

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 20, 2026

4:30 PM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Gary Flaherty, Chair
Councilor Michele Chalice
Ken Bergman
Bob Milliken, Alternate (Arrived at 4:31 PM)
John Therriault, Alternate (Voting)
Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Alternate
(Voting)

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks and
Recreation (left early)
Corinne Chaisson, Administrative Assistant

Members Not Present:

Barbara Richter, Vice Chair
William White
Steven Bill
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 15, 2026

Mr. Milliken arrived at 4:31 PM.

Revisions: Line 448 replace “real estate City Councilor” with “Realtor City Councilor.” Line 473 to 475, strike “Mr. Bergman wondered if in some cases you could click on a particular layer, and if they could be consistent (i.e., “refer” vs. “use”).”

A motion by Mr. Therriault to adopt the June 15, 2026 meeting minutes, as amended, was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Parks & Recreation Director

Chair Flaherty welcomed the Parks and Recreation Director, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, for a few updates. First, she shared that the Greater Goose Pond Forest was identified as a self-guided hike location for the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests Open Woods Day on August 8, 2026. There are three properties in the southwestern region of New Hampshire, and it

is all centered around Keene. The first property is a 110-acre parcel on the corner of Hurricane and Dickinson Roads. It is a privately owned parcel of land. For the past 40 years, the landowner has intentionally managed the forest to promote old growth characteristics throughout the stand. She holds a PhD in forest ecology and is actively involved in outreach and education focused on sustainable forestry practices. She will be leading a guided tour of that property at about 10:00 AM on August 8, highlighting exceptional trees, invasive pests and plants, and the long-term benefits of thoughtful, sustainable forest management. The Monadnock Food Co-Op donated snacks and Ilissa Sargent from Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests would be there to distribute the snacks. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey confirmed that there would be a press release.

Second, Director Fisk-Hennessey reported that the three-spot tour would reach a center point in the Greater Goose Pond Forest, highlighting it as the only publicly owned parcel of land in conservation in our region as a part of Open Woods Day. They would be highlighting recreation opportunities, wildlife, natural features, and celebrating the spillway bridge that was the community effort and just completed in November 2025. That is a self-guided walk.

Director Fisk-Hennessey said the third property is a 390-acre parcel located in Goshen/Lempster off Lempster Coach Road. The walk would start from the west side of Keene, move up to Goose Pond and then head up north to Goshen. This land was recently passed from mother to daughter, and the current owner is committed to a low-impact stewardship approach. As a result, trail maintenance is intentionally minimal, and no forestry activity takes place on the property. The featured hike will follow Babb Brook to a beautiful waterfall before looping back through mature hemlock forest and a wildflower meadow to several active habitat ponds. At about 1:30 PM, the landowner will lead a tour highlighting the property's rich historical and cultural significance, her low-impact management philosophy, and the unique ecological features that make this landscape so special. The Gilsum Village Store donated snacks for the public of the tour. Director Fisk-Hennessey reiterated that these tours on August 8, 2026 would all be free to the public as a part of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests' 125th Anniversary (register online).

Mr. Bergman said he would unfortunately be out of town on this date. He walks by Hurricane and Dickinson Roads frequently and asked if this is the property that if you are heading out of town, would be on your right across from the road. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said yes. Mr. Bergman asked if you would get more information about that property upon registering. Director Fisk-Hennessey said he would basically get the same information shared in this meeting, in addition to a welcome packet upon registering. Mr. Bergman mentioned using the City's SeeClickFix app to report a fence at this location on many occasions. Director Fisk-Hennessey called SeeClickFix a wonderful resource.

Director Fisk-Hennessey also announced that the City of Keene would be hosting the Natural Resource Stewards program in Keene this year and it was still accepting applications. It is a 12-week series every Friday. She asked Commissioners to share information with interested applicants.

The Director additionally talked about what would be next for red pine scale in Wheelock Park. She announced that on Tuesday, July 28, 2026 at 6:00 PM all park users and neighbors were invited to attend a walk and workshop in the park. She said no final decisions would be made

about what is happening and how the space is going to be transformed once the red pine is out of there, but she said the goal is to walk in different sections and identify what is going to happen when these trees are gone: what do we want to see? This would be the first initial outreach besides the woods walk that was led in April 2025.

Finally, Director Fisk-Hennessey shared the Branch Out for Parks donation program. She said staff were really focusing on this because it gives the community an opportunity to donate to an established project fund here with the City of Keene through Parks and Recreation so the City can plant trees in earmarked park locations. She said if people have parks they love and they want to see more trees there, they can donate to this fund and earmark the park location, and City staff will alert them as soon as the trees are planted. Mr. Milliken asked if donors could choose the type of tree. Director Fisk-Hennessey said they could make suggestions.

Councilor Chalice asked about the Robin Hood Park rehabilitation project at the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee meeting on July 22, 2026 at 6:00 PM, which Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said would only be about Phase One of the project: the pool. Councilor Chalice said that would include the bathrooms and Director Fisk-Hennessey said no, only the pool and the bathhouse.

Regarding the Branch Out for Parks donations, Mr. Therriault said if someone donates and says they would love to see a certain number of a specific species, would that just be a suggestion or would the money go to that use. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said it is a suggestion that City staff would definitely take into account as they make a decision on what trees would thrive in that specific park location. She said that if someone would also like to see a specific species of tree donated, the City could identify a park that would best fit those species.

4. NH DES Referral

- a. Wetlands Standard Dredge and Fill Application, 21 Route 9 – Applicant Granite Engineering, on behalf of owner G2 Holdings LLC, proposes to replace a culvert installed by the previous owner with a new box culvert. The total area of wetland disturbance is 1,205 sf, including 940 sf of permanent impacts and 265 sf of temporary impacts.**

Discussion ensued as to whether there was already a site visit for this referral. Chair Flaherty confirmed that there was a site visit already. Chair Flaherty recalled the applicant's plan to remove two culverts and install a box culvert, which he said is generally a better thing. The Chair said that because there are two tube culverts, the permanent impacts to the wetland will be 940 sf because that will be the material they will take out between the culverts, and the box culvert they seek to replace it with is four feet wide.

Councilor Chalice noted the Commission often talks a lot when culverts are being replaced about them needing to be upsized for larger storm events and to not have any cascading effects on culverts that have not be replaced and upsized. She asked if that was a discussion of how they decided the size of the new culvert. Chair Flaherty said yes, they supplied their calculations and

the Wetlands Bureau will look over those to confirm them. He said the new culvert would be four feet tall, so much bigger than it was.

Mr. Bergman asked if downstream is north and Chair Flaherty said yes. Discussion ensued about where the next culvert would be and Mr. Therriault said in Sullivan, New Hampshire. So, he wondered if at some point the Conservation Commission should alert them to this so they could look at it. Councilor Chalice said they could. Discussion ensued about notification to abutters when either the Zoning Board or Planning Board was concerned about this property and whether Sullivan was notified in that process. Chair Flaherty knew that two abutters in Sullivan were notified on the enclosed abutters list but not the municipality, which does not necessarily have to be notified if they do not own abutting land. He said they could still notify as a courtesy. Mr. Therriault agreed that the Commission should notify the municipality of Sullivan in the case of a large storm and much less upstream control, which could potentially cause downstream problems. He thought it would be worthwhile for them to know that. Mr. Von Plinksy added that it does not hurt to have better communication between the two towns. Chair Flaherty called it a great idea as a courtesy. He said Ms. Brunner would usually handle drafting such a letter, which the Chair would then sign.

Overall, Chair Flaherty felt like this was a good thing and that the Commission should vote favorably to New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) on the referral as submitted. There was consensus.

Mr. Von Plinksy made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Bergman.

Mr. Bergman noted Ms. Brunner cautioning about it being better to use motion language that says that Commission does not object to the project or it being consistent with Department of Environmental Services guidelines. Chair Flaherty said it was a good point and Ms. Brunner would be trusted with the appropriate language.

On a vote of 5–0, the Conservation Commission unanimously voted to write a favorable letter telling New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services it is okay with the application that was submitted.

5. Report-Outs:

a. Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee

No comments.

b. Invasive Plant Species

Mr. Milliken said he submitted a report to the Commission. On June 25, 2026, he met with four volunteers at Robin Hood Park, including Councilor Bobby Williams. First, they worked on the hillside where they had been managing Japanese knotweed for a while, and it was nice to see there was hardly anything there; there were small plants to pull right out and take care of. Then, they moved over to the pool side, where he said there is every single type of invasive except knotweed. He said bittersweet is choking out a bunch of the trees in that location. Mr. Milliken

hopes that during the pool project they look at that hillside because it goes right into the water and is not easy to access. Still, he said they filled four giant trash bags with everything they found without hurting themselves; it is a very steep hill. Councilor Chalice asked if they were able to use any of the seeds the Commission purchased. Mr. Milliken said yes, if they disrupted a bunch of dirt, they spread it out over the brook side and a little bit on that hill. Councilor Chalice noted that they had mixed the purchased seeds with one bucket of sand each (stored in Mr. Milliken's shed). He could bag the seeds and send it out with Commissioners to locations.

Mr. Bergman asked if they felt like they were able to get most of the bittersweet out of that location. Mr. Milliken said they got a lot of it because it is a bad spot without digging; they pulled most of it. Mr. Bergman agreed that if you do not get it by the roots, it will come back. Councilor Chalice noted that she and Councilor Williams were experimenting with using crushed soup cans nailed down around the stem where you cut buckthorn. She asked if those cans would be useful there. Mr. Milliken said they saw some buckthorns but pulled those up as they were small. Councilor Chalice offered to provide a bucket with some of the prepared crushed cans for when Mr. Milliken is at these sites and he noted that he was collecting them as well.

Mr. Milliken commented on the buckthorn at the Arch Bridge on Court Street, where he recently cut down two or three and used the can technique there. He said he found a postcard from 1926 showing the same buckthorn on that bridge. He was there with another volunteer and said they could only do so much because it is growing into that bridge. He wondered who at the City to talk to about what is ever going to happen with that bridge: it is such a beautiful sight but there are other problems down there like needles and trash, and even recently a dead body. Discussion ensued about how the bridge and the land in front of it had changed over time; the land in front of it has a lot of different invasive species. There is buckthorn on both sides of the bridge. Mr. Milliken asked about the City's response to the bridge because he does not believe it is stable anymore and he would be afraid to see a kid climbing on the rails of it, in addition to the surrounding trash (e.g., mattresses) and apparent homeless encampments in the woods. Councilor Chalice asked the protocol for this, and Ms. Chaisson said she would send a summary of tonight's meeting to Ms. Brunner, who would take it from there.

Mr. Milliken said that on June 27, 2026 he went to the corner of Court and Elm Streets (the wooden barrier near the pond) where he pulled some more wild parsnips, and there is a yard he believes that it is going to seed and coming from. He walks by and pulls it out and throws it in the street. If it goes to seed, it will constantly replicate itself. He felt like he was constantly taking one step forward and two steps back with the invasives. He wondered if there was a way to talk to the City's mowers about mowing that patch earlier before those plants go to seed. He cited an instance of doing this successfully in Vermont. Mr. Milliken noted that this site also had a lot of garlic mustard and other invasives, but predominantly the wild parsnips and garlic mustard. He said it is problematic because they border the brook that goes to the Ashuelot River. He still thinks the seeds are coming from the person's property up on Court Street; he had yet to knock on the door about the seeds as a neighbor not as a Commissioner. It used to be a beautiful garden and now is overgrown. He had seen the small plants in surrounding yards, but they were being mowed and not going to seed. Mr. Therriault asked if the issue is on the pond side and Mr. Milliken said yes. There is also multiflora rose, bittersweet, garlic mustard, and he thinks the parsnips are the worst there. Mr. Therriault asked to confirm this is not public land. Mr. Milliken

said he knows the City mows it, it just a matter of the timing of that. He cited their process for this at Hogback Mountain, where they have a management arrangement for cutting and pulling off the tubers before they mow. He said that over years of management, it takes less and less time. Mr. Therriault suggested communicating to the Public Works Department that this location should be on a monthly mowing schedule to keep it from going to seed.

Mr. Milliken said he was trying to map out all the invasives that are here and trying to figure out the most critical areas because he knows they cannot pull everything out. He said the two new sites with Japanese knotweed are huge. He mentioned the site along Beaverbrook. People were calling state representatives asking if the City could pull it; it goes from downtown all the way to Rt-9. The other site is near the high school along White Brook south of Arch Street. Unfortunately, he said it is a piece of land that the City owns but you can hardly access it from anywhere. He said the knotweed is probably seven feet tall, and people see it from their buildings. Chair Flaherty asked Mr. Milliken to have a conversation with Ms. Brunner when she returned so she could get the contact information. Mr. Milliken agreed, noting that as he would get these maps going, the dates and times that these plants mature would guide when to cut them.

Mr. Bergman mentioned seeing a large spread of multiflora rose at Otterbrook on the side of the lake away from the outlet mouth, against the wooded, rocky ledge. He asked, if it is spread across 30 feet or so, is it likely to be from one stem? Mr. Milliken thinks they are independent and they also touch the ground and regrow.

Mr. Milliken asked about the area off Arch Street: is it between Bent Court and Bradford Road or is it deeper at the end of Bent Court? Mr. Therriault said it is deeper at the end of Bent Court; you would have to go through Bent Court and cross the brook to get to the location. The land is owned by the City. It is the location of the auxiliary well for West Keene. He had talked to them several times about using some pollinator seed mix there but there was some pushback because it is a well property and they do not touch it. Discussion ensued about the nearby Willow Brook condos. Someone who lives there had been in contact with the Commission. Mr. Milliken said he hopes to experiment on the knotweed in that area without chemicals using things like mesh, bagging over it, cutting it, pulling it, etc., and then putting down seed mix that would be good for the site. He said many people from the condominium complex seem willing to volunteer.

Councilor Chalice asked if Mr. Milliken had been able to pull any volunteers from the City's new signup platform. Mr. Milliken said he had a signup sheet and every person said they saw the information on the City's Facebook. The Commission agreed it was better for the City to be advertising the events vs. when Councilor Williams was doing so on his own.

Councilor Chalice asked if Mr. Milliken presented before the City's Energy and Climate Committee. Mr. Milliken said he did talk to them and emailed his presentation. He also presented in Halifax, Vermont, which he said went over well. He said he would share the presentation with the Commission.

Councilor Chalice reported that she would be giving a presentation in Massachusetts. She noted that she contacted the New Hampshire DES Invasive Species Coordinator for the new NH Department of Agriculture Markets and Food. She had seen a presentation by him in Jaffrey

prior and was impressed, and it had an accompanying brochure that Councilor Chalice shared with the Commission. She would forward the Invasive Species Coordinator's information to Mr. Milliken in case he wanted brochures for volunteers.

Mr. Milliken said he hoped to do his presentation at a few different places this summer. Councilor Chalice suggested the Keene Public Library. Mr. Milliken also mentioned the Keene Middle School.

Mr. Therriault said he identified the brook earlier as White Brook, but he looked at the map system, and it is actually Ash Swamp Brook. Mr. Bergman said because it joins with Black Brook from Wilson Pond by the High School. Discussion continued about the area.

Mr. Bergman asked if Mr. Milliken had more need for the large 55-gallon black bags, which Mr. Bergman had on hand. Mr. Milliken said yes and Mr. Bergman said he would provide them. Mr. Milliken noted that someone else was leaving him with some large paper bags to use.

c. Land Conservation / Easement Monitoring

No comments.

d. Pollinator Updates

Councilor Chalice reported giving a pitch at Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship. She said they were going through a big shift from their former business focus to community based: how to help rural communities thrive, much like the theme of their Radically Rural Conference. She said they had a pitch night, and each person got two minutes, and Councilor Chalice pitched the Homegrown National Parks, which is a not-for-profit that was started by an entomology professor and one of his grad students. It is a national organization that allows anyone who has planted at least one native plant on their property to register their property on the map. There are over 50,000 people who have done it so far at 66 habitat sites. 175,000 acres have been planted this year, looking to recreate pollinator and wildlife corridors across the nation.

While there is a lot of nationwide activity, she said Keene has three places (hers is one of them) and she thought it would be fun to not only contact her clients who had planted native species, but to challenge the region as a whole to have 500 of our sites acknowledged and on the map. There is a whole program to get on the map. She was looking for ideas to entice people to come to an event that would offer them information on how to do it. It is free. She briefly explained the registration process. Councilor Chalice thought it could be a positive way for more pollinator plants to be introduced or acknowledged in our region and for people to feel they are doing something more with their property than just planting, but in fact joining a larger organization. She said she got a lot of ideas that night and Homegrown National Park had contacted her, noting a community in Texas did something like this, and they would be willing to come up with a map. She would be talking with the Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD) to see if they have ideas too (e.g., music or food) to get people out to do something like this. So, Councilor Chalice said she would be looking to draw more attention to pollinator habitat and would hope to make

progress on that within the next month or so and talk about when an event like this would best happen. She welcomed ideas.

Mr. Von Plinsky agreed with reaching out to the CCCD because they are so good at organizing and piggybacking off of a couple of different things that have the same thing and going from there.

Councilor Chalice reported that Pollinator Pallooza was smaller this year, but she was able to give away quite a few milkweed plants as well as sunflower, and she talked about the difference between the two. She thanked a Commissioner who gave her a whole bag of milkweed seeds, so the kids were able to play with the pods and seeds, and she called it great fun. She still had some seeds left over to use and said they were really helpful to raise more awareness. She said Bee City USA folks were present as well.

Mr. Milliken asked if Councilor Chalice could provide a list of qualifying native plants for the Homegrown National Park effort. Councilor Chalice said she would provide it to him. She added that the Native Plant Trust in Massachusetts is a wonderful resource for things like that. Councilor Chalice would send the link to register your property to the Commission so Commissioners could see if their properties would qualify.

6. Discussion Items

a. Request for Letter of Support re: Neonic Regulations in New Hampshire

Councilor Chalice said she had not gotten to this yet.

b. Draft Land Protection Criteria Checklist

Vice Chair Richter had provided the draft Checklist. The Commission decided that it did not have any edits at this time. They thought they could vote on accepting the Checklist at the next meeting.

7. Correspondence

a. NH DES Notice of Inspection for 65 Cone St.

Chair Flaherty said this was a notification from New Hampshire DES about inspection of 65 Cone Street, which could potentially have a fill problem in wetlands. New Hampshire DES was supposed to inspect the site on Tuesday, June 30, 2026 and had not gotten back to the Commission with their findings at this time. Ms. Brunner's advice had been to let DES handle it and the Commission would be kept in the loop. This was informational at this time.

b. Thank-you letter – Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

Chair Flaherty acknowledged the thank-you letter from the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests for the Commission's donation.

8. New or Other Business

Mr. Von Plinsky noted that he would be resigning from the Commission, so this would be his last meeting for some time. He wanted to provide the contact information for Lynne Barofsky, who he called a cool woman that is a part of the Wantastiquet-Monadnock Trail Coalition, which is for the trail that goes from Brattleboro, Vermont, to Jaffrey, New Hampshire. He said that in the past, the Commission had donated approximately \$150, once for a privy on one of the trail spots on Keene. Mr. Von Plinsky said Ms. Barofsky reached out to him asking for another donation and he would forward that email to the Chair and tell her to reach out to him from now on. Mr. Von Plinsky encouraged the Commission to give the donation some consideration at the next meeting because it is a great trail that does bring people through Keene in a way to see parts of the City a lot of people do not get to. Councilor Chalice wondered if this was more trails related and if the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee would not have a budget to donate. Mr. Von Plinsky said that in his time it had always been conservation related because they were originally looking for partners on the Daniels Hill privy.

Mr. Bergman said he sent an email to City staff about an article in the Keene Sentinel on the bipartisan Federal Housing Act, which he said the President did not sign in lieu of another act. Mr. Bergman said one of the provisions he read said that from now on, according to this new law, any development with fewer than 100 residences would be exempt from regulation. Chair Flaherty said there would be a federal regulation that municipalities cannot go below but they can be stricter than. So, anything stricter that is already in effect would hold.

Councilor Chalice suggested two items for the August 2026 agenda. She recalled a long time ago the Commission (i.e., Councilor Williams and Mr. Von Plinsky) talking about a list the City uses to plant street trees, shrubs, and plants. Councilor Chalice was dismayed to see new, columnar trees (when shade trees are needed) along Washington Avenue. So, Public Works provided her with a list of their street tree plants as a start, and she wondered whether the Commission was interested in revisiting the notion of commenting on the very ornamental choices. Some of them are fruitless (e.g., no oaks), which makes maintenance easier, but she said those are unfortunate choices in terms of the ecological health of our community. She said the Public Works Director admitted not knowing anything about plants and to just going with what they tell him he can buy, so it sounded like he was potentially open to ideas. Mr. Therriault asked if there was a disconnect between what the Commission recommended as street trees and what Public Works was currently using as street trees. Councilor Chalice was unsure; she was not on the Commission at the time and said the current list did not look ecologically friendly. Mr. Therriault asked for the Commission's previous recommendation to be available at the next meeting too.

Councilor Chalice also recalled that Pat Russell park was under contention with the contaminated sediment under the Findings property; she recalled a presentation from Deputy City Manager Andy Bohannon. She said a group of Keene eastiders met with Mr. Bohannon and Director of Parks and Recreation Carrah Fisk-Hennessey to hear the whole process again and expressed dismay that the Beaver Brook corridor series of recommendations developed several years ago were not referenced for this parking lot on the bank of Beaver Brook (in the floodplain). So, Councilor Chalice and Vice Chair Richter asked their resident wetland specialist to go out to the lowest area shown on the maps as former wetland and explore what type of regenerative plantings could be done there, or potentially how to rework that area to be more

functional. Both Mr. Bohannon and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey were very open to having someone else look at the possibilities and funding opportunities. So, at the next Commission meeting, Councilor Chalice asked to have an agenda item to discuss further.

Mr. Milliken asked if they were considering plants to help absorb the contamination. Councilor Chalice said that type of bioremediation would mean harvesting the plants and finding a landfill to take them. This plan would not be for that. Right now, it is being managed as lawn. She showed the current plan for that part of Pat Russell Park that has a short, squat oak, but at least some native plants, so that was good; that was for the Findings property. Councilor Chalice and Vice Chair Richter were not talking about adjusting that plan at all. Discussion continued about how this group could have more input (i.e., asking for more oaks because there are no walkways to worry about acorns) and the east side group to consider the banks. She thought the August agenda could also include an update on the Parks and Recreation Department's plans.

Discussion ensued about how Mr. Therriault had never heard of a pollinator that included the Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), which Councilor Chalice proposed for the Findings site. Councilor Chalice said it is not exactly native to here, but she cited several in the area, including on Main Street; Mr. Therriault asked if they have hives in them and Councilor Chalice was unsure. Mr. Therriault asked if they are perfect pollen or nectar producers. Councilor Chalice said she would be happy to find out. Mr. Therriault said he would like to see a linden tree replace this Fringetree. Councilor Chalice did not think they were sterile, noting that she was trying not to have any sterile plants. Councilor Chalice said the Conservation Commission could comment on those recommended plantings at the next meeting as well and submit those to the Parks Department. Commissioners should compile their comments and send them to Ms. Brunner. Discussion continued briefly.

9. Next Meeting: Monday, August 17 (City Hall)

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Flaherty adjourned the meeting at 5:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner