 meeting minutes as amended was duly
20 seconded by Mr. Bergman and the motion carried unanimously.

21
22 **3) Report-Outs**

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

24
25 Mr. Haynes said the Subcommittee had met since the last meeting. The hired contractor, Lew
26 Shelley of Snowhawk LLC, finished his work and there had been mostly positive feedback on
27 that trail maintenance, including new boardwalks in muddy areas and stream crossings. The

28 Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities, Andy Bohannon, was pleased with this work.
29 Larger trail signs were ready to be placed at the various kiosks and trailheads, as well as some
30 for the interior of the loop trail. Mr. Haynes said there were still some small projects remaining
31 that were not a part of Mr. Shelley’s contract that the Subcommittee would be working on—
32 Friday mornings and weekends—through the fall. At their next meeting, the Subcommittee
33 would be creating a prioritized list of projects for next year to determine whether funding is
34 needed.

35
36 **B) Outreach**

37
38 Mr. Haynes recalled that he would be stepping back as the leader of this work group and he was
39 seeking someone from the new generation of Commissioners to take the lead. He clarified that
40 this is general community conservation outreach and not specific to the Greater Goose Pond
41 Forest. Vice Chair Madison suggested tabling this conversation until the next meeting when
42 more Commissioners would hopefully be present.

43
44 **C) Invasive Species**

45
46 Councilor Williams reported that there had been two invasive species removal events since the
47 last meeting. First, six volunteers pulled Japanese knotweed at the Ladies’ Wildwood Park and
48 exposed how much knotweed is still there to address, which would likely require herbicide
49 treatment. Councilor Williams stated some ways to address knotweed: physically remove by
50 hand, bury and cover with a tarp (introduces black plastic that is not environmentally friendly),
51 or herbicide. He recalled the Director of Public Works, Kürt Blomquist, noting that many trees
52 need to be removed from Ladies’ Wildwood Park. Councilor Williams thought the Commission
53 should be coming up with plans for succession of the forest cover there.

54
55 More recently, there was another knotweed pull at Robin Hood Park. This was the third year
56 addressing knotweed at this location, but the problem keeps coming back each year; some areas
57 are under better control, but the knotweed is not eliminated. Councilor Williams had been
58 expanding where they are addressing knotweed in Robin Hood Park. The Councilor also
59 mentioned the problem with Norway maples at Robin Hood Park. In the Robin Hood Park
60 redesign, he hoped there would be money set aside for basic control options, like chain sawing.

61
62 Regarding the forest canopy at Ladies’ Wildwood Park, Mr. Haynes wondered if it would make
63 sense to ask the Cheshire County Forester, Matt Kelly, to attend a site visit or a Commission
64 meeting. Councilor Williams thought it was a good idea to get some recommendations. Vice
65 Chair Madison agreed that the trees planted in the park after the 1938 hurricane were reaching
66 the end of their useful lives. He said it would only take one winter storm to turn Ladies’
67 Wildwood Park into a meadow filled with knotweed.

68
69
70

71 **D) Land Conservation**

72
73 The work group had not met.

74
75 **4) Discussion Items**

76 **A) Keene Meadow Solar Station Project Update**

77
78 Ms. Brunner had no updates to report. The last she heard from Glenvale Solar was that they were
79 optimistic about scheduling a site visit in early August, but that did not occur, and she had not
80 heard an update. Glenvale Solar's next step was to get City Council permission for a building
81 permit for a lot that only has frontage on a Class VI road, which also had not occurred yet.

82
83 Mr. Bergman asked if Glenvale Solar originally requested to merge the two lots; he was recalling
84 something that was not permitted. Ms. Brunner reported that the company had appeared before
85 the Zoning Board of Adjustment and received the two variances—one for each lot—needed to
86 have a solar array with a footprint greater than 20 contiguous acres. Vice Chair Madison said the
87 company still had a long way to go before completing this project. It would be important for
88 Commissioners to attend any site visits. When it looks like the project is moving forward, the
89 company's representatives could be invited to another Commission meeting.

90
91 **B) Potential Land Purchase Update (Rt-9/Washington St. Ext. Property)**

92
93 Vice Chair Madison had not heard any updates about this at the Council level. Ms. Brunner
94 reported at the last meeting that the City Manager tried negotiating with the property owner, Hull
95 Forest Products, who asked for a much higher selling price—\$150,000—than the City Council
96 had approved. This Commission could recommend paying the higher price to the City Council.
97 However, that purchase would deplete the Land Use Change Tax Fund (currently \$155,000, does
98 not run out at the end of the year, and is maxed at \$500,000), which is added to every year
99 (minimum \$25,000) and must be used only for conservation. Mr. Haynes suggested that this was
100 not the best time to debate this, since several Commissioners were not present.

101
102 Mr. Bergman wondered approximately how much Hull Forest Products would be paying in taxes
103 on that land in the next 6 months to 1 year if they refuse to sell. Ms. Brunner said she could ask
104 the Assessing Department. Mr. Bergman imagined that if the taxes were only \$2,000–\$3,000 per
105 year, they might not want to sell if they still think they can get a better price than what the City
106 can offer. Mr. Haynes agreed that could be the case if they do not get other offers.

107
108 Mr. Bergman also recalled discussion at the last meeting about whether the City could buy just
109 one of the parcels. Ms. Brunner was unsure whether there was enough flexibility in the City
110 Council's last vote on this to adjust the offer in that way; she would look back at the language
111 but thought it was specifically for both properties. Mr. Bergman wondered if there was a way to
112 partner with the Monadnock Conservancy to help with purchase while the parcels are still
113 available. The last Mr. Bergman spoke with Ryan Owens, Executive Director of the Monadnock

114 Conservancy, about these parcels and others nearby, he told Mr. Bergman that the owners of
115 Hull Forest Products would not speak to him. Mr. Bergman wondered how an organization like
116 the Monadnock Conservancy would value (ecological or conservation) these parcels. He recalled
117 that the City had given the Conservancy money to help them make other land purchases, such as
118 for property in Gilsum, for example. Mr. Haynes thought the Commission needed to have a
119 conversation and discuss all the possible variables. Mr. Bergman did not want to lose the chance
120 to acquire these properties. Mr. Haynes suggested talking to the Director of Parks, Recreation,
121 and Facilities, Andy Bohannon, since some oversight might be under his jurisdiction.

122
123 Vice Chair Madison agreed that there is an opportunity that he did not want to see lost, but he did
124 not think there would be much change in the month before the next Commission meeting. He
125 would talk to the City Manager about the options and potential to partner with other conservation
126 organizations as a way to increase buying power. Mr. Bergman recalled that the Monadnock
127 Conservancy has their own criteria for valuing land.

128
129 Ms. LeBlanc asked whether there is a group, like the Coalition, that all Conservancy projects
130 feed into. Vice Chair Madison did not think so. Mr. Bergman thought this would be an open land
131 committee. While they operate independently of each other, Vice Chair Madison said the
132 Monadnock Conservancy and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests generally operate in
133 the same way; the latter tends to do bigger projects.

134
135 Ms. Brunner asked if the Commission had to choose one of the properties to purchase, which
136 they would choose. There was discussion that the Beaver Brook Canyon property might be best
137 because it has recreational value. Tom Haynes agreed but noted that the Route 9 property is
138 contiguous with the Greater Goose Pond Forest. Mr. Bergman thought the Washington
139 Street/Beaver Brook parcel was also less developable and might be harder for the owner to sell
140 as a standalone, which is probably why they want to keep the two properties together. However,
141 he thought the other larger parcel might be more ecologically interesting in terms of landscape
142 values. He recalled a bull moose seen near the larger parcel on Route 9, and added that there is a
143 lot of wildlife going through there. The larger the tract of land, the more likely it is to have
144 wildlife value. Mr. Haynes thought the property north of the highway was more likely to be
145 developed than the smaller, narrower parcel. However, it does have issues with access from the
146 public right-of-way. Mr. Bergman thought that for developers, where there is a will, there is a
147 way.

148
149 Vice Chair Madison would talk to the City Manager, and this should remain on the agenda for
150 next month.

151
152 **C) Airport Proposed Wildlife Control Fence Update**

153
154 There were no updates.

155
156

157 **D) Conservation Commission Speaking Events**

158

159 There were no updates.

160

161 **E) Wantastiquet-Monadnock Coalition – Request for Commission Assistance**
162 **with Construction of a Bathroom Along the Wantastiquet-Monadnock Trail**

163

164 Ms. Brunner had no updates but recalled that Chair Von Plinsky had agreed to take the lead at
165 the last meeting. The Coalition is seeking financial assistance up to \$500 and seeking volunteers
166 to build a bathroom near the Horatio Colony Nature Preserve part of the trail, which is not on
167 City land. Ms. LeBlanc recalled that she attended a Coalition meeting on behalf of the
168 Commission. She said the Coalition had asked about the Commission helping to create the tent
169 site on the Horatio Colony Nature Preserve. Since that meeting, she had received an email from
170 the Chair of the Chesterfield Conservation Commission, which Ms. LeBlanc forwarded to Chair
171 Von Plinsky, who said he would follow up. There was no date scheduled yet to construct the tent
172 site. This should remain on the agenda for an update from Chair Von Plinsky next month.

173

174 **F) Neighborhood Pollinator Garden Update**

175

176 Ms. Brunner recalled that Mr. Therriault volunteered to follow-up with Mr. Bohannon (Director
177 of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) and Mr. Blomquist (Public Works Director) about the
178 request from residents of the Edgewood community to plant a pollinator garden in their common
179 area. Currently, that area is just grass that the City mows and some burning bush. Ms. Brunner
180 was unsure if Mr. Therriault had those conversations yet. Mr. Bergman thought City Staff
181 intended to check if there were any deeds on the parcel that would prevent this. This should
182 remain on the agenda next month for an update from Mr. Therriault.

183

184 **G) Antioch University CSI Proposals**

185

186 Ms. Brunner recalled discussing this at the last meeting. The Antioch University New England
187 Community Service Initiative (CSI) proposals are due at the end of September. She recalled
188 Commissioners mentioning submitting a proposal for tree inventories, such as at Ladies'
189 Wildwood Park, but Ms. Brunner was unaware of any proposals submitted. Mr. Haynes noted
190 that he had some ideas for possible projects at Goose Pond, but the Subcommittee was not yet in
191 a position to submit a proposal for that; he thought it was more likely next year. Vice Chair
192 Madison and Mr. Haynes agreed this would be good to keep on the agenda so any proposals
193 could be refined during the next year. Ms. Brunner mentioned that the CSIs are very deadline-
194 driven, but there are also master's projects and internships that are more flexible, and proposals
195 for those could be submitted to Antioch at any time to see if there is an interested student(s).

196

197

198

199

200 **5) New or Other Business**
201

202 Mr. Bergman mentioned that daily, he drives past the bypass and T-intersection by Best Western
203 and Filtrine. He recalled that the Commission reviewed plans for a more modest scale project, so
204 he was concerned with the large equipment that had been there weeks or months. The soil and
205 turf had been disturbed over quite a large area. He said they were building mountains of earth
206 and then leveling them. He was concerned about the heavy trucks going in and out of traffic. He
207 asked for an update on the project.
208

209 Ms. Brunner reported that this is a NH Department of Transportation (DOT) project for
210 floodplain compensatory storage, accounting mostly for the Winchester Street/Rt-101
211 roundabout project. Overall, she thought it was 20 acre-feet of compensatory storage accounting
212 for three different projects that impacted the floodplain. The digging is supposed to be just above
213 the water table, so that it will not actually fill with water, but might become more like a wetland
214 over time. Mr. Bergman wondered if DOT was putting in any impervious or porous materials;
215 are they promoting drainage or wetlands development? Vice Chair Madison did not think they
216 would be adding impervious surface. He thought it would be gravel, covered and graded to
217 promote infiltration and aquifer recharge so water goes somewhere other than roads or people's
218 basements. The Vice Chair suggested inviting the Public Works Director, Kürt Blomquist, or
219 someone from DOT to the next meeting for an update.
220

221 **6) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Monday, October 16, 2023**
222

223 There being no further business, Vice Chair Madison adjourned the meeting at 5:07 PM.
224

225 Respectfully submitted by,
226 Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker
227 September 25, 2023
228

229 Reviewed and edited by,
230 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
231



New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

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

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September 28, 2023

*Please join us again
this year.*

Dear Keene Conservation Commission,

Local conservation commissions now face increasing pressures and complex challenges. Emerging contaminants threaten our drinking water, lakes and streams. Climate change impacts our built infrastructure and the state's biodiversity. New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC) is here to help your commission face these challenges by providing support, education and advocacy. NHACC strives to be a powerful and respected voice in the State Legislature and among State agencies and organizations. We need your conservation commission to renew your NHACC membership so we can continue to provide technical assistance and strong leadership. Please renew your NHACC membership; **your support of NHACC helps build a stronger New Hampshire conservation community.**

Your annual dues provide so much more than simply access to technical assistance and guidance on conservation funding. NHACC membership gives you discounted rate at our **Annual Conference to be held on November 4, 2023**. This year, we have expanded our educational programs to reach more of our members with the Lunch & Learn webinars. NHACC strives to be a powerful and respected voice in the State Legislature and among State agencies and organizations.

Last year, with your support, NHACC achieved many significant goals:

- Hosted the Spring Wetlands Training Program;
- Provided a monthly Enews to our members;
- Tracked state legislation, providing testimony on bills impacting natural resources and providing legislative updates to our members;
- Presented a Lunch & Learn series to educate our members;
- Collaborated on the Taking Action for Wildlife team;
- Updated the NHACC website.

NHACC's goals are to educate commissions so they can be effective and successful and to advocate for environmental policy. We cannot accomplish these goals without help from our members. Feel free to contact me at Barbara@NHACC.org or call 224-7867 if you need assistance. We look forward to working with you this year.

Sincerely,

Barbara

Barbara Richter,
Executive Director

Enc: NHACC Conference Announcement
Dues Invoice

New Hampshire Association of Conservation

Commissions

54 Portsmouth St
Concord, NH 03301
admin@nhacc.org



BILL TO

Keene Conservation Commission
3 Washington St
Keene, NH 03431

INVOICE # 2233

DATE 10/04/2023

DATE	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
		2024 Membership Dues	1	950.00	950.00

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

SUBTOTAL	950.00
TAX	0.00
TOTAL	950.00
BALANCE DUE	\$950.00



New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

SERVING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES SINCE 1970

Join us for the
NHACC 53rd Annual Meeting & Conference
on Saturday, November 4, 2023

REGISTER ON-LINE:
nhacc.org/annualmeeting

Keynote; **Journey to the Swamp** with naturalist, author, and artist David Carroll
as he shares his love of wetlands and turtles.

9:30 AM	Keynote; <i>Journey to the Swamp with David Carroll</i>					
Session A 10:15 - 11:15 am	COMMISSION FUNDAMENTALS 101	WETLANDS ASSESSMENTS	BEAVER PANEL DISCUSSION	PROTECTING THE LITTLE BIG FOREST	THE GLOBAL STAKE OF CLIMATE AND CLEAN ENERGY	NH STONEWALL MAPPER & LiDAR
Session B 11:30 am- 12:30 pm	FUNDAMENTALS 202; WORKING WITH OTHER BOARDS	CASE STUDIES IN WETLAND ZONING	TRAILS FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE	CONSERVING THE NH MAHOOSUCS	HEALTH IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE	INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL & FOREST MANAGEMENT
Session C 1:30 - 2:30 pm	NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY	RESTORING STREAM NATURALLY WITH WOOD	INTRO TO BIOBLITZ & iNATURALIST	HOW EAST KINGSTON PASSED A CONSERVATION BOND	ROADWAY ADAPTATION & CLIMATE PLANNING	COMMUNITY SCALE SOLAR & CONSERVATION

Join us for the only the only State-wide conference dedicated to municipal conservation commission members. Don't miss this educational networking opportunity to learn from both peers and professionals.



AUNE Environmental Studies Department Collaborative Service Initiative Request for Project - Application

Applications for Spring 2024 Projects (Jan. to April) due by September 22, 2023
Please email Suzanne Green (sgreen5@antioch.edu) with any questions

Organizational Information

Organizational Name: City of Keene Community Development Department & Keene Conservation Commission

Organization Address: 3 Washington Street, Keene, NH 03431

Client Representative: Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Contact Telephone: 603-352-5440

Contact Email: mbrunner@keenenh.gov

Project Description

Attach this cover page to no more than a total of two pages (single spaced), containing the response to the following questions:

1. Please describe your organization’s mission and goals.
2. What is the specific problem or challenge your organization would like assistance addressing?
3. Please describe the proposed project to help address the above problem or challenge, including what the project would involve and any new initiatives to apply that support the project.
4. What are the skills and expertise necessary to complete the project?
5. List specific project deliverables, timeline for specific steps to be completed along the way, and deadline for completion (the students will have 4 months to complete the project).

COMMITMENT TO FULFILL EXPECTATIONS OF CLIENT

We have read and agree to the client expectation (“What We Expect of You”)

Organization Director Jesse Rounds [Signature] 9/22/23
 (print name) (signature) (date)

Representative Client Mari Brunner [Signature] 9/22/2023
 (print name) (signature) (date)

PLEASE RETURN by email to Suzanne Green (sgreen5@antioch.edu) by **September 22, 2023.**

Forest Management Plan/Recommendations for Ladies' Wildwood Park in Keene

The mission of the City of Keene Community Development Department is to develop and implement community-based strategies to enhance economic opportunity, build strong neighborhoods, protect Keene's environment and natural resources, and ensure a dynamic framework for quality growth and development while providing professional advice and technical expertise to promote and protect health, safety, and the environment. The work of the department ranges from reviewing, issuing, and inspecting building permits to long-range planning, food and health licensing and inspections, historic preservation, code enforcement, and GIS / mapping. The department is also responsible for staffing eleven boards and commissions, including the Conservation Commission.

The Keene Conservation Commission is a 7-member volunteer board comprised of City residents who have an interest in protecting the City's natural resources. The Commission was created to promote the stewardship of natural resources and the protection of watershed resources in the city. Each year, the Commission chooses 2-3 focus areas to work on. Recent examples include invasive species removal on public lands, creating and implementing forest stewardship plans, and promoting land conservation within the City of Keene.

Recently, the Commission has raised concerns regarding maturing forests in several City parks and lands, including the Ladies Wildwood Park, Robin Hood Park, Wheelock Park, and Dinsmoor Woods. Most of the trees in these parks are white and red pines that were planted following the hurricane of 1938 and are at risk of coming down *en masse* in a large storm event. In addition, many of these parks are becoming overrun with invasive species.

This project will focus on the Ladies' Wildwood Park, a 14.6-acre tract of land located along the southwest side of Park Avenue and adjacent to the Keene High School athletic fields. The property was originally put into conservation in 1887 through the efforts of Caroline Ingersoll and nearly 100 women who donated money to purchase the land and save it from being clear-cut by loggers. The hurricane of 1938 destroyed almost all the existing trees and the City replanted the park with red pines.



Photo of the Ladies' Wildwood Park (Trevor LaBarge, May 13, 2015).

While the park is small, it is greatly valued by its users and is representative of other parks and lands within City limits that are facing similar issues related to forest succession and invasive species encroachment. To help the City plan and prepare for future maintenance of this and other parks, the City is seeking assistance with creating a park forest management plan that includes an overview of the park history, a resource inventory (forest stand conditions, plant and wildlife populations, etc.), an overview of current use and management practices, a risk

assessment (i.e., what we could expect if we continue business as usual), and future management recommendations to maintain a healthy forest ecosystem that meets the community's expectations for the park.

Skills and expertise required for this project include knowledge of forest management practices and invasive species management/control techniques, strong writing and communication skills, and strategic planning (i.e., ability to develop goals, objectives, and actions). In addition, public engagement and meeting facilitation skills will be necessary for successful community outreach and buy-in.

Project deliverables will include a final report or plan that includes the information detailed above. At least one public listening session will be required. In addition, the student team will be expected to attend monthly Conservation Commission meetings throughout the duration of the project to provide updates on the plan and gather feedback. A final presentation to the Conservation Commission will be required at the conclusion of the project. The tentative project timeline is detailed below:

- **Month 1:** Meet with City staff and Conservation Commission to refine project understanding and scope of work, develop a public outreach and engagement strategy, and research the history of the park, current use, and current management practices.
- **Month 2:** Begin resource inventory, research forest management best practices, research risks associated with a "business as usual" scenario, plan and prepare for a public listening session, provide a project update to the Conservation Commission.
- **Month 3:** Finalize resource inventory, begin developing management recommendations, hold a public listening session, provide a project update to the Conservation Commission, develop a first draft of the final report.
- **Month 4:** Finalize management recommendations, develop the final draft of the report, and present it to the Conservation Commission.

Throughout the project, the student team should expect to communicate regularly with City staff in the Community Development Department as well as the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department. The main contact people will be Mari Brunner, Senior Planner in the Community Development Department (project supervisor) and Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities (project advisor).