

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 16, 2026

4:30 PM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Katie Kinsella
William White
Ken Bergman
Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Alternate

1) Call to Order

Chair Flaherty called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM.

Keene Resident Nora Judkins joined the meeting and introduced herself.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 17, 2026 (Regular and Workshop)

Revision: Line 431–432 of the Regular meeting minutes: change to read, “Mr. Bill said Ms. Whittemore is no longer on the faculty at Keene State College.”

A motion by Councilor Chalice to adopt the February 17, 2026 regular meeting minutes as amended was duly seconded by Mr. Bill and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion by Mr. Haynes to adopt the February 17, 2026 workshop minutes as presented was duly seconded by Vice Chair Richter and the motion carried unanimously.

3) Report-Outs:

A) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee

Mr. Haynes reported that the Subcommittee met on March 13, 2026 after not meeting in February, so there was a lot to talk about. Regarding trails, the Subcommittee decided to focus on two trails for major projects—the Mattson and Lower Drummer Trails—aside from all the regular trail maintenance. The group created a trail work schedule for May through October 2026. Workdays are the second Fridays and fourth Saturdays monthly; Fridays are typically Committee workdays Saturdays are community workdays, with notices to the public. Mr. Haynes reported an additional workday on June 6, 2026, National Trails Day, as well as other unplanned days when Mr. Haynes has extra time on Fridays to lead work in the woods. He noted that the Subcommittee also talked about doing some limited blazing (painted blazes on trees) on a few other trails to encourage people who may not know the trails as well to follow them, especially in the winter.

Next, Mr. Haynes shared the Subcommittee’s outreach plans, which he leads. He recalled that in summer 2025, a recreation program youth group (ages 14 and 15) cut many feet off the Kingsbury Trail and made a stone bridge. The group would be participating again during summer 2026, and Mr. Haynes planned for them to focus on the two priority trails: Mattson and Lower Drummer. Although, he was not sure yet what projects they would complete. Another outreach effort was that the Subcommittee hoped the Harris Center for Conservation Education would be coming to its next meeting. Mr. Haynes recalled reporting that the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee does not have the capacity for outreach. However, The Harris Center has the staff and all the things needed for outreach, so the Subcommittee hopes to partner with them on the Goose Pond Through the Seasons walks (four guided walks throughout the year). Mr. Haynes said it would be really exciting to partner with them since they have the skills and expertise for that educational outreach.

Mr. Haynes shared updates on the spillway bridge. The Subcommittee was unable to meet with the City Engineer, who talked about the ramp at the Conservation Commission’s February 2026 meeting; the Subcommittee was still unsure what the ramp would look like. Mr. Haynes hoped to meet with the trail builder Lew Shelley on site later during the week of this meeting to brainstorm their own ideas for the ramp and see if they match the City Engineer’s ideas. Mr. Haynes said people seemed interested in wanting to finish the ramp during 2026, so that would mean the bridge would be fully completed.

Mr. Haynes also reported that there would be a blue ribbon cutting for the bridge to thank all the workers and the donors, especially Savings Bank of Walpole, which contributed \$10,000 to this bridge as a part of the community project. The Spillway Bridge Ribbon Cutting would be Saturday, June 6, 2026—National Trails Day. Mr. Haynes invited everyone to celebrate and then he would put them to work. The Subcommittee would determine other details of the event in the meantime. Mr. Haynes reported total funds raised for the bridge as \$9,750. The hope was to raise \$10,000 to fully match the Savings Bank of Walpole’s dollar-for-dollar donation, but the total was very close, so the Subcommittee was thrilled it was able to accomplish that community fundraising. He said the City’s Engineering Division reported that the total bridge cost was \$22,653.00 and the goal was for it to be approximately \$20,000. Mr. Haynes said the

Subcommittee felt pretty good about coming close because there were some added costs for materials. So, Mr. Haynes said that approximately 80% of the total bridge costs were raised by community members, and with the Savings Bank of Walpole, it was almost \$20,000 in total community support.

Councilor Chalice asked if there would be a press release for the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and what was accomplished. Mr. Haynes noted that with the event not until June, there was still time to figure out those details; he suspected the Parks and Recreation Department staff would handle most of that. Councilor Chalice wondered whether the Commission has to ask the staff to do that. Mr. Haynes said no, the Subcommittee would be working with them to do it, and he specifically asked Director of Parks and Recreation Carrah Fisk-Hennessey to handle this. Mr. Bill noted that Ms. Fisk-Hennessey is on the Subcommittee.

Mr. Bill reported that the Subcommittee discussed criteria for building new trails and Director Fisk-Hennessey was working on a revision for the Subcommittee, which they would bring to the Conservation Commission. Additionally, the Subcommittee discussed trying to discourage people from using the old north trail head until the old steps are out. Mr. Haynes said there is rebar there that is a safety hazard, but he thinks people are so used to using the trailhead that they do not notice the signage. So, the Subcommittee would collaborate with the Parks and Recreation staff to determine how to do that differently. It is not closed, but the Subcommittee wants to encourage people to use the new trailhead.

Vice Chair Richter asked whether the Subcommittee had used the Nature Groupie website for outreach. Mr. Haynes decided that because there are only five members of the Subcommittee, outreach is beyond their capacity. Vice Chair Richter agreed it is time consuming. She thought that by working with the Harris Center, they might do it for the Subcommittee. Mr. Haynes agreed that would be the goal of working with them on the Subcommittee's four annual programs and anything else they could help to coordinate. He said that would free up the Subcommittee's time. Vice Chair Richter agreed that it was a good idea.

Mr. Bill added that the Subcommittee discussed a bird walk and Mr. Haynes said he was going to email Steven Lamonde about leading it. Mr. Bill also thought Commissioner, Ken Bergman, could be another possibility to ask. Councilor Chalice asked whether the Subcommittee ever accepted recommendations of interested community members who could lead walks because she has a neighbor, who is quite a birder, for example. Mr. Haynes said the Subcommittee gravitated toward people they feel comfortable with and know can lead the walks. For example, Mr. Lamonde had led bird walks at Goose Pond in the past; not that Councilor Chalice's suggestion is not capable. He noted that it was an effort to make things easier for the Subcommittee. Councilor Chalice and Mr. Haynes agreed that if there was a way to draw in more interested community members and keep it not time-consuming for the Subcommittee, that it would be great. Councilor Chalice said she could share the event with her neighbor. Mr. Bill suggested that if the Harris Center is involved, it will help with publicizing in the near future. Mr. Haynes agreed that the Subcommittee members are not natural marketers. Mr. Bill noted the Subcommittee learned that Harris Center had been doing programs in the Greater Goose Pond Forest, and the Subcommittee did not know most of the time. So, Mr. Bill said some better connection would be great. Commissioners mentioned that it would be an exciting opportunity.

B) Invasive Plant Species

Councilor Chalice reported that she could definitely not take over this effort from former Commissioner, Councilor Bobby Williams. However, Mr. Milliken volunteered to lead the Invasive Plant Species Program moving forward. Commissioners agreed that it was great news and thanked Mr. Milliken.

Mr. Milliken had not yet heard back from Councilor Williams about help with transitioning. Mr. Milliken would need help accessing contacts within the City and volunteers, as well as any maps, etc. He asked whether this volunteer Program engages poisonous invasive species: i.e., gloves and long sleeve shirts? Councilor Chalice called that general invasive work. She said that in terms of protecting for ticks—at least the bottom part of the body and gloves. Councilor Chalice said it is good to predicate the activity by saying there is always a chance to cross something that could cause a reaction. Mr. Milliken chairs the invasive species program at Hogback Mountain, where they do not have volunteers work with anything poisonous. He said he would set a meeting with Councilor Williams about it. Discussion ensued about whether Councilor Williams ever asked volunteers to work with poisonous invasives and wild parsnip was mentioned. Ms. Brunner noted the Commission authorized purchasing a tool (“Parsnip Predator”) to keep in the Keene Public Library’s Seed and Tool Lending Library.

Mr. Milliken wondered if the Commission has a map of the invasive species eradication areas, similar to one at Hogback Mountain, tracking how much the invasive species are shrinking. The Commission agreed there was discussion about creating such a map. Vice Chair Richter thought Parks and Recreation Director Fisk-Hennessey might have connections on this because the City had contracted out removal of invasives in certain areas; those areas would be mapped. Whereas Councilor Williams picked smaller areas throughout the City (i.e., Robin Hood Park, the Rail Trail, the Arch Bridge) that were not officially mapped. The Commission agreed that Councilor Williams would be the source of the knowledge. Mr. Bill added that Councilor Williams tended many of those sites for several years, so it would be good to know and continue them. Mr. Milliken agreed he wants to care for what Councilor Williams started.

Ms. Brunner noted that annually, Councilor Williams made flyers for each location, which she would share with Mr. Milliken. Discussion ensued about how on occasion, Councilor Williams spread native seeds after pulling certain invasive plants. Mr. Haynes thought that would be something to ask him about as well. Councilor Chalice said she would be happy to potentially talk about being a source of seed.

C) Land Conservation / Easement Monitoring

Vice Chair Richter noted that she had been unable to start Easement Monitoring due to health reasons, but it would be on her spring 2026 schedule. She reviewed the updated Land Protection Criteria that the Commission had been working on and thought they were a really good start. She agreed that with one more Commission workshop, the group could really get them nailed down. Vice Chair Richter also agreed with the suggestion to complete the Land Protection Criteria before moving on to the Keene Conservation Priorities Checklist, with more specific resources to

match each type of Criteria (i.e., compare a property to the Criteria). Chair Flaherty offered to accompany Vice Chair Richter on Easement Monitoring, which the Vice Chair said would be especially helpful for the Concord Hill parcel, which Mr. Haynes agreed is steep.

D) Pollinator Updates

Mr. Therriault met with Ms. Brunner and Councilor Chalice in February 2026 to complete Keene's Bee City USA Annual Report for 2025. He said the only thing remaining would be to pay the annual \$200.00 renewal fee (for a city with less than 25,000 people).

A motion by Mr. Therriault for the Conservation Commission to allocate \$200.00 of its Budget to pay the annual renewal fee to Bee City USA was duly seconded by Chair Flaherty. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7-0.

Councilor Chalice noted that she planned to sign up for both Pollinator Palooza and for Earth Day because Mr. Therriault would be stepping back from his Bee City duties. She wanted to contact the Xerces Society to see whether they have particular materials they want the City to use and Mr. Therriault said they do. He said the contact for a Bee City Coordinator is listed on their website. There is a Xerces Society volunteer in Keene (they attended the 2025 Pollinator Palooza) and Councilor Chalice would try to contact them to see if they want to join forces. Councilor Chalice asked if she had Mr. Therriault's okay to move forward. Mr. Therriault said yes. Ms. Brunner asked Councilor Chalice to keep staff in the loop.

Councilor Chalice added that she would be brainstorming with some gardener friends about other events that she would love to see happening to welcome the bumble bees this spring. She talked about the fact that 80% of bumble bees are actually ground nesters and the rest are stem nesters. She would bring some attention to those issues in her next Monadnock Shopper News article, specifically reintroducing the notion of Bee City USA, which community members might not have heard about lately, and talking about upcoming events. Mr. Therriault said that all sounded great. He said his column in the Shopper News this time of year always cautioned against cleaning-up spring flower beds too early because many pollinators (e.g., butterflies) overwinter in leaf piles and brush piles (e.g., in stems of hollow plants from the previous year); cutting them down before several consecutive days over 60 degrees wipes them out. Councilor Chalice said the science has actually changed now. Her article in the Shopper News two weeks prior was about the fact that scientists are saying never to clean the flower beds and let the vegetation come up and hide the previous brush/leaf piles. Councilor Chalice's tagline was "If You Didn't Want to do it, Great! Don't!"

Mr. Haynes mentioned the Bee City sign and Chair Flaherty said it was later on the Agenda.

4) Discussion Items:

A) Land Protection Criteria – Review of Draft Amendments Dated 2/17/2026

The Committee reviewed its February 2026 updates to the Keene Conservation Commission Land Protection Criteria. The document included new draft language at the beginning from Vice Chair Richter, which the group at the February 17, 2026 Workshop decided to keep. Ms. Brunner

briefly summarized the changes that the Commission also reviewed during its February 17, 2026 meeting in detail. The introduction language describes the Criteria and says land that directly abuts existing conservation land will be a high priority (based on the Commission's recent practice of purchases). Water resources were split into two categories: surface water and groundwater; protect drinking water is beneath both of those categories. The "Protect Woodland Resources" Criterion was renamed as "Protect Forest Ecology" to be focused more on the ecological value of forests and less on timber harvesting. There was not a lot of change to "Protect Agricultural Resources," beyond adding an example of "urban agriculture." Under "Protect Wildlife and Natural Areas," the group added "Unique geologic features." There were minimal if any changes to the final two Criteria: "Protect Cultural, Recreational, and Scenic Value" and "Collaboration and Leverage."

Mr. Bill said he thought of two things for the "Protect Cultural, Recreational, and Scenic Value" Criterion: (1) Protect and enhance pollinator habitat. Chair Flaherty said the Commission could discuss these added ideas during the next Workshop on April 20, 2026 at 3:30 PM. Second, Mr. Bill suggested adding something about wetlands. He agreed with Vice Chair Richter that vernal pools were mentioned, but that they are different. Discussion ensued briefly about the difference between wetlands and vernal pools as a lead-in to the April Workshop. Vice Chair Richter did not think wetlands would need to be another criterion, but likely listed under "Protect Surface Water Resources." She did not think the Criterion should be so specific to refer to "vernal pools" but not "wetlands." The Commission reviewed the draft Criterion dated 02/17/26, "Protect Surface Water Resources," and found that the third subitem already addressed wetlands: "c. Maintain or enhance wetlands, vernal pools, floodplains, buffer areas, and riparian zones."

Chair Flaherty and the Commission confirmed the second workshop on the draft Land Protection Criteria would be at 3:30 PM on Monday, April 20, 2026. Ms. Brunner would try to secure the usual meeting location. Once the Commission confirms the Criteria, they would vote to approve them at the next Commission meeting.

As a new Commissioner, Councilor Chalice appreciated the freer flowing, less formal style of the workshop. Chair Flaherty said open discussion is fine as long as it is within Robert's Rules of Order.

B) Member Bios for Website

Ms. Brunner showed Commissioners some of their first Member Bios that were listed on the Conservation Commission's webpage at KeeneNH.gov/Conservation-Commission. This is where agendas and minutes are usually posted, and there is a list of active members. Under "Further Information & Resources," at the bottom, she added the Bios. Ms. Brunner edited some of what Commissioner's submitted to ensure consistency (i.e., formality). She offered to modify anyone's Bio.

Councilor Chalice asked if it would be possible to hyperlink from the list of Active Members at the top of the page to their Bios at the bottom of the page, so members of the public are encouraged to go see more. Ms. Brunner was unsure. Mr. Bill thought maybe they could add a statement like "individual Bios are at the bottom of the page." He and Councilor Chalice agreed

that it was dry and not enticing/inviting to scroll through the active members list. Vice Chair Richter suggested “Active Members (see Bios below).” Others liked the idea. Chair Flaherty thanked everyone for contributing their Bios. Councilor Chalice said there is so much experience on the Commission the public may not know about or appreciate.

C) Invasive Plant Removal Workdays / Map / City Volunteer Program

Discussed under “Invasive Plant Species Report-Out.”

D) Red Pine Scale – Harvesting and Replanting Plan

Ms. Brunner shared that the “Red Pine Scale Harvesting and Replanting Plan” would be presented at the City Council’s Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Standing Committee meeting on March 25, 2026 at 6:00 PM. Interested Commissioners could attend the meeting or watch the live stream. Ms. Brunner said it should be a good overview of the Plan, and she thought the Committee might take comments from the public, but she was not entirely sure. Councilor Chalice asked whether the Red Pine Scale Harvesting and Replanting Plan would be available online for people to look at ahead of time. Ms. Brunner thought there could be a link to see it in advance for comments, but she did not think it was an actual document; staff would just be presenting a plan. She would find out. Other than some links on the Parks and Recreation Department website, Parks and Recreation Director Fisk-Hennessey sent out letters with links to resources (Ms. Brunner did not have the letter yet but would share it with the Commission). Other than all that, members of the public could view the MSFI Committee meeting recording after the fact. She imagined that Director Fisk-Hennessey would be at the MSFI Committee meeting, noting how hands-on she had been. Councilor Chalice wondered whether Director Fisk-Hennessey would post the letter on the website as well as something that was a notice to abutters, so others could see that same information. Councilor Chalice said she would ask.

E) Bee City Street Sign

Ms. Brunner noted that when she met with Councilor Chalice and Mr. Therriault for the Bee City USA annual reporting, Mr. Therriault mentioned that one of the program requirements is to have a Bee City street sign. However, the City had never done it because there was some hesitation when the City joined the program about having another street sign. Ms. Brunner said she was curious to find out whether the Public Works Department could make one and so she contacted them and ultimately, they were able to order one at the cost of \$150.00. Now, she said Public Works was asking which Project Center to charge the sign to. Ms. Brunner was hoping the Conservation Commission would be willing to cover the cost, a one-time expense. The Department also sought feedback on where the sign should be placed. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey suggested Ashuelot River Park because that is where Pollinator Palooza is held annually. Ms. Brunner was unsure whether that would qualify as a street sign because it would not be on the street; another option could be placing it at the Park entrance, which is on the Street. Chair Flaherty said he looked at the entrance and there was remaining space under the curved Park sign, where the two timbers hold it up. He said it would not be an overly big sign, so he suggested that Ms. Brunner check out the space. Chair Flaherty thought the Commission had

enough money until the end of the fiscal year and if unspent, it would go away, so he was comfortable spending this money.

A motion by Mr. Therriault to fund the Bee City USA sign at \$150.00 to be placed at the entrance to Ashuelot River Park was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7-0.

Councilor Chalice said the Public Works Department would install the sign. Ms. Brunner said yes; they were unable to fabricate the beautiful sign in-house with the Bee City USA logo, so the Department ordered it from GemGraphics. Councilor Chalice thought it was a vote of confidence that City staff just went ahead and ordered it.

5) **Amendments to the Rules of Procedure**

Ms. Brunner explained that around 2019 the City went through the process of having all of the boards and commissions update their respective rules and procedures to all be current and similar. For some reason, she said the Conservation Commission was missed. So, Ms. Brunner proposed that the Commission review draft amendments to its Rules of Procedure based on the template that other boards and commissions use, customized slightly for this Commission. It includes some standard language around creation of subcommittees and remote participation.

The current Rules of Procedure say that in order to amend the Rules of Procedure, the Commission must introduce the text at one meeting, form a subcommittee to review them, and then vote on them at the next regular meeting. The Commission can only waive the Subcommittee requirement by unanimous vote. Ms. Brunner hoped to walk through each Section of the proposed Rules of Procedure quickly. Then, the Commission could decide whether to form a Subcommittee and review them or to unanimously waive that requirement. Ms. Brunner reviewed each Section:

1. Meetings: This section outlines the types of meetings Ms. Brunner has seen this Commission hold: Regular Meetings, Special Meetings (e.g., public hearing for land to be sold at auction), Workshop Sessions for in-depth discussion on one topic, and Site Visits (i.e., technically public meetings that have to follow all open government laws). These all require 24-hour advance notice.

2. Public Hearings: The Commission can hold a Public Hearing on items it thinks may be of interest to the public. In addition, the Commission is required to hold a Public Hearing whenever it recommends expending money for the purpose of acquiring conservation land.

3. Minutes: The language listed is pretty standard from the Rules and Procedure templates. Mr. Bill suggested adding remote participation now that technology had opened the door. Ms. Brunner agreed. She continued, explaining that state statute says that within five business days of the close of the meeting, the Minute Taker shall submit the draft minutes to the staff liaison, who shall then review. What the Commission sees in its agenda packets each month is what the Minute Taker created and then the staff liaison reviewed for grammar, and any questions the Minute Taker had about something said or something that was unclear. Sometimes the recording

is used to confirm. All of those corrections are made with track changes turned on, so it is available to Commissioners if there are questions about edits. Members of the public can also access the minutes five business days after the meeting by requesting a draft copy from the City Clerk's Office. Vice Chair Richter asked when minutes are posted to the website and Ms. Brunner said not until they are adopted by the Commission, but the drafts are included in the next meeting's Agenda packet. Councilor Chalice asked if there is a provision so that a Commissioner could review the edits (i.e., track changes) if there were something particularly controversial; she said it already seemed possible within this language. Ms. Brunner thought that was why all copies with track changes are maintained by the Clerk's Office in case there are ever questions.

4. Quorum: Mr. Bill noted the language indicating that remote members would not count toward quorum, and he thought that remained from Covid. Chair Flaherty noted that the law had changed since. Vice Chair Richter explained the option in current state law that if a committee knows it will need people to be remote at the next meeting and will not have a quorum, the committee can unanimously vote to say it is choosing to hold the next meeting remotely. She said it is possible under certain unique circumstances, but it has to be approved at the prior meeting when those circumstances (i.e., an emergency) may not be known yet. Effectively at this time, Vice Chair Richter said a quorum must be physically present. Thus, Ms. Brunner said because the Conservation Commission has seven regular members, the quorum will always be four members required to be physically present at the meeting specified in the meeting notice. Mr. Haynes and Ms. Brunner agreed that quorum applies to subcommittees too; there always needs to be 50% plus one member represented for quorum.

5. Remote Participation: Ms. Brunner thought this section was new and something everyone added to the Rules of Procedure after Covid. It basically says that a number of members may participate remotely with approval of the Chair. When doing so, it must state in the minutes why they are participating remotely, where they are participating from, and if they are alone. She said the Commission had been doing this in practice and this just codified it in the Commission's Rules of Procedure. Additionally, when somebody is participating remotely, to be a voting member, all votes must be by roll call. Whoever is presiding must also be physically present. If both the Chair and Vice Chair were remote for a meeting, the Commission would elect a Chair Pro Tem.

6. Elections: The Commission must elect a Chair and Vice Chair at the first regular meeting of each calendar year.

7. Presiding Officer: This is template language, indicating that if the Chair is not present and a quorum is present, the Vice Chair is the Presiding Officer. If both the Chair and Vice Chair are absent and a quorum is present, the Committee elects a Chair Pro Tem until a Presiding Officer arrives.

8. Right of Floor: The Chair controls the meeting. Ms. Brunner said this was template language. It talks about ensuring that people are not trying to be argumentative or making personal comments, etc. It also says that individuals attending meetings for presentations to the committee may participate remotely with prior approval from the Chair; for example, an applicant making a

remote presentation during bad weather or because they live in another state—if the Chair approves. Mr. Bill asked if he should check with the Chair before participating remotely, noting that he typically notifies Ms. Brunner, who said she passes the information to the Chair.

9. Order of Business: This is a standing item that indicates the Commission can take Agenda items out of the regular order shown.

10. Meeting Agenda: Agendas are either prepared by the Staff Liaison and in consultation with the Chair or by the Chair. Items to be added to the agenda must be submitted five business days prior to the meeting. Chair Flaherty explained that at this time, he was meeting with Ms. Brunner two weeks before each meeting to go over everything and it was working out pretty well. Ms. Brunner said any subject matter that is not on the Agenda really should not be discussed during the public meeting, but it can be raised under new business for discussion at a future meeting. That is the purpose of the New Business Agenda item.

11. Communications: Also standard language, which says communications must be signed by the person introducing it to the Commission. Ms. Brunner said staff will typically accept e-mails from someone, and the Commission will see forwarded communications whether or not they are physically signed by the person. But this is standard language, which is why Ms. Brunner said she included it.

12. Reports to City Councils: Another piece of template language. When the Commission wants to issue a report to Council, it takes a simple majority of the Commission. Vice Chair Richter asked if that includes letters of recommendation and Ms. Brunner thought so. For example, the Council has requested annual reports from each committee. So, anytime the Commission makes a recommendation to Council, it is always a simple majority vote. A tie vote does mean that motion or recommendation is defeated.

13. Reconsideration: This is if somebody who voted on the prevailing side decides that they want to reconsider their vote. They can call for a reconsideration at the next regular meeting.

14. Creation of Subcommittees: Ms. Brunner thought this was the biggest change to the Commission's Rules of Procedure. At this time, the Commission has one formal Subcommittee, the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee. Ms. Brunner spoke with the City Attorney to confirm that the Commission can create a subcommittee, but it can only have members of the Commission who are appointed by the City Council. Ms. Brunner read: "*The Commission may create subcommittees as necessary to assist in its operations, which shall be advisory to the Commission. Subcommittees shall be created by vote of the Commission for a stated purpose, identifying the specific Commission members appointed, with the purpose and membership included in the minutes of the Commission.*" Then, the template language says, "*Non-Commission members shall not be appointed to subcommittees;*" and Ms. Brunner added the following, "*however, non-commission members may participate in subcommittee discussions at the discretion of the subcommittee chair*" because at this time, there were at least three non-Commissioners on the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee. At present, Mr. Haynes said the only two Commissioners on the Subcommittee were Mr. Bill and himself. Chair Flaherty volunteered to be the third Commissioner.

Ms. Brunner understood from the City Attorney that this is how subcommittees work in general, by only including committee members. Discussion ensued about what this group would be called if it included non-Commissioners members and someone suggested “advisory board.” Ms. Brunner explained that under state statute, the Conservation Commission is advisory to City Council but is not called an advisory group. Non-Commission members of the Subcommittee could be called “advisories” to the Subcommittee or something like that, but technically they cannot vote, only elected Commissioners can. Councilor Chalice said everyone can still participate in conversations. Chair Flaherty agreed that he also was also reading that the Subcommittee Chair could have a bit more leeway and discretion to draw them in for discussion. Ms. Brunner agreed.

Ms. Brunner thought at this time the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee was made up like a subcommittee but operating like its own standalone committee; it needs to be one or the other. A subcommittee can have up to three members, all of whom are Conservation Commissioners. Other members of the community can be involved as a standalone committee, but they all have to be appointed by City Council. Right now, it was concerning the City Attorney to have Subcommittee members who were not appointed by Council. Mr. Haynes asked what this group should be. Chair Flaherty said whatever would work for the other current Subcommittee members because he would hate to lose anybody. Vice Chair Richter thought the voting piece was critical, asking how often the Subcommittee votes on things. She said the Subcommittee probably does vote to spend some money. Mr. Bill added that only three members could vote to elect the leader and the rest would have to go along with it, which could be an issue. Discussion continued on the number of eligible voters and what would be easiest. The Commission discussed the possibility of a separate advisory committee with a Conservation Commission liaison, like Mr. Bill, who provides progress reports at each Commission meeting. Mr. Haynes noted that when the Subcommittee began, the Mayor at that time highly encouraged it not to be a standalone committee because he did not want another one as a part of City government; there were too many. So, he wanted it to be a Subcommittee, and the Commission agreed; Mr. Haynes said these volunteers came in and all the work they were doing seemed to be working just fine. Mr. Bill suggested a conversation with Mayor Kahn. Vice Chair Richter thought there would be more flexibility as a subcommittee instead of having to go through the whole process of creating an additional committee. If it had been working, she suggested just being careful of the voting process. Mr. Bill said the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee does not have many formal votes. Discussion ensued about whether three members are needed or up to three members. Ms. Brunner said three members come from the fact that four makes a quorum of the Conservation Commission, so four members on a subcommittee would be a second meeting of the Commission.

Mr. Haynes preferred remaining as a Subcommittee. He thought there would be more loopholes and work as a standalone Committee. He thought the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee could continue to make it work. They already had a quorum with Mr. Bill and Mr. Haynes, and Chair Flaherty would join in case they need a third member. Mr. Milliken added that he could step in too as needed and Ms. Brunner thought that might be overcomplicating things. The Commission agreed to review the Rules of Order today and vote to appoint Chair Flaherty to the Subcommittee at the next regular meeting.

16. Conflict of Interest: Template language also. Conflict of interest can be pecuniary (related to money) or personal, which means it will benefit someone that you are related to or are close to personally. For example, if an applicant were a close friend. If Commissioners ever have questions about conflict of interest or see something on the agenda they are unsure about, it is helpful if they reach out to City staff ahead of time, so they can confer with the City Attorney and get a solid answer before the meeting.

17. Non-Public Session: This would only come into play if there were a situation when the Commission is deciding whether to purchase land, for example. Anytime there is a public hearing for land purchases, it is open to public comments and then the Commission closes that Public Hearing and enters a deliberative, non-public session, which helps to protect negotiations should the City decide to pursue the land purchase. For example, when the City wanted to purchase land at auction, the amount of money the Commission was authorized to spend was a part of the public record, which put the City at a competitive disadvantage. That is the reason for non-public sessions. The non-public minutes of the non-public session would be sealed until it does not make sense for them to be sealed anymore, when the Commission would vote to unseal them. Vice Chair Richter also thought the Commission could go into non-public session when just starting discussions about a property before it is even ready for a Public Hearing to talk about whether that property might be something the City wants to purchase; anytime to avoid feeling like the Commission could be putting the City at a disadvantage for bidding.

18. To Amend Rules: These Rules may be amended or new rules adopted by a two-thirds vote of all members appointed. This is similar to the existing Rule, except it removes the subcommittee process. Proposed amendments must be submitted at one meeting and voted upon at the next meeting (a revised process).

19. Rules of Order: “Roberts Rules of Order” shall govern points of order not covered herein.

The redlined version of the revised Rules of Procedure was in the Commission’s 03/16/2026 meeting packet.

Chair Flaherty felt comfortable not appointing a Subcommittee to review the Rules, which he thought were boilerplate to protect the Commission. Vice Chair Richter agreed.

A motion by Mr. Haynes to waive the Subcommittee for review of the Conservation Commission’s Rules of Procedure as revised February 25, 2026 was duly seconded by Vice Chair Richter. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7–0.

The Commission would vote to adopt the Rules of Procedure at its April 2026 meeting.

6) Correspondence:

A) NH Association of Conservation Commissions – Annual Dues Request

Ms. Brunner referred to the annual request for \$950.00 in dues from the NH Association of Conservation Commissions in the meeting packet. She said it is something that Commissioners have done in the past. The Commission’s Budget is \$2,000 and to date during the fiscal year, the

Commission spent \$200.00 on the Bee City USA renewal and \$150.00 on the Bee City USA sign. Ms. Brunner confirmed that anything spent on the Invasive Species Program was from the previous fiscal year's budget. Councilor Chalice said she would want to talk about invasive species replacement plantings if money remains in the Budget at the end of this fiscal year.

A motion by Mr. Bill for the Conservation Commission to pay the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions \$950.00 in annual dues was duly seconded by Mr. Milliken. The motion carried on a vote of 6–0. Vice Chair Richter abstained.

Vice Chair Richter informed the Commission about a Pollinator Lunch and Learn online program with The Xerces Society in April 2026. She would send the invitation to the Commission.

B) Letter to Bretwood Golf Course (Sent By Certified and First Class Mail)

Mr. Bill shared two comments: (1) he thought the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) should get a copy of the letter; and (2) he was a little uncomfortable with it saying Keene State College, noting that if it ever goes back to the College, they would have no idea what he does on this Commission. He suggested it could say that a full instructor at the College found the information, because institutions can be sticky about these things. Chair Flaherty said it was a good point.

Ms. Brunner noted that someone stopped by the Community Development Department with the letter asking for copies of the resources attached to it. The City does not have printed copies but can make copies for a fee. Still, she thought it was a good sign and others agreed. Vice Chair Richter noted that good resources were attached to the letter. Councilor Chalice asked if the resources were available online. Ms. Brunner said they are, but the person did not have a good printer, so they may come back to get copies printed. Councilor Chalice suggested emailing them to a printer instead.

Vice Chair Richter reported that she was trying to get the University of New Hampshire (UNH) shoreline brochure to share with the public and put on the Commission's webpage. She hoped to get some hard copies as well to leave with Ms. Brunner and share with landowners. Ms. Brunner showed the Commission how on its City webpage, under "Further Information & Resources" there is a link to "UNH Habitat Brochures," which has 12 brochures, including the shoreline brochure. Ms. Brunner explained a new law for accessibility that will make it so that the City's website will not necessarily be able to link to all PDFs as of April 2027; everything online must be accessible to someone with a screen reader, which PDFs do not work well with.

Mr. Therriault noted that there is another golf course in town, Keene Country Club, which borders White Brook that eventually rolls into the Ashuelot River. He wondered if Keene Country Club should receive a similar letter with the materials; they were getting a new Superintendent, so Mr. Therriault called it the perfect time.

A motion by Mr. Therriault was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice to share information in the letter to Bretwood Golf Course with the Keene Country Club because their runoff goes into White Brook and eventually into the Ashuelot River.

Mr. Therriault talked about revising the letter because Bretwood Golf Course is specific to the dwarf wedgemussel and Mr. Bill said other mussels too. Chair Flaherty suggested a generic byline about anything threatened. Mr. Therriault mentioned this location being near the well by Dusty Dog Farm and the auxiliary well just north of the 4th hole of Keene Country Club. Since there was no time frame, Ms. Brunner asked if it made sense to bring the draft letter to the next meeting. The Commission agreed.

The motion to share information in the letter to Bretwood Golf Course with the Keene Country Club because their runoff goes into White Brook and eventually into the Ashuelot River carried unanimously.

7) **New Business**

Councilor Chalice suggested that with monies left over at the end of the fiscal year, the Commission purchase a set of different seed mixes (full sun, part sun, shade, and moist) so there are seeds available for the invasive species removal and pollinator program projects. While she said planting plugs is definitely better, it is hard to necessarily know what plants you might need. Councilor Chalice explained that seed is the easiest. Some would just be available for projects, and the Commission would not lose money at the end of the year. Chair Flaherty said it was not a bad idea, mentioning University of Massachusetts Amherst's great nursery and seed program, including wetlands, upland, side, and slope seeds. They have a booklet and Chair Flaherty thought they were all New England plants. Councilor Chalice said as long as they are natives. Chair Flaherty said they are native and they list all the seeds that are in each mix.

For information, Mr. Haynes said at the end of the fiscal year the Commission has usually not had a problem spending its money. Councilor Chalice said this was one suggestion. Mr. Milliken mentioned the Seed Lending Library at Keene Public Library. Councilor Chalice said there are a lot of flowers and vegetables, but not a lot of natives.

Mr. Haynes said the West Street Dam was becoming a part of the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board (ARPAB) conversation again. He added that it had not been on the table for a bunch of years, but it was now being talked about again. At some point, he believed the City Engineer would give the Commission a presentation. Councilor Chalice heard about it at the Capital Improvement Planning presentation. Mr. Haynes mentioned being sort of a conduit to this group for the ARPAB. The Vice Chair asked if this was about removing the Dam. Mr. Haynes said it was an open discussion at this point. He said that the topic of the Dam comes up every so often. He repeated that this was just informational. Vice Chair Richter asked who owns the dam and who was responsible for it. Mr. Bill said the City of Keene.

Mr. Bill recalled that earlier in the Commission's history, there was discussion about trying to find out more about Keene's water infrastructure. If that was still of interest, he said he would see what he could find out about an upcoming Wastewater Treatment Plant tour. He said

availability was limited because of regular employee hours. Councilor Chalice noted that there was an upcoming celebration for wastewater, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant would be open to the public. She would check the date.

Mr. Haynes explained the original concept was called “Tap to Toilet,” and the idea was to help people understand where their water came from and where it went. The initial plan was to have a general speaker provide an overview presentation, then visit where the water comes in and where the treatment process happens. Councilor Chalice asked if that is the similar plan now. Mr. Haynes said the Commission originally proposed it as an outreach activity, but then COVID hit, so it never happened. Councilor Chalice said she had not heard about anything that specific. Mr. Haynes explained that this was a standalone outreach activity that former Commissioner Eloise Clark developed and Mr. Haynes had been running with it for a while; between COVID and lack of capacity, they let it go and no one picked it up. Mr. Bill said that if the Commission was interested as a group, then ARLAC could also want to be involved. He would try to find out if there was more interest. Mr. Bill thought it would be good for the Commission to better understand the whole water infrastructure cycle as well. Councilor Chalice loved that idea and the title of “Tap to Toilet.”

8) Adjourn – Next Meeting: Monday, April 20, 2026

There being no further business, Chair Flaherty adjourned the meeting at 6:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner