

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 17, 2025

5:00 PM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Councilor Andrew Madison, Chair
Councilor Robert Williams, Vice Chair
Art Walker
Steven Bill
Barbara Richter
Gary Flaherty
Katie Kinsella
Bob Milliken, Alternate
Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Alternate
Ken Bergman, Alternate
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant

Members Not Present:

John Therriault, Alternate

1) Call to Order

Chair Madison called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

Revisions: Line 148, replace “lematode” with “nematode.” Line 359, replace “Keene’s side of the town line,” with “West Keene.”

A motion by Mr. Bill to adopt the October 20, 2025 minutes as amended was duly seconded by Mr. Walker and the motion carried unanimously.

3) Report-Outs:

A) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee

First, Mr. Haynes shared photos of the Goose Pond spillway bridge, in progress. He and Mr. Walker reported 12 to 18 volunteers attended to move the LVL laminated glue plywood beams from the staging area. He said there were two that form to be a beam; each was 38 feet long, had

to be hauled from the staging area, glued together, hauled to the halfway point, and then a mini excavator pulled it the last 12 feet. So, Mr. Haynes said the volunteers made getting those very heavy beams in place much easier. The remaining work putting up the rails and posts was more straightforward. He said they finished the work on November 14 and the bridge was basically finished except for the back side so people could access it, which he hoped would happen this week or the next. Mr. Haynes called it a great volunteer project. Lew Shelley of Snowhawk LLC was the only hired person involved with the project. Everyone else volunteered, which Mr. Haynes called fun and encouraging. He reported being more than halfway to the fundraising goal of \$20,000—half of which was being matched by Savings Bank of Walpole. He encouraged anyone to donate who had not yet and shared some more information about contributing to the bridge, stating it would be great to have the Commission feel a part of this.

Mr. Haynes also reported that Mr. Bill led a geological walk at Goose Pond on October 25, 2025 as an outreach activity at the pond. Otherwise, he said the Subcommittee's usual trail work and maintenance continued, adding he hoped they could go clean out water bars now that most of the leaves were down. Mr. Walker mentioned the water tower area and the development site. Mr. Haynes recalled discussing it some in October. On the parcel the Commission acquired about one year prior, the Subcommittee was actively putting in trails, adding signage in a network of some old woods roads they converted into trails, and adding some new things. Chair Madison recalled that parcel connects to Old Gilsum Road and Mr. Haynes agreed. Mr. Haynes said now that those trails were in place, it would give people in that Drummer Hill area some loops to actually walk. Mr. Bill mentioned the spontaneous trail builders there. Mr. Haynes thought they had grappled with that issue, and it was a stewardship matter.

Mr. Bergman asked if the wooden spillway bridge is fixed to the stone: are the buttresses bolted or held by gravity? Mr. Haynes referred to one side of the bridge in a photo, demonstrating where they had to raise the bridge because the engineers did not get the height needed putting in the massive concrete blocks. Mr. Haynes said the water would have to be able to lift that whole structure up. He replied that the buttresses were basically wedged in.

Mr. Von Plinsky shared that his friend did a "hike for hunger" at Goose Pond the previous Saturday and said the whole group expressed appreciation for the Subcommittee's work on the Loop Trail. He said they were excited to see the bridge come to fruition; a lot of people had been hiking out there forever and came up with their own ways of getting across the spillway. Mr. Von Plinsky passed on their gratitude. Mr. Haynes said it was good to hear because, while dozens of people asked for the bridge, a few folks expressed their unhappiness with the Subcommittee. Still, Mr. Haynes said the majority of people really wanted to see something different there mostly for safety. Chair Madison said if he learned anything as a City Councilor it was that no matter what you do, someone will be unhappy about it, and those unhappy people will always be louder than the happy ones.

B) Invasive Plant Species

Vice Chair Williams reported that the final invasive cleanup event of the 2025 season was on Veteran's Day, November 11, on the Rail Trail at Eastern Avenue. There were six volunteers, which he called a pretty good showing for these events at this point. This was the fifth year at this site and Vice Chair Williams was really seeing a difference for what was growing there, such as burning bush not growing back as much as he expected. He thought that cutting the bittersweet vines year after year had probably saved quite a few trees; still, he said the invasive would be evident trying to climb up old vines the next year. Vice Chair Williams reported experimenting this year with something incoming Councilor Michele Chalice recommended: trim the top of an invasive stump (e.g., burning bush or autumn olive), place a tin can on top, and hammer it in to prevent them from coming out and reproducing. Vice Chair Williams said the group tried this technique with a number of stumps and would see how successful it is.

Ms. Marcou shared a message from the staff liaison, Ms. Brunner. Parks and Recreation Director Carrah Fisk-Hennessey asked to coordinate prior to spreading wildflower seeds because there were still some herbicides being sprayed. Vice Chair Williams thought some of the Commission's plantings in the past were affected by herbicide, so he agreed they needed to be careful. Mr. Bill wondered if the Commission could have information on where the spraying was happening. Ms. Marcou said she could ask. Mr. Bill noted that it would be helpful in such cases. Vice Chair Williams thought the spraying was probably finished for the year but hoped for a briefing from staff before to coordinate on what should get sprayed before next year.

C) Land Conservation / Easement Monitoring

Ms. Richter said she had been trying to reach out to the landowners of the Ashuelot Parcel by the Stone Arch Bridge (yellow house on Court Street that goes down to the river). She finally found a contact for the Concord Hill parcel and drove by but had not walked the whole property yet. She did not have a good contact for the Ashuelot Parcel landowner and was not even sure they were still living. At some point, she said she might just walk out there and see if someone notices her. It was previously in the Bergeron family. Ms. Marcou suggested contacting the City's Assessing Department because they mail property taxes, so they should have contact information for the landowner. Ms. Richter also looked into a homeowner's association. She hoped to have this wrapped up soon.

Ms. Richter reported on reviewing the Land Protection Criteria, which seemed to be in good shape from the Commission's 2018 update. She thought it would be best to form a Subcommittee to work on updating the criteria with her or she could send them to the whole Commission via staff. Ms. Richter said that from the Criteria, she created checklist to make it a little easier for Commissioners to walk through and review properties. One thing she noticed was that a lot of the properties the Commission had been most interested in were typically those that abut existing City conservation lands, she thought it might be something to focus on as a top priority. Chair Madison asked whether Ms. Richter had a preference about forming a subcommittee or working

on the Land Protection Criteria as the whole Commission. Ms. Richter did not have a preference; she just wanted to ensure the Commission was comfortable with the Criteria. Ms. Kinsella asked if these were land preservation criteria and Ms. Richter said yes. Vice Chair Williams thought it would be a helpful discussion for the whole Commission to hear and thought that was how it happened the last time, when George Hansel was a Commissioner and updated the Criteria. Mr. Haynes agreed that the previous update happened in-house, so everyone was up to speed. Vice Chair Williams said it sounded like a strong educational opportunity for those Commissioners who were not familiar with the Criteria. Chair Madison agreed that it would be good for each Commissioner to have time to review the existing Criteria and develop their own recommendations for improving or updating them.

Ms. Richter asked Ms. Marcou to share the Land Protection Criteria and Ms. Richter's checklist with the whole Commission. Ms. Richter highlighted a few recommended additions to the Criteria that she did not think were extensive. She thought the checklist reflected the Criteria.

D) Pollinator Updates

Vice Chair Williams received an email from Kenneth Kost on this date, reporting that there was an effort to establish a pollinator garden in the Rail Trail oval behind the Monadnock Food Co-Op. Mr. Kost invited anyone interested to a meeting at the Monadnock Food Co-Op Conference Room on Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 3:00 PM. Vice Chair Williams would send the email to staff to forward to Mr. Therriault. Vice Chair Williams believed that parcel was privately held by the condominium.

Mr. Haynes recalled the Commission talking about the City needing an invasive species staff person and asked if that had gone any further. Vice Chair Williams was hoping to hear more about that at the City Council Goals Workshop after this meeting. He said something obviously happened because a lot of invasives were sprayed with herbicide. Ms. Richter asked who sprayed them and Mr. Haynes thought the City hired someone but was unsure the Commission had all the information.

Mr. Bergman recalled the October 2025 meeting, when there was a request from residents for help with Japanese knotweed growing across White Brook from their residence. There is a tract of public land, on which a backup well system is located that is separated from the West Keene wells at Dusty Dog Farms near Ash Brook. He recalled that the Commission requested information on the proximity of this knotweed growth to that backup public well parcel for the purposes of potentially spraying the knotweed as the Commission discussed in October. He said knotweed loves to grow on long streambanks and the question would be the best way to deal with it, and who would do it. Vice Chair Williams thought that if an invasive species staff person were assigned, he would love to have that conversation with them. He said that it was a complicated property because of the wells nearby. Mr. Bill wondered if Vice Chair Williams was willing to be a temporary contact with the residents, not to overburden him. Vice Chair Williams

was happy to help, calling killing Japanese knotweed one of his hobbies. Although, once there is an official City representative, he said they should be the main contact.

4) Discussion Items:

A) Budget – NHACC Dues Request

Chair Madison recognized the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions' (NHACC) annual request for \$950 dues. He asked staff how much was remaining in the Commission's annual Budget. Ms. Marcou reported \$1,790 remaining after expenses for Ms. Brunner to attend a conference (\$60) and a donation to the Wantastiquet-Monadnock Trail Coalition (\$150). Ms. Richter noted that the NHACC dues are a sliding scale.

Mr. Flaherty made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Walker. On a vote 6–0, the Conservation Commission approved spending \$950.00 on New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commission (NHACC) annual dues. Ms. Richter abstained.

B) Outreach

None presented.

5) New or Other Business

Chair Madison's term would end December 31, 2025. As would the terms of regular members Vice Chair Willams, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Bill; Mr. Bergman's and Mr. Von Plinsky's terms as alternates would also end on December 31, 2025.

Chair Madison noted that the Commission would need a new Chair in January. Mr. Bill said he was willing to continue serving. The Commission discussed the rules for being renominated as an alternate after being a regular member and vice versa after so many years. Chair Madison thought the rule was to break for three years and come back, but staff needed to confirm. Mr. Bill added that there may be other members of the community who would be very good Commissioners too. Chair Madison agreed and thought that some recruiting efforts would be good. Regardless, the Committee would need a new Chair in January 2026. Chair Madison would be stepping back from some of his extra curriculums of the previous five years and focusing a bit more on his career.

Discussion ensued about recruitment. The Conservation Commission does not require an ex-officio City Councilor despite always having had one as a member. Ms. Richter suggested a Planning Board member because there is often overlap. Chair Madison thought that it would be good to provide background for a lot of City regulations, especially someone with a few years on the Planning Board, because of the overlap. Chair Madison thought it was important for a Councilor to remain on the Commission too. Mr. Bergman agreed about keeping a Councilor. He also agreed with someone from the Planning Board but wondered if they would then have to

recuse themselves from votes on Conservation Commission-related issues at the Planning Board. Chair Madison said no because the Conservation Commission is advisory and the Planning Board is quasi-judicial. For example, Councilor Madison could vote on Conservation Commission matters that come before the City Council.

Ms. Marcou read the remaining Commissioners' term expirations: Ms. Kinsella 12/31/2027, Ms. Richter 12/31/2026, Mr. Flaherty 12/31/2027, Mr. Milliken 12/31/2026, Mr. Haynes 12/31/2027, and Mr. Therriault 12/31/2026. Mr. Von Plinsky and Mr. Bergman noted they had just become alternates again, but their terms were ending and Ms. Marcou thought there might have been an error on the website with their term ends. Chair Madison said if there were any questions to reach out to the City Clerk's office. If any Commissioners knew individuals in the community interested in serving or any regular members were interested in becoming Chair, he asked them to contact him.

Mr. Bill asked about the spiny water flea mentioned at the last meeting. He wondered if the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) was notified. Chair Madison said the spiny water flea is primarily found in lakes and mountain rivers, so Mr. Bill said it would not be as relevant to ARLAC. Mr. Bill asked if the New Hampshire Department of Services monitored for it. Chair Madison said probably but he was not aware; he did not think they were too worried about it at this point. Mr. Bill thought it could be a good citizen science project.

6) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Madison adjourned the meeting at 5:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner