

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 18, 2026

4:30 PM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Alternate

SITE VISIT: At 3:30 PM before the meeting, a quorum of Commissioners attended a site visit of the property located at 30 Production Avenue.

1. Call to Order

Chair Flaherty called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

Steve Ringland of Howard Street was present to learn about the Commission.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – April 20, 2026

A motion by Mr. Therriault to adopt the April 20, 2026 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Planning Board Referral

- a. **PB-26-11 - GMS Parking Lot Expansion - Major Site Plan & Surface Water Protection Conditional Use Permit - Applicant Fieldstone Land Consultants, on behalf of owner GMS Realty LLP, proposes to expand the rear parking lot and install stormwater management infrastructure within the 30-ft surface water buffer on the lot at 30 Production Ave. The property is ~3.1 ac and is in the Industrial District.**

Chair Flaherty welcomed John Noonan with Fieldstone Land Consultants on behalf of GMS Realty, seeking to expand their parking lot. He showed the plans. He explained that the existing 25 parking spaces at the front of the businesses on Production Avenue are very limited and it is difficult to have the employees parked plus all the storefronts. So, the petitioners are looking to expand parking to the rear that would be utilized mostly by employees. The proposal is to add 24 parking spaces. He showed areas on the plans that were demonstrated on the site visit that are mostly travel aisle in the rear; it is all gravel now and a lot of mud, so there are problems with deliveries for the larger loading docks, which will have a solid surface to park and unload trucks. Mr. Noonan explained that the petitioners proposed larger pavement edges about 20 feet past the existing edge of the gravel and to expand a section. Access to the site is both from Production Ave on the northern end (there is an easement for two businesses to utilize the driveway) and the southern driveway access is just for this property. Along the rear of the site on the southern edge, there is a tax ditch that turns and follows the back edge of the property and then continues. This is the tax ditch system that is used to drain the majority of Keene, but in this area especially, delineated wetlands follow parallel to where the tax ditch is. So, Mr. Noonan said the petitioner would be very limited on expanding the parking lot and then having enough space for stormwater management.

Therefore, Mr. Noonan said the applicant proposed a long, skinny rain garden through the area. He said there is not a lot of pitch. He knew there were questions about having an outlet structure and pipes that would drain the systems but there is not a lot of elevation there; it is fairly flat. The only lower area would be all the way in the tax ditch, which would require crossing the wetland resource to drain it. That is how they decided to do a rain garden, which would hold and detain rainwater in the drier months and would soak into the ground in the wetter months; it would build up in the basin, and the spillway of the pond is at the 100-year flood elevation. So, this would hold a 100-year storm event. The entire rear section is only about two feet deep.

With this system running along the back, the City Engineer Bryan Ruoff asked the applicant to work in coordination when the project moves forward for access to the tax ditch for maintenance; it has been maintained for many years. They clean the tax ditch and dredge along the area. Mr. Noonan said the applicant was open to it and they just need to work out particulars on who pays the contractor to do this work in the tax ditch when it is the City infrastructure and with the impacts of crossing the Wetland Permit that is held. Typically, any of that maintenance is held by the City and they permit those crossings. Those are things the applicant is willing to work with the City on, but details would have to be figured out.

Next, Mr. Noonan discussed the Site Plan checklist, noting two trees required, and a plan for two red maples; he showed the locations proposed closest to the parking spaces. He was certain that the applicant would be willing to entertain a different species of shade tree if the Commission has a preference. The current lights on site would be maintained, so no lights are proposed on site. The utilities are moving, such as the propane tank that was moved already and are being decommissioned and removed completely; new propane tanks will be placed on a new pad location. The new tanks are already in use but will be lifted up to grade with the concrete pad to the level of the parking lot.

Overall, Mr. Noonan said the applicant was present because of the impact to the wetland buffer. He said the project stayed out of the wetland resource. They are calling for erosion control measures, so there will be a double row of silt fencing placed along the outer edge of where the grading is, following the wetland resource. There would be no existing or proposed closed drainage structures in the back. He showed the berm of the detention / rain garden that would be finished in a loam and conservation seed mix unless the Commission recommended a different mix. Mr. Noonan welcomed questions.

Councilor Chalice asked for the slope from the building to the rain garden. Mr. Noonan said it was proposed at 2%. At this time, it varied and some parts were steeper at 8%. The goal would be to flatten it to a 2% grade. Councilor Chalice appreciated that it would be such a gradual slope. Mr. Noonan said the idea is to get into the sheet flow, so that rain is really gradually sheet flowing and then opens into the long narrow basin that is along the back.

Chair Flaherty asked if it would be feasible for low salt use on the back parking lot during the winter. Mr. Noonan did not think the applicant had a restriction at this time and could ask the client if they would be willing. Mr. Haynes said the Commission could make that recommendation and Chair Flaherty agreed.

Vice Chair Richter asked if there would be an opportunity to use a pervious pavement, at least for the parking; she knew heavy trucks would be going through some areas, but wondered if the parking spots could be pervious for the size of cars. She did not know if it was something the Planning Board (PB) could look into. She said it would certainly help with the drainage issue. Vice Chair Richter also asked if there would be a way to save some of the existing trees. Mr. Noonan replied that the large trees would be difficult to save. Vice Chair Richter said they are doing a lot of work absorbing water and holding the bank. So, it seemed silly to her to remove them and install an artificial replanting. She suggested some way to save them. Discussion ensued as Mr. Noonan reviewed the plans and suggested that in a wider section, they may be able to shift where the spillway was proposed, and the berm would be wider to accommodate the three biggest trees in that area. The Commission agreed that it was a good recommendation.

Mr. White asked if there was anything on site currently catching or stopping the water runoff. Mr. Noonan said nothing. Mr. White said any berm or rain garden added would keep runoff from the wetland more than is currently happening; everything is flowing from the loading docks into the wetlands. He was sure that testing the soil would show a lot of interesting things. Mr. Noonan said some of the steeper spots around it were starting to erode. Mr. White asked if the area is plowed in the winter and Mr. Noonan said yes. So, Mr. White said they just turn up all that soil and leave it in a big pile.

Mr. Bergman asked to see a profile of how high the top of the berm is compared to the low point of the rain garden. Mr. Noonan said the top of the berm is only two feet higher than the bottom of the rain garden. That is just above the spillway which is at the point of the 100-year floodplain. Mr. Bergman asked if there would be safety posts in front of the canisters (propane tanks) to prevent trucks from backing into them. Mr. Noonan said yes, they are placing concrete blocks there (two feet by two feet above grade). Mr. White asked if the propane tanks would be staying

in that location in general and Mr. Noonan said yes, once the concrete pad is poured. If there were to be a propane leak, Mr. White said it would settle right in the berm / rain garden area.

Mr. Therriault asked what size tree the applicant is planning to plant (e.g., two-foot sapling). Mr. Noonan said a two-inch caliper. So, Mr. Therriault said a juvenile tree but not tiny. He asked if they would consider *Tilia Americana*, American linden, or American basswood instead of the of the red maple. Mr. Noonan said he would absolutely be willing to tell his client if the Commission proposes a better choice of tree. Mr. Therriault thought this area has no lack of silver, sugar, and red maples as a pollen source in the spring. He said the City is not filling a niche mid-summer when there is a dearth of linden blooms that provides a gap of nectar for pollinators. From a pollinator standpoint, he said these trees would be a better choice. He said there used to be a big basswood in front of Mechanics Bank on West Street that was cut down a few years prior. He would like to see more lindens around town for the pollinators. To Mr. Therriault, they would be a better addition than the maples.

Mr. White asked about the legal requirement for shade trees. Ms. Brunner explained that there is a City requirement about breaking up the massing of large parking lots. Once above 50 parking spaces there are requirements for interior landscape islands that are about breaking up the mass, providing wildlife habitat, and helping to mitigate some of the heat island impact. Typically for shade trees, the City is looking for something that is not evergreen; anything that would provide shade. Mr. White suggested aiming for the best environmental impact.

Councilor Chalice suggested that lindens are lovely for the particular period that they are blossoming. However, she suggested the swamp white oak and willows as particularly keystone species having the highest ecological benefit for all of the Lepidoptera, the moths and the butterflies, which create the caterpillars that the birds need to feed their babies. Mr. Therriault said willows are not a bad idea either; they are an early season pollinator. Discussion ensued about whether willows' root systems are too wide to be that close to the building, with Councilor Chalice stating there is a lot of pavement in between and Mr. White countering that willows will find water and get into foundations. Councilor Chalice suggested willows because they utilize the water at such a distance from the building. Discussion ensued about the pros and cons of willows for this location. Mr. White clarified that the Commission could recommend tree species but not mandate them. Councilor Chalice recommended one swamp white oak and one linden. There was consensus.

Mr. Bill asked the rain garden capacity in terms of amount of water. Mr. Noonan said it would handle a 50-year storm. With a 100-year storm, there would likely be backfilling from the tax ditch and overtopping back to it. Mr. Bill asked how the water leaves the rain garden. Mr. Noonan said there is an 18-inch-deep sand-mix layer in the bottom and two inches on top of open basin. Mr. Bill also asked where the roof drainage goes; does it drain into a storm area or tie out into the front. Mr. Noonan thought it would tie out into the front catch basin. Chair Flaherty and Mr. Haynes said they saw some downspouts in the back of the building just dumping right in the ground. Mr. Bill said that might be something to design into and could be a recommendation. Mr. Bill was thinking about the winter when the ground is frozen and the City sometimes gets its heavier rainfall when the plants are inactive, so he had concerns about the capacity of the system. Discussion ensued briefly about the existing vs. current capacity and protection of the wetland.

Chair Flaherty felt that it was not a perfect proposal, but it would improve the existing condition. Mr. Noonan mentioned other ideas he would have liked to include, like a pipe as an outlet, but said it is a wet area. He and the Chair agreed it is difficult.

Mr. Haynes asked if the berm, sand, and rain garden plantings are all designed to absorb any contaminants that come from the site. Mr. Noonan said yes, their details come from the University of New Hampshire (UNH) suggestions for stormwater. When they get their Alteration of Terrain Permit, they have general details that the applicant will follow for treating runoff for oils, etc. Councilor Chalice asked if New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has a list of recommended plants for remediating contamination. Mr. Noonan said yes, it comes from the UNH stormwater manual, and they include: low bush, blueberry, deep laurel, blue flag iris, cardinal flower, New England Aster, and black-eyed Susans. Councilor Chalice was content with that list of all native plants.

Mr. Bergman asked if the elevation of Production Avenue itself is higher than the parking lot and Mr. Noonan said yes. Mr. Bergman asked if there is runoff from the roadway to the parking lot. Mr. Noonan said Production Avenue has closed drainage catch basins.

Mr. Haynes asked if during a 100-year flood the tax ditch would fill so it would be the same height as the water coming off the new parking lot. Mr. Noonan said yes. He showed where the 100-year flood line would go through the site and afterward follow the backside of the berm, but the spillway elevation is the same as the 100-year flood.

The following motion by Chair Flaherty was duly seconded by Mr. White. On a vote of 7–0, the Conservation Commission positively recommends Planning Board Referral PB-26-11, with the following recommendations:

1. Pervious pavement in the parking areas.
2. Low winter salt use if possible.
3. Tree replacement with *Tilia Americana* and *Quercus Bicolor*.
4. Invasive Species Management.
5. Retaining the three large trees on site, if possible, by modifying the layout.

Mr. Noonan departed.

4. Public Hearing

- a. **Acquisition of 2 properties located at 0 Gilsum Rd. for Conservation Purposes – TMP #s 218-010-000 & 218-011-000: In accordance with the requirements of RSA 36-A:5 the Keene Conservation Commission will conduct a public hearing to evaluate whether to expend funds from the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund for the purpose of purchasing .95 acres and 3.7 acres of forested uplands located adjacent to the Greater Goose Pond Forest.**

Chair Flaherty opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Brunner said this was about properties adjacent to the vernal pools the Commission had discussed the prior month. She showed the lots on a map along Old Gilsum Road, adjacent to the

Greater Goose Pond Forest. The Commission discussed other adjacent lots the City does and does not own on the map related to these two that are for sale, numbers 10 and 11. The City also owns 9, so this purchase would make those contiguous. It does not own 12 and 13 yet; it does own 15. Discussion continued. The City could consider merging the three lots and adjusting the easement; the City was working over time to own several parcels and put them into conservation.

Chair Flaherty welcomed public comments and there being none, he closed the Public Hearing.

A motion by Chair Flaherty to enter Non-Public Session to discuss whether to purchase property was duly seconded by Mr. Bergman and the motion carried unanimously. The Session began at 5:02 PM.

A motion by Mr. Therriault to seal the minutes of the Non-Public Session was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice and the motion carried unanimously. The public session reconvened at 5:15 PM.

5. Report-outs:

a. Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee

Mr. Haynes reported that the Subcommittee met on Friday, May 8 in the Greater Goose Pond Forest. They met at the North Trailhead to discuss how to close off the original trail, so people can use the one built a couple of years back. The original North Trailhead is pretty eroded, so the Subcommittee has some ideas. They walked up the North Trailhead to talk about a perpetually wet area in the springtime that is a mud hole; the trail keeps expanding as people try to go around. The Subcommittee considered alternatives to address it. They also went to the new bridge to discuss the June 6, 2026 ribbon cutting ceremony and what materials may be needed (e.g., a tent) so it looks professional. The Parks and Recreation Department are overseeing most of it. The trail builder, Lew Shelley, met the Subcommittee at the bridge to look at alternative ramp ideas because there is no ramp at this time. The Subcommittee decided at this point not to pursue any ramp ideas and that the ramp would be a future initiative maybe tied to the All Persons Trail that can get people to the Pond. So, the idea is on hold for now. The Subcommittee had been doing trail work for a while at this point in the season. The first organized Saturday volunteer event would be on May 23, 2026. He said for the next couple of months, the volunteers would be working on the Mattson Trail, which is one of the priority trails for 2026.

Mr. Bill mentioned an issue with unauthorized trail construction. Mr. Haynes said the bikers put in a few new trails, but they had worked through the issue, deciding they would not come down hard on them and let the trail stand, maybe with some modifications. The group is encouraged to work with the Subcommittee in the future. Mr. Haynes said that while the Subcommittee's recommendations are not as publicized as ideally, they do exist and were not followed. So, he hoped this event would put those trail building regulations on New England Mountain Bike Association's (NEMBA) radar.

Councilor Chalice asked if it is a fall line trail or whether they had done well aligning it, so there is minimal erosion. Mr. Haynes noted that a biker on the Subcommittee went over the trail and said they did a good job. As much as Mr. Haynes does not like having the new trail, he did call it

an impressive, technical trail that is not for the everyday biker, with very technical trail jumps, steep, and rocks, etc. So, they did well building the trail according to the expert on the Subcommittee.

Mr. Bergman recalled discussion in 2025 about signage to dissuade unauthorized trail building without checking with the City first. Mr. Haynes said there is no actual signage saying that, but it is the hope. He added that it is not a hard rule, it is a recommendation. The Subcommittee has met with the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA), encouraging them to work together. The Subcommittee is not opposed to new trails; they just want to work together to ensure they fit within the Forest's Stewardship Plan. Mr. Bergman warned about giving an inch and taking a mile. Councilor Chalice asked if there is a NEMBA member on the Subcommittee and Mr. Haynes said yes. Mr. Bill said that the member was not aware of this new trail either; there was some secrecy. He said the issue is a lack of enforcement ability and really relying on the good faith of people in the Forest.

Discussion ensued about the problems with discouraging fire building in the Forest, such as a prominent ring on the far side of the spillway. Discussion continued about other spots. Mr. White said it is illegal to build fires, and the Subcommittee could absolutely use the Fire Department (FD) as a resource; that is legally enforceable. He explained smoke tower coverage that can spot smoke during the day. He said there is no way those lighting fires in the Park have permits, so the FD can enforce that. Discussion continued. Mr. Haynes did not think fires were nightly, so the Subcommittee goes in and tries to disperse the locations to discourage more. They always worry about spreading when it is dry and windy. Mr. White noted that if the Subcommittee wanted to really take action, because kids are going to have fires, they can manage directly around the main areas by creating fire lines (i.e., pulling by the leaf litter in a trench); it is a common practice in the west. It makes fire harder to spread. Chair Flaherty wondered if there was any signage that could be put out from the FD. Mr. White does not work for the Keene FD but was willing to speak with his connections in Keene. Mr. Haynes said a part of the discussion was whether to put up signage and if it would make a difference. Mr. White said the public can be ignorant about what they do not realize they cannot do, like making a fire in the woods. So, just a little education, like a sign (e.g., Smokey the Bear), may help. It still may not work on some.

Discussion ensued about a favorite swimming hole by the new bridge that is posted as "No Swimming." Mr. Bill received advice from the New York Park System, which posts "Swim at Your Own Risk" instead, so the liability is on the individual and not the Park. He suggested considering it as an alternative. It bothers him to have "No Swimming" signs that are unenforceable and could come with legal responsibility for the City. Mr. Haynes thought that was a bigger discussion for the Subcommittee. Vice Chair Richter thought "No Swimming" did provide a certain level of legal protection, but she understood that it is not enforced.

Mr. Haynes said the dilemma with everything out in the Forest is that the Subcommittee is a handful of people who can do nothing to enforce things. Occasionally they will be in the moment when someone is leaf blowing a trail, but that is a rare occurrence. They can only keep doing what they are doing, which is to be as pro-stewards as possible and encourage people to treat the forest well, which 90% of people do.

Mr. Haynes recalled that Chair Flaherty would be attending a turtle workshop at the end of May. Mr. Haynes said there are a lot of turtles at Goose Pond. Perhaps after the workshop, the Chair could share what he learned with the Subcommittee and others in the Park working on turtle studies. Chair Flaherty agreed.

b. Invasive Plant Species

Mr. Milliken reported that he created a sign-up for the invasive species volunteer events, he just had to figure out how to get it to the public. He asked if there was a template. Ms. Brunner said that the City would advertise the dates and times. Ms. Brunner and Mr. Milliken agreed that these could be added to the City's volunteer sign-up pages as well. He sent Ms. Brunner a link to the Google Form with the dates and times and it will create an Excel sheet with people's contact information, so he can reach them.

Mr. Milliken noted that he found the wild parsnips on Elm and Court Streets, there are also garlic mustard, bittersweet, and multiflora roses in the area. So, he called it a bigger job than he thought. Unfortunately, the garlic mustard was already flowering, so he said it was time to get out there and get the word out to volunteers. Mr. Haynes asked if garlic mustard is spread by the flowers and the seeds. Mr. Milliken said just through the seeds; if you pull it, it is gone. The first year it is just a small plant that stays low and then, the second year, it flowers and seeds.

Mr. Bill stated that Beaver Brook from the Branch River upstream is a mess and there are quite a bit of invasives. Mr. Bill wondered what the strategy should be to protect certain City properties because it is an overwhelming problem. Mr. Milliken agreed, stating he unfortunately feels like the Commission should attack the areas that will spread faster. For example, the spot he found at the corner of Elm and Court Streets that is right out of a tiny brook that flows into the Ashuelot area; if spreading seeds into that water, it will take over. He said people in the community call and say, "you need to take care of your area," and he is unsure how that goes. He is still new at this.

Discussion ensued about supplies for this effort: are there funds for plastic bags that would be needed? Mr. Milliken also asked about their disposal. Ms. Brunner said to call the Public Works Department, which is pretty good about providing bags and picking them up to dispose of them. Mr. Milliken noted all the different methods for getting rid of these plants, so he asked what happens when they take the bags somewhere. Ms. Brunner noted that Councilor Williams mentioned there is a place to burn the invasives; alternatively, putting them in the plastic bags and covering them with tarps to bake in the sun and then disposing of them. Mr. Milliken called the latter one of the best methods because you know they are dead. However, he asked where they would be kept. Ms. Brunner thought the Public Works Department. Any invasive plant removal on City park land is contracted through a company. Mr. Milliken would develop a list of supplies and send them to Ms. Brunner for voting at the next meeting.

Vice Chair Richter noted that Councilor Williams had an email list that he would contact for volunteers and asked if Mr. Milliken had it. Mr. Milliken said no and he would reach out to Councilor Williams.

Mr. Milliken said the first invasive pull of the year would be May 20 at 4:30 PM on Elm Street.

c. Land Conservation / Easement Monitoring

Vice Chair Richter had nothing new to report. The next Workshop on the Land Protection Criteria would be Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at 4:00 PM.

d. Pollinator Updates / Bee City Photo

Councilor Chalice and Mr. Therriault were at the Monadnock Food Co-Op Earth Day celebration. Councilor Chalice provided basic information on the City's Bee City status, answered questions, and talked about potential future projects. Councilor Chalice also noted the upcoming Pollinator Palooza to the Commission, and she would share information there as well.

Discussion ensued about the Commission's Bee City USA photo with the new sign. The Commission agreed to meet at Ashuelot River Park at 3:30 PM before the June 2026 meeting (if there is a site visit) to take the photo and carpool to any site visit from there. If there is no site visit in June, the group will meet at the Park for the photo at 4:00 PM before the June Commission meeting.

6. Discussion Items

a. 2026 Commission Budget & Donation Request from Society for the Protection of NH Forests

Ms. Brunner said there were a few expenses for the Fiscal Year (FY) she had not been accounting for. On July 22, 2025, the Commission donated \$150 to the Wantastiquet-Monadnock Rail Trail Coalition. Also, Ms. Brunner went to the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions Annual Meeting and Conference, which was \$60. There were also the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions dues, the Bee City sign, the annual renewal for Bee City USA. Pending was the request from Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) for \$125.

Ms. Brunner went through past financial records for a few years since the City's financial system changed and only found one record of a donation to the Society for the Protection of NH Forests for \$112. She assumed the Commission donated whatever was left of its Budget at the end of the year. She said that if the Commission decided to give ARLAC \$125, it would have \$365 remaining to give something to the Forest Society and anything else it would like to spend on. Chair Flaherty said a good chunk would be spent on supplies. Councilor Chalice wanted to provide information on seeds. Mr. Haynes asked about waiting to make the decision in June. Ms. Brunner said the Forest Society sent its request some time ago but did not provide an amount. Chair Flaherty recalled that the Commission would need to spend its Budget by the end of the next month's (June 2026) meeting before it goes away for the FY, so they should probably vote on something now.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Haynes recommended funding ARLAC because of the long history of supporting them and holding off on donating to Society for the Protection of NH Forests until

June to ensure the Commission can cover the supplies it needs more critically locally; whatever is remaining could go to the Forest Society.

The following motion by Mr. Therriault was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice. On a vote of 7–0, the Conservation Commission donated \$125.00 to the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) for 2026.

b. Update on Letter to Keene Country Club re: Best Management Practices for Turf Adjacent to Water Bodies

In the meeting packet there was a letter sent with attachments dated May 4, 2026. The Commission thanked staff for sending it. Mr. Bill was glad to see the criteria that were submitted and the information about fertilization too because water bodies being algal blooms have been more problematic. He hoped they would take that to heart.

c. Update on Notice Practices for Mosquito Control Activities (Michele Chalice)

Councilor Chalice reported that Justin Adams, the representative for the Northeast Vegetation Mosquito Control Firm that the City is contracted with, replied to the Councilor. He is willing to speak with the Commission. He explained in a very long memo that Ms. Brunner could distribute for the June meeting that they do an arboviral testing, which allows them to monitor the potential for the types of diseases that we are concerned about. In general, they use the BTI granules, which is a bacterium that kills larvae. It is the same product that Councilor Chalice tells people to put in their rain barrels and ponds, which is considered very low toxicity and not a concern for people or pets. She said they do not anticipate doing any “adulticiding,” which is killing, or fogging of actual bugs themselves. If they determine that there is a problem, they have a quite elaborate series of posting steps that need to be taken and notification requirements to City government, to the health department, and to registered beekeepers. However, it is not something that they anticipate in this instance. Obviously, this is their extremely busy season, but Councilor Chalice said she would not mind learning more about the arboviral testing during some off season. There was consensus that this memo answered the Commission’s questions. Councilor Chalice was glad to hear they would be focusing on larvae in the pre-stage vs. fogging the subdivisions like when she was a kid.

d. Update on Red Pine Removal on Maple Ave – Reseeding (John Therriault)

Mr. Therriault sent a letter to the Parks and Recreation Department because they are the ones managing the Dinsmoor Woods red pine replacement. He read a May 13, 2026, response Director of Parks and Recreation, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey: “We think spreading wildflower seeds would be a wonderful enhancement to the Dinsmoor Woods area. We appreciate the thoughtfulness and staying in alignment with Bee City USA, as well as our environmental steward initiatives. It will take time, some time for the understory to grow, and we know that we will be managing invasives for quite some time. We look forward to all the natural and native tree species that have a chance to shine.” Mr. Therriault suggested waiting until fall to spread the native wildflower seeds so they can go through stratification over the winter and bloom next spring. He said it felt like the Commission was in alignment with Parks and Recreation. Mr. Therriault said he was thinking

about doing something in the September timeframe. Chair Flaherty asked how much seed he had. Mr. Therriault said he would walk the area and measure where the understory did not do anything and then buy the seed.

Councilor Chalice suggested making an event of it. She said it would require buckets with sand and seed to distribute properly. Councilor Chalice offered to develop a handout that talks about what those seeds are for and what they do in the late fall so they have an opportunity. Mr. Therriault agreed. Vice Chair Richter asked if it is best to spread the seeds on bare soil. Mr. Therriault said it is best to just scratch the soil a bit on top so the seeds sort of embed with the snow melt. Mr. Milliken said it looked like something had been spread there like a grass and Chair Flaherty said maybe straw even. Mr. Milliken had not seen any knotweed resurfacing yet.

e. Land Protection Criteria Amended February 2026

Discussion ensued about who would be attending the May 19, 2026 workshop to have a quorum.

f. Airport Wildlife Fence Project Update (Ken Bergman)

Mr. Bergman showed a map and provided history on this effort he began working on in 2018 with then Airport Director, David Hickling, who was very sympathetic to the Commission's interests and explained the process to him. Mr. Bergman explained the wildlife safety fence at the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport. The money for such a fence, which is needed because of incursions of deer, coyotes, and even geese on the runways, comes ultimately from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), but is channeled through the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT), which works with local airports and other organizations and their advisory consults. The best Mr. Hickling had gotten to was where the fence was going to be built in stages. This year, DOT provided the funds to allow the whole fence to be built in one phase, presumably beginning fall 2026 and continuing into early spring 2027. Most of the work will be completed in the winter, which is a biologically quieter time. The plan is for an 8-foot-high chain link fence with 1.5 feet of concertina wire on top.

He noted the original plan was to completely enclose the runways by going along Airport Road all the way down to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. He oriented the Commission with the map. The original plan would have enclosed a stream that feeds water into the marsh coming through from the Edgewood neighborhood in addition to enclosing an entire wetland complex within the Airport property. Mr. Hickling always questioned why to enclose that menagerie within the runway protection scheme. Mr. Bergman showed adjoined wetlands that are top wildlife quality control habitat. The river comes from various places and actually runs underground under the runway. Mr. Bergman spoke about beaver removal work along Airport Road where culverts have been cleared of the beaver dams that cause water in neighboring yards. It is all interconnected.

Mr. Hickling worked with his consultant, McFarlane Johnson, which is really experienced with how New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) will respond because there are wetlands, and that is their number one priority. However, the purpose of all this is to protect the runway, and we do not want to do that by enclosing rich wildlife habitat within a fence. So, they performed a delineation of wetlands and lighter mapping in 2025 and ground penetrating

radar in 2026. The good news is there is a berm at the end of the runway that is elevated and slopes up and then descends; this will allow for bringing the fence closer to the FAA's object free zone. Mr. Bergman explained what is typically allowed in this zone, which are frangible (i.e., breakable) objects only. So, the good news is they have found that they can bring the fence, much closer to the runway than they had thought. This means the impingement upon the wetlands will be less, which Mr. Bergman demonstrated on the map delineating the wetlands; there will still be some impingement, though minimal. The main disruption will be during construction. They are not going to sink the fence posts in with concrete sonotubes. They are just going to vibrate them down as far as they can go. There will be some lumber pads and mats, but the disruption will be much less, temporary, and will preserve most of the wetlands. Otters, for example, will be able to go outside the fence and into the main marshes through the culverts or overland into the river; there are various oxbows in different places. Discussion continued about other parts of the river.

Mr. Bergman summarized that the money came through to perform this fence work closer to the runway in one season, mostly during the winter months, in a way that would be much less disruptive than originally thought. The plan is to begin with the frost during fall 2026. Mr. Bergman had already seen ground penetrating radar trucks out there studying the sediments. Brief discussion continued about the original opposition from New Hampshire DES, whose goal is fierce protection of wetlands. Mr. Hickling convinced them there was no good in putting the fence along Airport Road.

Chair Flaherty asked if the chain link fencing would be galvanized coating. Mr. Bergman said it would not be vinyl coated, so Chair Flaherty said galvanized. Mr. Bergman said the 1.5 feet of concertina wire on top is required by the FAA as security to keep people out although he worried about deer getting trapped. The Commission agreed that the fence would be so far in wetland that the deer would not be able to get good enough footing to jump that high.

Discussion ensued about the wildlife value at the Airport and the Sentinel writer about recreation viewing there. However, Mr. Bergman said there are still issues with pedestrians blocking the roadway to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Airport Road. He said without public access, some of the value of the good view of the marsh would be diminished. He called it a separate but related issue. The new Airport Director, Ryan Cooley, also mentioned more tree topping or cutting to the Swanzy Conservation Commission and that would likely not make anybody happy in those neighborhoods. Discussion ensued on the FAA's need for good approaches and the limits of tree foliage. At Councilor Chalice's request, Mr. Bergman agreed to give the Commission a tour of the marsh along the roadway. It would require the Airport and Public Service's permission.

Vice Chair Richter noted that a lot of people are really concerned about the situation of trapping beavers. Mr. Bergman said he spoke with the trappers and they are killed by the traps; they cannot be transplanted for practical reasons. He said the beavers bear scars from fighting, they are very territorial and force young to disperse. By putting them in a new location, they would be attacked immediately. He said you also need permission from a municipality or landowner to relocate them. He heard hearsay that there had also been otter trapping because it is hard to discriminate between the two within the same waterways. Mr. Bergman said there are the same issues in the City's cemeteries, like on North Lincoln Street. Vice Chair Richter said if there is an opportunity

to recommend beaver control devices like “beaver deceivers,” she would like to. Mr. Bergman said the trappers did not think they would work here at all. Vice Chair Richter and Councilor Chalice wanted to know more about that. Mr. Bergman noted complications with this being Keene land in Swanzey, with an Airport Director and a head of Public Service, who likely contracted with the trappers. It was an issue in the Swanzey Conservation Commission meeting, in addition to solar farms and grassland birds.

Mr. Therriault recollected when starting this discussion, the main objective was to get those wetlands outside the fence because it is too much of good habitat for all kinds of birds and mammals. It sounded to Mr. Therriault like the Commission won: most of the wetlands would be outside the fence and accessible. Mr. Bergman agreed, noting at one point there was talk of viewing blinds along Airport Road. He would keep the Commission updated.

7. Correspondence:

a. ARLAC Annual Update on River Monitoring Activities & Donation Request

Ms. Brunner said this Annual Report from ARLAC talked about the results of their annual monitoring. They look at dissolved oxygen, chloride, turbidity, and total phosphorus. The pH is low at all sites except Hinsdale in July and August and the Thompson Covered Bridge site in Swansey. They said specific conductance showed moderate to high impact in Keene and downstream. Ms. Brunner assumed that it was during drought. It says similar effects are seen in 2025. Fluoride levels also increased July through September 2025; they remained within Class B standards. E. coli showed acceptable readings. However, when considering E. coli geometric means, which imposes a stricter limit, impacts appear mid-river from Keene into Swansey.

Mr. Bergman said it was all fascinating but did not know what a lot meant. When there is low rainfall during drought conditions, he said the Treatment Plant has a harder time discharging enough volume to dilute. Others agreed that makes sense.

8. New or Other Business

Councilor Chalice suggested that the Commission take time requesting to review the site plans for Pat Russell Park. She explained the proposed parking lot that was granted \$75,000 by a funding entity as a cap for contaminated soils from the former railroad. She said three City Councilors, including herself, voted against this parking lot at the Park, and there are questions in the community as a whole about the site aspects of this second half of the Pat Russell Park. At this time, Assistant City Manager, Andy Bohannon, was progressing with a plan. She said a group of people felt strongly that it would not be the right way to finish this park and are concerned the City is going with the input of certain people but coming up with a design they are presenting to the Committee as a done deal. She proposed the Commission ask to review the site plan on the June agenda prior to any further progress. Ms. Brunner said she would certainly reach out to the Deputy City Manager to see if he would be willing to come to the June meeting. Ms. Brunner said the Site Plan is for governmental use of the property and appeared before the Planning Board for their recommendation. Really, Ms. Brunner said the City Council decides, and the Conservation Commission is advisory to the City Council, so the Commission could certainly share its recommendations with the City Council.

In terms of reviewing the site plan, Ms. Brunner said even the Planning Board did not have the opportunity necessarily. Councilor Chalice asked the mechanism: a memo from the Commission requesting a presentation on the proposed site plan? Ms. Brunner said she would discuss with the Deputy City Manager and ask if he is willing to come give a presentation. The plans are also publicly available, so Ms. Brunner said this could be on the June agenda with or without a presentation. Vice Chair Richter said she spoke with Mr. Bohannon, who was willing to seek recommendations from the Conservation Commission, although more so for planting and replanting; however, he said he was willing to work with the Commission. So, Vice Chair Richter agreed with inviting him for a presentation. Discussion ensued on what the Commission was requesting: site plan review or engineering plan review. Vice Chair Richter thought the latter. Discussion ensued about whether it already passed the City Council. Councilor Chalice thought it already passed the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee. She knew three Councilors voted against it but it did pass. Ms. Brunner said that if the City Council had already voted on the parking lot and approved it, there would be no further recourse on the parking. There may be some flexibility on the plantings. Mr. White asked if it is a cap on the soil and Ms. Brunner said yes, there were a combination of funding sources to keep the contamination from going into the brook. Councilor Chalice said the City chose that method of capping and others agreed that it is a common method.

Mr. Bergman asked if the parking lot is along Carpenter Street. Councilor Chalice said it comes off Water Street along Beaver Brook; it is the former Findings property. Vice Chair Richter said her concern was that it did not come to the Commission as a Conditional Use Permit technically. She understands that it is City land but said it would be nice if the City followed their own rules because the location of the contamination is so close to Beaver Brook; the parking lot is right on the bank. She had been in contact as a Keene individual, urging them to move the parking lot back as much as possible because it is a contaminated site. Mr. Bohannon said they were going to try pushing it back, maybe reducing the number of parking spots, so it would be as small as possible, and possibly including a bike rack. Councilor Chalice said some wanted a bicycle pavilion instead. Ms. Brunner noted it is also a floodplain and possibly a floodway, so there are many variables. Ms. Brunner would invite Mr. Bohannon to the next meeting.

9. Upcoming Meetings (Keene Recreation Center, Room 22)

- Tuesday, May 19, 2026 – 5:00 PM, Workshop to Discuss Land Protection Criteria
- Monday, June 15, 2026 – 4:30 PM, Regular Meeting – 2nd floor conference room.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Flaherty adjourned the meeting at 6:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner