

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

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

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026**

**4:30 PM**

**2nd Floor Conference Room,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Gary Flaherty, Chair  
Barbara Richter, Vice Chair  
Councilor Michele Chalice  
Steven Bill  
Ken Bergman (Remote)  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate (Voting)  
John Therriault, Alternate (Voting)

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer (left early)

**Members Not Present:**

Katie Kinsella  
William White  
Bob Milliken, Alternate  
Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Alternate

**1) Call to Order**

Chair Flaherty called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM. Mr. Bergman participated remotely from Sarasota, Florida, for health reasons.

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 20, 2026**

A motion by Mr. Bill to adopt the Commission’s January 20, 2026 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

**3) NHDES Standard Dredge & Fill Wetland Permit Application – Martell Court Pump Station Permanent Bypass Project**

Chair Flaherty welcomed City Engineer Bryan Ruoff to explain this City project. Mr. Ruoff said the impetus for this project was in 2023, when the 30-inch discharge knife gate valve within the Martell Court Pump Station failed. It was temporarily repaired at the time, and Mr. Ruoff said the City had been “limping along” with that temporary fix since. In reality, he said it helped the City to identify a needed redundancy within the system. When the knife gate failed, the City could not utilize the existing sewer force main, which the City Engineer showed the Commission on a plan. He demonstrated how they had to essentially run temporary pipes over the Ashuelot River to get back into the system. Under current peak flow conditions, Mr. Ruoff

said the Pump Station can go down for roughly one hour. It runs 24/7/365, so he said that it would obviously be an environmental catastrophe if a failure occurred.

Mr. Ruoff said the City hired Wright-Pierce as the design engineer to develop the bypass pump line. This type of project in a river crossing would almost always be a directional drill to minimize impacts on the stream, the wetlands, etc. However, the City Engineer reported that the test borings of the area found zero-strength clay soil in such poor condition that they could not run a drill rig through it for the high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe without it just sloughing into the ground. Because of that, the City must open-cut the Ashuelot River in order to install the force main across the river and connect to the existing force main. That is why the City Engineer was present seeking the Conservation Commission's review for the NHDES Standard Dredge & Fill Wetland Permit Application.

Mr. Ruoff explained another aspect the City was looking to address as part of this project. There is an existing gravity sewer main where the embankment along the Branch River is eroding so far back that this sewer manhole is essentially floating mid-air to a certain extent. He showed a photo. So, a part of this project would be restoring the banking at both locations, replacing that pipe so it is unexposed, and lowering it because it currently acts like a semi-siphon and is not functional. This project would restore a lowered gravity system, in addition to restoring the stream banks. Mr. Ruoff explained that at one point the approach was more softscape. The thought now is combined with the soil and protecting the City's infrastructure of the pipes and the overall constructability, so he said a hardscaped approach for the banking restoration and protection would be more appropriate for this specific project. Councilor Chalice asked if that referred to the armoring and Mr. Ruoff said yes. He said the City had multiple meetings with New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), which essentially conceded that it is unfortunately probably the best option for this project. The consulting engineer also met with the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC), which provided a letter of recommendation for the project based on their review and findings. At this point Mr. Ruoff said the City received NHDES notification of administrative complete tests, so it is within their technical review. At this time, the City Engineer said the City anticipated bidding the project in the May 2026 time frame to construct the project in the lower flow periods and minimize impacts associated with diverting a portion of the Branch River to install the sewer force main.

Mr. Bill asked when construction would conclude if starting in May: the fall? The work looked pretty extensive to him. Mr. Ruoff thought the fall was unlikely, in reality. He thought the portion crossing the river would have to happen in the dry period, so July until the fall. The work especially associated with re-piping and Martell Court would likely go into the winter. The City Engineer envisioned the project being completely wrapped up by summer 2027. He explained the plan for the wetlands area not being restored as far as the stream bank. Rip rap will have wetlands vegetation seed mix for reestablishing the wetland areas that will be disturbed as a part of the digging and excavation for the project.

Councilor Chalice asked if any protections were called for the two particular species of frog and one turtle, and what measures might be being taken to address their habitat during this period of disruption. The City Engineer said twofold: (1) a full-time inspector on site at all times, so if those species are identified, the contractor will be asked to stop and New Hampshire Fish and

Game will be notified immediately of their presence; (2) the work will be maintained in a manner that is not to potentially disrupt them, and if they are identified, there will be adjustments therein.

Mr. Bergman said that he had submitted reports to the State of New Hampshire about both wood turtles and northern leopard frogs along the Ashuelot River not too far from this project location. He said it is clearly not prime wood turtle landscape, and the leopard frogs prefer grassy meadows in the woods, which is true a little bit slightly further south from there (e.g., near the athletic fields and down into Swanzey). As long as they keep watch, Mr. Bergman doubted there would be too much difficulty, adding that they are easy species to notice and keep track of. Mr. Bergman asked if dewatering the Branch River would be complete with cofferdams (i.e., completely dry area for trenching and piping) or just a diversion, such as the one on the Ashuelot River near West Street. The City Engineer replied that it would be both. To install the piping and install a concrete encasement, they will need to dewater a portion of the river. He said what would likely happen, depending on the contractor's submitted dewatering and bypass program, is that construction of a cofferdams would likely be established for a portion that allows enough flow without backing up or flooding. Then, they would essentially switch the cofferdam to the other side and construct the other half of the pipe. Mr. Ruoff said he envisioned that, but it would be the contractor's means and methods to design and propose.

Mr. Therriault asked if the wetland mix used to restore the wetlands would have any pollinator-friendly seeds in it. The City Engineer said that it could certainly be included and Mr. Therriault was appreciative.

Mr. Bergman asked if there would be heavy equipment on the eastern downstream receiving end of the new force main; he thought there would obviously need to be equipment there unless cranes were used from the west side. He wondered about the type of substrate on the east side to prevent heavy equipment damage. The City Engineer explained that as part of the investigation work and doing test pits for the existing force main, the contractor laid down gravel and timber matting, which was removed at the end of the work and the area was restored nicely. He said that it is almost impossible to access the area using equipment without creating some kind of construction entrance and matting. Councilor Chalice asked if the matting is on bottom and gravel on top, so both are removed at the end. Mr. Ruoff replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Bill wondered about the flooding potential. He lives in that neighborhood, which tends to flood when the Ashuelot River gets too high; it backs up the Branch River and Beaver Brook to the point where they can even flood Baker Street. Mr. Bill thought it would probably be pretty catastrophic if that happened during the middle of this construction process. He said there had been dry years and wet years. Mr. Bill asked how the City would plan for that. Mr. Ruoff replied that the contractors will submit a proposal on their means and methods to construct this. He said that if the contractor thinks they have a dry week to cross the river and accomplish it, then that would make sense; if they think it will take closer to one month, then more allowances will be needed for how to free up the river in the event of a high intensity storm. Mr. Ruoff said a part of the benefit for the City hiring a third-party consulting contractor to watch the contractor doing the work is that there is always oversight for these aspects. However, Councilor Chalice said the project would not be happening in the spring, but in starting in July. Mr. Bill said the City has

had powerful thunderstorms in the middle of summer too. Mr. Therriault said Keene historically has a dearth—a lack of rain—from July 15 to August 15, which he had observed for just over 10 years as a beekeeper (all but one year). Mr. Ruoff said that could be something to aim at.

Mr. Bill asked if there are any invasive species in the area, mentioning that it was unclear what the strategy would be (i.e., where the contractor's part will end and City will take over). The City Engineer said it was a great point. Typically for a New Hampshire Department of Transportation project, the contractor develops an invasive species plan to show how they will manage invasives during a construction cycle; the City confirms that it is acceptable and has an engineer on site to monitor because of past lessons learned (i.e., an invasive species becomes the full focal point of the project afterward). Mr. Bill said that if spraying invasives is an option in the plan for this specific project, that it could be problematic for the nearby aquatic bodies. Councilor Chalice said that plan would ensure no invasive species are brought onto the site via the contractor's equipment during construction and Mr. Bill agreed, stating that there are already species of concern that exist in this area. The City Engineer agreed.

Mr. Bergman noticed that one of the documents said the project would occur in the summer of 2025 and that there was an expiration date, maybe for a permit, of October 2026. He asked whether the City Engineer's proposed timeline reflected an updated schedule officially approved for the permit. Mr. Ruoff said it would and he thought that what Mr. Bergman read was a typo because the project is anticipated to occur in summer of 2026. Mr. Bergman asked if the October 2026 expiration would still leave enough time to complete the project as described. Mr. Ruoff said ideally. The necessary work in the wetlands must be completed before fall 2026, so he anticipated that deadline, depending on how the permit and bidding would progress. He said that if an extension is necessary, that would be the case, but in a perfect world the project would be completed by October 2026. Councilor Chalice saw an aspect of the project that would extend to a subsequent year. Mr. Ruoff agreed, stating that part was somewhat confusing because there are different parts of the project. For the aspect directly associated with this permit, the City Engineer believed that in a perfect world, construction would start in June 2026 to mobilize and install the pipe in July (low flows), and site work and restoration would be complete by October 2026 before bad weather.

Vice Chair Richter pointed out the areas of temporary impacts that would be restored and asked if there would be any permanent impacts to the wetland. Mr. Ruoff replied that the permanent wetland impacts are essentially the areas where the vertical face slopes will be replaced 1:1 with riprap slopes. Councilor Chalice asked if the riprap would be mesh containers of large rock that are dropped into place. Mr. Ruoff replied that at this time, the plan was for 12-inch diameter stone on fabric layered back at 1:1, which is acceptable for that size rock; so, no mesh. The riprap stone diameter size may change based on the hydraulic modeling to ensure that there is no rise in the floodplain. Mr. Ruoff said there would not be a rise due to the creation of more storage, so it will just be adjustment of what the floodplain elevation is for the water surface.

Mr. Bill asked why this spot was chosen for the pump station and whether this might be a good time to move it given climate change and the difficulties of working; had the City considered moving the Pump Station south at all? The City Engineer said it was definitely a conversation in the air. He potentially thought a reason for this location might be an elevation standpoint and

gravity getting everything to flow there and then pump to the Treatment Plant, which is at a higher elevation. He said the City cannot get all of its water to flow by gravity to the Treatment Plant. Every year, Mr. Ruoff said City staff were talking more about why the Martell Court Pump Station is located here and that there is a good opportunity to move it. Unfortunately, he said the cost for pump station is upward of \$20–\$50 million. Mr. Bill asked the cost of this force main project and Mr. Ruoff said approximately \$3.5 million for construction but it would depend on the bidding climate. It is not an easy project.

Mr. Bergman asked, once the sewage has passed across the river, does it head over to the berm along Airport Road and follow that course to the Wastewater Treatment Plant or go elsewhere. Mr. Ruoff said it follows the path along Airport Road to the Treatment Plant.

Mr. Bill mentioned the illustrations provided and a scale listed on a map, which he said would not be accurate once digitized and changed. He suggested that the contractor create a bar scale so that when it changes or moves onto a new map, it would still be relevant and work. The City Engineer said there was no reason they could not create a new map.

Councilor Chalice asked how many times the City had done this type of project at this location. The City Engineer said this would be the first of its kind. It basically operated the way it was constructed until this knife gate valve failure. The City did not recognize this critical lack of redundancy until this Station was out of operation. Mr. Bill asked how long this Station had been operating. Mr. Ruoff thought since 1963. Ms. Brunner thought the Martell Court Pump Station was built in 1985, based on the online property card.

Mr. Bergman recalled a few years prior, when the City had to replace a pump or filter at the Pump Station because it was jammed with debris. He said that it was a very expensive operation but that was not the pipe across the river. Mr. Ruoff said that it is not usually mentioned because that was expected to be a maintenance issue, whereas the knife gate valve failure was not. Mr. Haynes asked what a knife gate valve is. Mr. Ruoff explained that, as opposed to a typical valve, a knife gate flips, so it has the ability to close and when it is open everything flows well. As a part of the project, he said they would remove the knife gate entirely because they are not used much anymore.

The following motion by Mr. Therriault was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice. On a roll call vote of 7 to 0, the Conservation Commission recommends writing a letter to the NHDES, favorably recommending the Standard Dredge & Fill Wetland Permit Application for the Martell Court Pump Station Permanent Bypass Project, with the addition of native pollinator seed mix for the wetland restoration.

The Commission thanked the City Engineer for his presentation.

- 4) **Report-Outs:**
  - A) **Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee**

Mr. Haynes said the Subcommittee had not met the prior month and he had nothing to report.

Vice Chair Richter asked for an update on the spillway bridge. Mr. Haynes said the conversation was ongoing about how to build a ramp on the one side but there was no update. People can get across the bridge, with a landing and steps, it is just missing the sloped landing they still hope for. City Engineer Bryan Ruoff reported that he had been meeting with the Public Works Department, who plan to install gravel, extending the trail up to the bridge (ADA compliant). In addition, they plan to put in more waste blocks to protect the bridge where it sits on the abutments. Both of those are planned for Public Works to complete in spring (into summer) 2026, weather dependent. Mr. Haynes mentioned the goal of integrating a ramp with the steps. Mr. Ruoff said the Public Works Department and Engineering had already estimated the tonnage the Director of Parks and Recreation was on the same page. Closer to April, Mr. Ruoff said he said he would coordinate with Mr. Haynes about a timeline. The Commission appreciated the good news. Mr. Ruoff left the meeting at approximately 5:05 PM.

### **B) Invasive Plant Species**

Councilor Chalice explained that there was not yet a local volunteer to lead the Invasive Plant Species Program following Bobby Williams' departure from the Commission. Councilor Chalice said she would be willing to work with another Commissioner but was not yet ready to commit. This would involve planning the workdays, communicating, and organizing volunteers—everything. Mr. Bill noted that if/when the City hires an invasive species staff person, they could be in that position. Councilor Chalice said that would be great and Mr. Haynes agreed that it was still the dream. Ms. Brunner said that it could be a long-term goal. She reminded the Commission about the new Landing Page for Volunteer Opportunities that soft launched on the City of Keene website, which could have a specific call for volunteers to run the Invasive Plant Species Program. Ms. Brunner added that some of the new Commissioners who were not in attendance might be interested as well. Councilor Chalice wanted to be careful to ensure that a leader is chosen who knows what they are doing; it is a really easy thing to do poorly. Mr. Haynes said it sounded like one Commissioner would be needed to oversee a group of volunteers, who would do most of the legwork. Mr. Bill mentioned that the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension offers invasive species courses that the person(s) could attend. Councilor Chalice agreed, mentioning the Cooperative Extension's Natural Resources Stewards Program and NH Invasives Academy. She wondered if a Commissioner should contact the Cooperative Extension and express interest in having someone attend the NH Invasives Academy, not necessarily a Commissioner. Councilor Chalice hoped that the attendee would report back to the Commission regularly. Vice Chair Richter offered to contact the NH Invasives Academy and request a list of Keene graduates.

### **C) Land Conservation / Easement Monitoring**

Vice Chair Richter noted that she missed the Land Protection Criteria Workshop that immediately preceded this regular meeting. Chair Flaherty, Councilor Chalice, Mr. Bill, and Mr. Haynes were in attendance for a productive workshop with support from Senior Planner, Mari Brunner. The group decided to focus on the Criteria first for now before moving on to Vice Chair Richter's proposed Conservation Priorities Checklist, because the ultimate intent is for line items to better correlate between them. Councilor Chalice said all of the same Land Protection Criteria

categories were maintained and there were no substantive changes overall (i.e., wording changes).

Ms. Brunner summarized the high-level changes. All edits were emailed to the Commission for review in detail and are captured in full within the Commission's February 17, 2026 Workshop minutes. Summary:

- Separated the "Protect Water Resources" criterion into two criteria: "1. Protect Surface Water Resources" and "2. Protect Groundwater Resources," each of which includes a sub-item to "Protect drinking water."
- The most changes were made to "3. Protect Forest Ecology," to focus more on ecological aspects of the forests.
- There were very few changes to "4. Protect Agricultural Resources."
- For "5. Protect Wildlife and Natural Areas," the group added a new sub-item, "Unique geologic features."
- Only a minor word change for "6. Protect Cultural, Recreational, and Scenic Value."
- The group agreed to keep "7. Collaboration and Leverage" as a criterion.

Councilor Chalice mentioned that the group talked about less emphasis on harvesting and more focus on the ecological aspects. They agreed that these edits were not meant to be final.

Mr. Bergman mentioned that discussion should ensue between motions and votes. He recalled asking whether these Criteria would apply only to parcels within the City of Keene, because the City owns land in Swanzey and Roxbury that were purchased at some point. He wondered if the same could be possible for lands outside of Keene in the future. While he knew the focus of the Land Protection Criteria was on Keene, Mr. Bergman wondered about legal entitlement. Chair Flaherty and Councilor Chalice agreed that this would be covered under the seventh criterion "7. Collaboration and Leverage" with adjacent communities. Ms. Brunner added that she was pretty certain the New Hampshire statute allows municipalities to enable conservation commissions to acquire land outside their municipalities. Vice Chair Richter said a municipality would have to pass "optional powers." Ms. Brunner said she would check.

Chair Flaherty made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a roll call vote of 7 to 0, the Conservation Commission recommends an agenda item at the March 2026 regular Commission meeting to vote on the draft Land Protection Criteria (Adopted April 2018; Updated February 2026). If approved, then the Commission will schedule another workshop on the draft "Keene Conservation Priorities Checklist" at 3:30 PM on April 20, 2026 immediately before the Commission's regular meeting.

#### **D) Pollinator Updates**

Mr. Therriault said there were not many updates at the national level. Mr. Therriault would meet with Councilor Chalice and Ms. Brunner to create the City's 2025 Bee City USA Annual Report on February 18, 2026. It is mostly question/answer and submitting photos that Mr. Therriault had collected. Two to three months after submitting the Annual Report, the City will be notified that it is approved.

Mr. Therriault also shared that the Monadnock Beekeepers, which basically covers all of Cheshire County, had just finished its new Beekeeper School on February 7 and 14, 2026, at Stonewall Farm, with an all-time high of 39 new beekeepers (normally mid-20s). Everyone agreed this was good news. Councilor Chalice asked if they would be fostering honeybees, thinking about native bees as well. Mr. Therriault said usually all honeybees. He occasionally gets questions about native bees, or from people who want to pollinate their two/three fruit trees, in which case he steers them away from honeybees to mason bees or leaf cutter bees (i.e., more solitary and active primarily during fruit tree blossom season). Each new beekeeper was able to bring a “bee buddy,” so Mr. Therriault said it was more like 60 people, and now his task was to find 20 willing mentors to guide them through the season.

Mr. Bill asked how this winter had been for bees. Mr. Therriault said it was not bad. He agreed with Mr. Bill that there had been cold stretches, Mr. Therriault said it is worse to have a really warm thaw in January, which makes the bees think it is spring, so they come out and then there is another deep freeze. He would be checking one of his hives later this same week to see their status. Mr. Therriault guessed the queens would probably be starting to lay little, tiny patches of brood right now, and it would just get warmer into February and March.

**5) Discussion Items:**

**A) Member Bios for Website**

Ms. Brunner recalled discussing potentially adding member bios to the Conservation Commission webpage on the City of Keene website. She asked willing Commissioners to email her two to three sentences, so that someone looking at the website and is curious about the Conservation Commission would have a little more background information about the members. All of the members have good backgrounds to share. She would create a draft with all the bios for Commissioners to review before the next meeting.

**B) Invasive Plant Removal Workdays / Map / City Volunteer Program**

Ms. Brunner said this was an item to see if anybody was willing to take on the invasive plant removal workdays. She also wanted to capture that Mr. Milliken mentioned that having a map showing the locations of invasive plant species on public lands might be useful. Mr. Bill thought Mr. Milliken could be a good person to try talking to about taking over Mr. Williams’ role overseeing the Invasive Plant Species Program. Councilor Chalice mentioned that the State of New Hampshire Department of Agriculture was going to start mapping invasives. She said there is a data layer on GRANITView that she had looked up for clients and Vice Chair Richter agreed. Councilor Chalice said she would try to look at it again but was unsure she was still capable with GRANITView. She suggested offering a class on GRANITView to the public. Vice Chair Richter thought that it was a great idea and added there are many pre-programmed tutorials, which Councilor Chalice said the Commission could gather and provide via a link.

**C) Red Pine Scale – Harvesting and Replanting Plan**

Ms. Brunner reported that she reached out to the Director of Parks and Recreation, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, who was not available to attend this meeting. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey would be at the next Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee meeting to provide an update on the harvesting and replanting plan. Ms. Brunner referred to further correspondence in the Commission’s Agenda packet, in which Ms. Fisk-Hennessey confirmed that the removal of the trees for disease management is allowable under the conservation easements for those three parcels. Councilor Chalice said the activity is allowed and she hoped the update to the MSFI Committee would provide details on follow up after removal. Chair Flaherty agreed. Ms. Brunner referred to the harvesting and replanting plan, which lays out where there will be cutting, focusing more on monocultures where there is less understory to replace them. She said there is a replanting plan, including a variety of species, which would also be presented to MSFI. Chair Flaherty said there had already been some replanting in Wheelock Park and so far, it seemed pretty good. He explained that they are using logs that are not too diseased for other purposes in the park (e.g., structures).

**D) Grant Opportunities (T-Mobile and AARP)**

Ms. Brunner emailed all City boards and committees about some upcoming grant opportunities that may be of interest. She specifically thought about the Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee because AARP has grant opportunities for increasing accessibility, such as the ramp and trail to the spillway bridge. She also shared the T-Mobile Hometown Grant that seemed pretty flexible to her. The AARP Grant is one application per year, and she reported a deadline of March 4. T-Mobile seemed more flexible, with four opportunities to apply throughout the year.

Councilor Chalice asked if both grant opportunities require shovel-ready projects. Ms. Brunner said yes. Councilor Chalice said that is the catch. Mr. Haynes replied to a point, noting that some work for the spillway bridge was being finished in-house and the Subcommittee had raised enough to cover our current expenses. Mr. Bill mentioned that there was also a discussion about fixing/changing the Jonathan Daniels Trail at Ashuelot River Park a few years prior but for whatever reason it fell through. Councilor Chalice said there would have to be a construction drawing to be “shovel-ready.” Ms. Brunner was unsure whether that project was shovel-ready. The Commission discussed consulting with the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board, although Ms. Brunner was unsure whether that Board only covered the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum, which does not include the Jonathan Daniels Trail. It might be the Parks Department’s responsibility. Vice Chair Richter thought that Pathways for Keene funded part of the trail restoration along the Ashuelot River, so they might have access to plans.

The Commission discussed both options—Goose Pond and the Jonathan Daniels Trail—and noted the need to confirm if anything with the Jonathan Daniels Trail would be shovel-ready for the tight March 4 grant application deadline. Ms. Brunner reported that the AARP application did not seem too laborious. Mr. Haynes said he would try to work on the AARP application soon for the ramp to the spillway bridge at Goose Pond, which involves putting up blocks and filling them with gravel. Mr. Bill recalled the other idea for an “All Persons” accessible trail at Goose

Pond, which this grant could be good for. The Commission agreed there would be an opportunity for projects in future years. There is plenty of work, it is just a matter of time, energy, and money. Ms. Brunner noted that City Planner Megan Fortson would be working on a micro grant application for the walk and bike audits for the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan update, which last occurred in 1999. Ms. Brunner thought it was a pretty similar application and would report back to the Commission about the process. Mr. Bill clarified whether "micro" referred to small amounts of money. Ms. Brunner said yes and there are predetermined activities you must choose from, so in this case they were considering walk audits or bike audits, which are very useful ways to determine how to improve walkability and/or bikeability. Councilor Chalice thought the City did that in the past. Ms. Brunner agreed.

6) **Correspondence:**

A) **Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee – Bretwood Golf Course Pesticide Application**

Ms. Brunner said that this was mostly informational because the Conservation Commission, to her knowledge, did not technically have any role in this. She explained that the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) was kind enough to copy the City of Keene and the Conservation Commission so they would be aware that there was a pesticide application at Bretwood Golf Course. Ms. Brunner reached out to the Public Works Department, which was very concerned. Ms. Brunner was unsure whether Public Works Director Don Lussier called the golf course and shared their concerns. However, Ms. Brunner knew the Pesticide Control Division at the State New Hampshire was concerned about and interested in this application because this is one of the areas where Keene gets its drinking water.

Mr. Bill said he personally agreed with everything in ARLAC'S letter and thought it covered the Conservation Commission's concerns. He added that he had students working on that stretch of river that goes to the golf course and it is unique because that is the only part of the bed that is gravel, and those mussels need gravel for nesting grounds; further south it is fine sand and further north it is all boulders. So, he said this is really a unique habitat for the mussels. Vice Chair Richter agreed it is not the best location for pesticides.

Mr. Bergman said this is where Cliff Lerner did a lot of work for years out on the river with the dwarf wedge mussels. Mr. Bergman added that there is a Pesticide Control Board of citizen advisors to NHDES on this issue. He wondered if the letter reached the Board as well. He recalled that a former Keene Conservation Commissioner, Susan Whittemore, was on the Pesticide Control Board, which met at least monthly. Mr. Bill said Ms. Whittemore is no longer on the faculty at Keene State College. Councilor Chalice offered to look up the Pesticide Control Board and find out if they saw ARLAC's letter; she also hoped for the Commission to establish a relationship with the Board. Chair Flaherty asked her to report back to the Commission. Mr. Bergman thought the Pesticide Control Board was Governor-appointed.

Discussion ensued about next steps following ARLAC's letter and the Public Works Departments outreach on this issue. Vice Chair Richter asked if the Conservation Commission could request that the City write a letter to the Golf Course, following up with concerns. Ms. Brunner thought that it was already handled and she was unsure how much they could take into

account what the City would say. Certain public bodies can intervene in certain things, like conservation commissions are the only ones for wetland permits. Ms. Brunner believed ARLAC oversaw this pesticide application. She asked ARLAC to keep the Public Works Director, Chair Flaherty, and herself informed about any updates. Chair Flaherty said this would be on the next meeting for more discussion.

Vice Chair Richter said the City could provide more information to the landowner on best management practices and alternatives; providing information is not directing a requirement. She noted that NHDES would probably provide best practices as well and Chair Flaherty agreed. Mr. Haynes thought the Pesticide Review Board could deny this application. Ms. Brunner said she could follow up to see if there would be a benefit to the City formally taking a stance on this. Councilor Chalice thought everyone could ask.

Mr. Bergman mentioned the federally endangered species and that the Fish and Wildlife Service, to the extent that the present administration has allowed them to operate at all, would historically have had some input on whether such things would be allowed to degrade the habitat. He cited a past instance of the Army Corps of Engineers drying out the bed of the river below Surry Dam for the rubber duck races and it caused a lot of concern about the dwarf wedge mussels. He wondered whether the US Fish and Wildlife Service had already submitted a response or been consulted and recommended Steven Marchand in Concord.

Mr. Therriault said that Matt Barrett, who owns the Bretwood Golf Course, is a very nice guy and very amenable to discussing anything regarding the environment. So, Mr. Therriault said that if the Commission wanted to reach out to him, they certainly could. Vice Chair Richter said she has some great informational shoreland brochures to share with landowners that they could send to him. Councilor Chalice asked whether it would be appropriate to send that material to Mr. Barrett and Mr. Therriault thought so. The Commission decided it would be better to send it informationally to the Golf Course as a Commission.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Vice Chair Richter. On a roll call vote of 7 to 0, the Conservation Commission authorized Chair Flaherty to work with Ms. Brunner to create a letter based on the information provided by Mr. Bill and the links to NHDES brochures, and signed by the Chair to be sent to the Bretwood Golf Course.

**B) Society for the Protection of NH Forests – Response to Easement Monitoring Inquiry**

Ms. Brunner provided an update, stating that the responses to the City's inquiry were in the meeting packet and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests followed up with maps, showing the actual boundaries of the lands they monitor: the properties along Maple Avenue and the Greater Goose Pond Forest. Discussion ensued about what properties along Maple Avenue are conservation land deeded to the Society for the Protection of NH Forests Dinsmoor Wood. Ms. Brunner showed a map and called it a small but beautiful stretch: the "Dinsmoor Shifting Executory Interest" and the Faulkner and colony Manufacturing Shifting Executory Interest." Vice Chair Richter said there are red pines there too and Ms. Brunner said yes. The

“tree removal” observed there was from the July 2024 microburst storm that caused all the damage at Tanglewood Park Cooperative. Ms. Brunner showed the Greater Goose Pond Forest easement, which Mr. Haynes said the Society for the Protection of NH Forests used area aerial reconnaissance to monitor. Ms. Brunner showed the City of Keene easement boundary.

Mr. Haynes asked about integrating the parcel the City acquired about a year prior and other small surrounding lots into the current easement, so should they have their own. Ms. Brunner said she did not know the answer to that, but they are immediately adjacent it would seem most efficient to integrate them, but she did not know how that works. Vice Chair Richter said it would require amending the current easement in a sense, so there would be legal fees involved, the new survey, and the deeds updated. She recommends that whenever the City purchases land using conservation funds that the conservation status be put in the deed when it is purchased. She said it helps future generations selling off the land.

Councilor Chalice asked if future land purchases could have agreements, specifying in the transaction that some of the money be used for future surveys. Vice Chair Richter thought it might be able to be more formalized that way. Mr. Haynes noted the funds are dedicated for specific purposes. Mr. Bill asked if those easements are a part of the Cheshire County record. Ms. Brunner said you can search for them at the County Registry of Deeds online or in person. Vice Chair Richter mentioned sharing language with Ms. Brunner, which she shared with the new City Attorney, who Councilor Chalice said is very open to suggestions.

Discussion ensued briefly about the properties off Old Gilsum Road, which are landlocked and with access off a Class VI Road.

**7) New or Other Business**  
**A) Rules of Procedures Update**

Ms. Brunner reported that she started looking into the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee membership and would like to have a discussion about updating the Commission’s Rules of Procedure to specifically address how subcommittees are supposed to run and other aspects like remote participation that changed since Covid. Ms. Brunner would set up a meeting with Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee Chair, Mr. Haynes, to debrief on what she learned. Chair Flaherty said that the Commission’s Rules of Procedure seemed due for a potential update too.

**8) Adjournment – Next meeting: Monday, March 16, 2026**

There being no further business, Chair Flaherty adjourned the meeting at 5:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner