



City of Keene, New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

**Monday, March 21, 2022**

**4:30 PM**

**City Council Chambers**

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Commission Members

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair  
Eloise Clark, Vice Chair  
Kenneth Bergman  
Art Walker  
Andrew Madison

Councilor Robert Williams  
Brian Reilly, Alternate  
Thomas P. Haynes, Alternate  
Steven Bill, Alternate  
John Therriault, Alternate

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 22, 2022
3. Guess Speaker:  
Amanda Littleton, District Manager, Cheshire County Conservation District
4. Informational:
  - a. Subcommittee reports
    - Outreach Subcommittee
    - Arm Fund Subcommittee
    - Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship
    - Invasive Species
5. Discussion Items:
  - a. Conservation Commission speaking events
  - b. Beaver Brook to Cemetery
    - Field trip: meet at the bridge at the bottom of the hill in the cemetery for 3:30 pm
  - c. Airport solar project update
  - d. Joint Council Meeting - Eversource scenic roads
6. New or Other Business
7. Adjournment – Next meeting date **Monday, April 18, 2022**

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1 City of Keene  
2 New Hampshire

3  
4  
5 CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
6 MEETING MINUTES  
7

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

4:30 PM

Council Chambers,  
City Hall

**Members Present:**

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair  
Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair  
Councilor Robert Williams  
Art Walker  
Ken Bergman (via Zoom; non-voting)  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate  
Brian Reilly, Alternate  
Steven Bill, Alternate  
John Therriault, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant

**Members Not Present:**

Eloise Clark

8  
9  
10 **1) Call to Order**

11  
12 Chair Von Plinsky called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM.

13  
14 **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2022 & February 10, 2022**

15  
16 January 18 revisions: Mr. Reilly should be listed as present. The adjournment time should read  
17 5:21. Line 129: replace “Piscah” with “Pisgah.”

18  
19 Vice Chair Madison moved to approve the January 18, 2022 minutes as amended, which Mr.  
20 Walker seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

21  
22 February 10 revisions: on lines 149 and 150, language should be stricken that refers to the Goose  
23 Pond Stewardship Plan suggesting considering incorporating other parcels.

24  
25 Mr. Therriault moved to approve the February 20, 2022 minutes as amended, which Mr. Reilly  
26 seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.  
27  
28  
29

30     **3) Guest Speaker – Matt Kelly, County Forester**  
31

32 Chair Von Plinsky welcomed guest speaker, Matt Kelly, who is the Natural Resource Field  
33 Specialist for the University of NH Extension. Mr. Kelly said he wanted to introduce himself and  
34 explain what he does as County Forester, highlight some significant forest resources in the area,  
35 identify some issues or concerns of interest to this Commission, and then welcome discussion.  
36 Mr. Kelly shared that he has degrees in forestry and forest resources management. Prior to  
37 arriving in NH, he taught at Michigan Tech University. He taught courses in forest resource  
38 management and forest operations, in addition to social sciences research.

39  
40 Mr. Kelly continued sharing his core responsibilities as County Forester. He visits woodlots with  
41 private landowners, assists consulting foresters and other natural resource professionals, leads  
42 workshops and educational events, manages the County Farm, acts as the County Chair/Inspector  
43 for the American Tree Farm System, is the State Representative for Securing NE Forest Carbon  
44 (regional, grant-funded effort to make more people aware of science and management of forest  
45 carbon, climate change, and the emerging forest carbon market that offers benefits to  
46 landowners), serves on various committees, and fields email/phone inquiries related to  
47 trees/forests.

48  
49 My. Kelly expanded upon his duty visiting woodlots with private landowners. His goal is to visit  
50 as many woodlots as possible in the county. He generally tracks walks with property owners,  
51 with photos and GPS points, which he can later share with the landowners for their viewing.  
52 During the walks, he talks with the landowners about their goals and objectives. He does a  
53 general assessment and discusses what interests that landowner (e.g., creating habitat, timber  
54 quality, applying to cost share programs, etc.). His goal is to get landowners further along the  
55 path to good stewardship. After the visits, he shares a summary and connects them with relevant  
56 local professionals, like arborists or conservationists.

57  
58 Next, Mr. Kelly described his duties leading workshops catered to a broad audience, from tree  
59 identification for the general public to more technical projects, such as one on Beech control for  
60 private foresters' continuing education. Sometimes he leads forest ecology hikes like the recent  
61 one at Goose Pond. He delivers both in-person events and occasional online webinars via Zoom.  
62 There are a range of topics that can be addressed, he is starting to book those for the coming  
63 year, and he welcomed collaborations with this Commission.

64  
65 Mr. Kelly shifted focus to the forests of Cheshire County. According to the USDA Forest  
66 Service, there are 343,234 acres of forestland in Cheshire County and about 85% is owned by  
67 private families or entities. He also interacts with state foresters and municipal leadership. The  
68 average annual net total forest growth across the county is 15.99 million cubic feet per year, the  
69 average annual harvest is 7.91 million cubic feet per year, and the growth-to-cut ratio is 2.02. He  
70 explained the growth-to-cut ratio, stating that we are growing twice as much volume in wood as  
71 we are removing annually. It is a broad indicator of "sustainability," but he said how those

72 harvests are conducted is another thing. In response to Councilor Madison, Mr. Kelly said that  
73 the private entities do include land conservancies and conservation trust funds.

74  
75 Next, Mr. Kelly discussed the age of Cheshire County forests. He showed the percentage of  
76 forestland across various age classes. It showed that approximately 70% of the forest resources  
77 in the County are between 61–100 years old, with fewer forest acres in younger age classes (20–  
78 40 years old) and in the oldest age class (120+). He said it is challenging to say what age an old  
79 growth forest is because there are different species and different types live longer than others. In  
80 general, though, he said the Department of Natural Resources at the University of Minnesota  
81 classifies old growth as anything over 120 years. He likes to consider it 150 years or more, but it  
82 depends on the characteristics of the tree. He said old growth is not just age, but structure that  
83 has been allowed to develop without large scale disturbance (human or natural). It makes sense  
84 that a lot of our forests are in the 60–100 years age class after the 1938 hurricane. He said that to  
85 create resilient forests it is important to create young growth for wildlife in addition to sustaining  
86 old growth.

87  
88 Next, Mr. Kelly shared challenges that foresters and forestry professionals encounter in the  
89 County and Statewide:

- 90     ▪ Invasive plants and pests
- 91     ▪ Degraded stands in need of rehabilitation; for example, from poor harvesting practices  
92         that only harvest the valuable trees. Rehabilitation is expensive.
- 93     ▪ Deer browse/regeneration. Deer like to eat the most valuable seedlings, including red oak  
94         and sugar maple.
- 95     ▪ Climate change effects
- 96     ▪ Low-grade markets are always a concern and while okay right now, he understood that  
97         the chip market used to be robust and has taken a hit. He said that is important because to  
98         practice good forestry you want to remove the worst trees first and allow the healthy ones  
99         to grow and improve the stand. He said there needs to be a market for the low-grade  
100         trees.
- 101     ▪ Diversity of stand ages (resiliency, structural diversity). It would be good to see more age  
102         class distribution.
- 103     ▪ Housing/development pressure
- 104     ▪ Parcelization/fragmentation

105  
106 Mr. Kelly s discussed some challenges and opportunities for Keene. First, he discussed the  
107 Goose Pond forest, stating that he had hiked and biked it, and read the Stewardship Plan. He  
108 thinks a potential challenge is going from a document to implementation and prioritizing what it  
109 in the plan. He said some activities would have a cost and others would generate revenue; he  
110 agreed with the recommendation for an endowment. He also discussed the public perception and  
111 response to any changes implemented at Goose Pond, stating that it would be an opportunity to  
112 inform the public but also a challenge to make everyone happy. Mr. Kelly continued discussing  
113 the forest and the need for structural/age class diversity, which is good for wildlife, species

114 diversity, and forest resilience. Some work suggested in the plan includes patch cutting and  
115 group selection to create this diversity.

116  
117 Next, Mr. Kelly talked about the red pine plantations scattered throughout Keene (Wheelock  
118 Park, Maple Avenue, Ladies Wildwood Park, Yale-Tourney Forest, & Robin Hood Park). He  
119 said that dead red pine threatens vehicular and pedestrian traffic. These plantations are  
120 monocultures, which are the opposite of biodiversity. They were planted 80 years ago, post-  
121 hurricane. They grow densely and are starting to show signs of poor health, most likely from salt,  
122 being close to pavement, and beetle infestations. Because there are concerns about risks to  
123 people and property, he suggested being proactive versus reactive, and having a plan in place for  
124 if something more dramatic happens. He met with the Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities,  
125 Andy Bohannon, and others about these trees because of the possibility for red pine scale  
126 arriving in Keene. It is found currently in Rindge in Cheshire County. He showed Bear Brook  
127 State Park where approximately 120 acres of red pine had to be removed due to the disease. It  
128 takes about three years to kill trees once infested. It is moved by squirrels, birds, and even  
129 humans. It is not in Keene yet but would be a significant problem if it did. He said there is public  
130 concern about these visible locations that people cherish for providing sound buffers, shade, and  
131 a pleasant environment.

132  
133 Mr. Kelly concluded his presentation, sharing his contact: [matt.kelly@unh.edu](mailto:matt.kelly@unh.edu) and 603-397-  
134 3673. He welcomed questions.

135  
136 Mr. Therriault asked if there is a native plant species list for Cheshire County or this region of  
137 NH. Mr. Kelly knew there was a native tree species list for NH, but he was unsure if it was  
138 broken down by county. He would inquire. In terms of shrubs and herbaceous plants, he  
139 imagined it was a large list and would inquire about that as well. Mr. Therriault asked if there  
140 were any linden trees native to the area. Mr. Kelly said he usually sees them planted as street  
141 trees. He said basswood was native if Mr. Therriault considered that a linden.

142  
143 The Chairman discussed the red pine issue. He imagined if money were no object at Ladies  
144 Wildwood Park, for example, and asked if the ideal would be to clear the deadwood, weaker  
145 trees, and invasives like knotweed, and then to plant a more representative sample of native  
146 trees? If money were no object, Mr. Kelly said that getting something in there regardless of the  
147 threat of red pine scale to start transitioning it to something with more diversity would be a good  
148 approach in his opinion. He suggested planting things more resilient to the oncoming climate  
149 effects, like the red maple that can handle many conditions. He said we should not leave it to  
150 chance and let anything regrow that could be invasive. Rather than waiting for trees to regenerate  
151 on their own, he thinks planting some well established 15-year-old trees above any browse line  
152 would be a good approach.

153  
154 Councilor Williams asked the current status of the hemlock wooly adelgid in Cheshire County.  
155 Mr. Kelly replied that it is in all towns. He said that despite a mild winter there were cold enough  
156 temperatures to subdue it, with up to 90% mortality possible. He said there is another non-native

157 insect, the hemlock looper, of which there was an outbreak south and east of Mount Monadnock.  
158 It is a native species that thrives when conditions are just right every 30 years and can devastate  
159 hemlock stands. Some in Jaffrey, for example, were 100% defoliated. Hopefully it was just a  
160 one-year outbreak. He said hemlocks are under threat and the elongate hemlock scale is also in  
161 Keene.

162  
163 Mr. Bergman discussed the American chestnut. He said there were free growing chestnuts,  
164 usually sprouts from stumps, in Hinsdale, along the CT River, and in Brattleboro. He said people  
165 were also trying to breed blight resistant chestnuts. Mr. Bergman asked if the State has any  
166 activities promoting the establishment of chestnuts on public or private lands. Mr. Kelly was  
167 unaware of any. He said researchers from the State University of NY developed a transgenic  
168 chestnut, which is genetic modification by taking a small sequence of the common wheat plant  
169 DNA spliced with the American chestnut, which has shown very resistant to blight. They are  
170 now waiting to see if the transgenic chestnut can be approved by the federal agencies as a food  
171 source. There has also been some mild success crossbreeding the Chinese and American  
172 chestnuts. Mr. Bergman asked if there was a black gum swamp in Cheshire County. Mr. Kelly  
173 replied that there is one at the Horatio Colony Nature Preserve; it is in its northern range. Mr.  
174 Bergman said some in NH could be close to 500 years old.

175  
176 Mr. Therriault asked Mr. Kelly's opinion of the Liberty Elm that is bred on Hastings Road in  
177 Keene. Mr. Kelly replied that he does not have enough information to have a strong opinion and  
178 would seek more information to weigh-in.

179  
180 Mr. Bill was interested in the long-term carbon storage capacities of old growth forests and how  
181 that could fit in with Commission management practices; he mentioned soils too. Mr. Kelly said  
182 the science shows that up to 50% of carbon on a forest plot acre is underground and the other  
183 50% aboveground. He said that holding onto old age classes of trees captures carbon for many  
184 years to come. He said that must be weighed against carbon sequestration, or the rate at which  
185 we pull carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. Forests sequester carbon at the  
186 fastest rate between ages 25–50, when the trees are 5–6 inches and are in high competition with  
187 each other. In his view, there should be a balance between protecting old growth for storage and  
188 young stands that sequester at a fast rate. He said if wood product were removed from managed  
189 stands, then that wood product also stores carbon for many decades both as a usable product and  
190 in a landfill.

191  
192 The Commission thanked Mr. Kelly for his time.

- 193  
194 **4) Informational**  
195 **A) Subcommittee Reports**  
196 **i) *Outreach Subcommittee***  
197

198 Mr. Haynes said this months' meeting was canceled and they hope to meet again soon. On their  
199 agenda is the Goose Pond Through the Seasons walk. A walk is planned with Jeff Littleton in the

200 fall, they are considering a possible birding event in the spring, and there was discussion of  
201 inviting Mr. Kelly back in the summer. The Subcommittee is considering revising its Tap to  
202 Toilet program about all facets of Keene's water system. Mr. Bill is potentially leading a geology  
203 walk at Robin Hood Park. Mr. Haynes appreciated the invasives schedule, so they do not  
204 overbook anything.

205  
206 **ii) *ARM Fund Subcommittee***  
207 **(1) *Update on Land Auction Purchase***  
208

209 The Chairman reported that on February 17 he had a lively discussion with the City Council  
210 about the purchase. In the end, on a vote of 11 in favor versus three opposed, the City Council  
211 approved bidding on both parcels. The Chairman did not yet have further details at the time of  
212 this meeting, but he knew the City was outbid on both parcels. He will have more details in  
213 March about the buyer and potential plans for the parcels, stating that he does not believe either  
214 is developable. The Chairman asked for Commission permission to write a thank you letter to the  
215 City Council on behalf of the Commission.

216  
217 Mr. Haynes moved that the Chairman write a letter thanking the City Council for approving the  
218 bids on behalf of the conservation Commission, which Mr. Therriault seconded, and the motion  
219 carried unanimously.

220  
221 Mr. Haynes noted that he saw an email about the ARM Fund opening for projects again. The  
222 Chairman said he would inquire, noting that last round there were no funds for this watershed but  
223 that he thought some City projects were ready if funds were available.

224  
225 **iii) *Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship***  
226

227 Mr. Haynes said the biggest news was that Lew Shelley agreed to do two trail workshops at  
228 Goose Pond, which have yet to be scheduled. The Subcommittee had identified maintenance  
229 needs that the type of wood signage they would like to implement.

230  
231 The Chairman would look into Mr. Kelly's comments about payments to landowners for not  
232 cutting trees as a possible alternative to selective harvesting, as he would personally rather leave  
233 trees to become old growth.

234  
235 **B) *Invasive Species***

236 **i) *Tentative Invasive Plant Removal Schedule***  
237

238 Councilor Williams shared the following invasives removal schedule, stating that he tried to  
239 schedule one to two events during each month of the season, with most events on Saturdays and  
240 fall events planned for Veterans and Indigenous People's days when people are off work:

- 241
  - Saturday, May 7, 11:00 AM–1:00 PM: Garlic Mustard Challenge (location TBD)



- 242                   ○ We are in need of a new patch to target, and Councilor Williams welcomes  
243                   suggestions during the month ahead of the event.
- 244                   ○ Mr. Bill asked if there was a need to monitor the garlic mustard sites from last  
245                   year and Councilor Williams said yes. The two sites from last year are in the  
246                   Councilor's neighborhood and he will keep an eye on them. He said that garlic  
247                   mustard grows over two years, so there is a chance there is still plenty to pull at  
248                   the previous locations. Still, he wanted a fresh spot as well.
- 249                   ▪ Monday, June 20, 5:00 PM–7:00 PM: Japanese Knotweed (location TBD)
- 250                   ○ Councilor Williams thought this might coincide with Juneteenth observed.
- 251                   ○ June is the best time to cut knotweed with the expectation that it will grow back  
252                   less that season. By cutting in June, the energy removed from the plant is  
253                   maximized. The site could be revisited later in the season to address regrowth.
- 254                   ▪ Saturday, July 16, 11:00 AM–1:00 PM: Watercress at the Dillant Hopkins Airport
- 255                   ○ The same patch would be addressed as last year, where 30 bags were removed, in  
256                   addition to some work further downstream.
- 257                   ▪ Saturday, August 20, 11:00 AM–1:00 PM: Placeholder
- 258                   ○ Possibly for a joint event with the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board as was  
259                   discussed last year.
- 260                   ▪ Monday, September 5 (Labor Day) 5:00 PM–7:00 PM: Buckthorn at the Old Stone Arch  
261                   Bridge at the far end of Court Street
- 262                   ○ Mr. Bill noted that there is significant poison ivy at this location.
- 263                   ▪ Monday, October 10 (Indigenous People’s Day) 4:30 PM–6:30 PM: Norway Maple,  
264                   Bittersweet and Japanese Barberry at Robin Hood Park
- 265                   ▪ Friday, November 11 (Veteran’s Day) 4:00 PM–6:00 PM: Burning Bush at the Industrial  
266                   Heritage Rail Trail

267

268 The Chairman thanked Councilor Williams for his effort.

269

270 **5) Discussion**

271 **A) Conservation Commission Speaking Events**

272

273 The Chairman said that Ms. Clark’s suggestion of guest speakers like Mr. Kelly would continue  
274 with Amanda Littleton from the Cheshire County Conservation District in March, Councilor  
275 Madison in April, and Anne McBride from the Monadnock Conservancy in May.

276

277 The Chairman also wanted to kick-off the Commission speaking events this summer in  
278 May/June, when it is not too hot for outdoor events. Councilor Madison thought that was a great  
279 idea. The Chair mentioned Elm City Compost and a possible waste event, without reinventing  
280 the wheel. Councilor Madison suggested a trash talk and said he would start looking into it.  
281 Councilor Williams said the Library has great venues for something like this; they are making  
282 the courtyard capable of hosting outdoor events in addition to the space at Heberton Hall. There  
283 has been a lot of investment to ensure the Library can support hybrid events streamed live.

284

285 Mr. Bill wondered if these Commission events could piggyback on some other events already  
286 scheduled in the City. Councilor Madison agreed it was a good idea to take advantage of a  
287 captive audience and more diverse crowd. Chair Von Plinsky suggested something on food waste  
288 to accompany Taste of Keene. Councilor Madison noted that there is an amphitheater for events  
289 behind the Monadnock Food Co-Op, which is active in limiting food waste and would likely  
290 partner on such an event. Councilor Madison will take the lead and the Chairman will help.  
291 Councilor Madison will inquire about the library as a rain venue. Mr. Bill said it would be  
292 helpful to have a list of City events.

293  
294 **B) Beaver Brook to Cemetery**

295  
296 The Chairman had not had a chance to work on this. He did talk with Mr. Bohannon, who was  
297 excited about using green space we already have to spread the word on wildlife habitat and  
298 invasive species. The Chairman would follow-up more before the March meeting, especially  
299 after the auction process brought a lot of attention to the length of the Beaver Brook watershed,  
300 which he thinks the Commission could use as a spine for events to remove invasive species and  
301 highlight the great wildlife in Keene. Councilor Williams said she was in the neighborhood and  
302 would like to go on the next walk with Mr. Bohannon. The Chairman would try to schedule a  
303 Committee field trip before the next meeting to the cemetery for a short walk down the Brook  
304 with Mr. Bohannon, weather dependent.

305  
306 **C) Airport Solar Project Update Timeline**

307  
308 The Chairman reported that he requested more details from Staff on the solar array by the  
309 Airport, but Staff had been busy with the budget process. He hoped to have more details at the  
310 next meeting. Mr. Therriault had a phone call scheduled the next day with the Assistant Public  
311 Works Director. The Chairman asked Mr. Therriault to inquire about a brief overview on the size  
312 of the project and how much timber was removed. Mr. Therriault would also inquire about the  
313 possibility for a pollinator border on the inside or outside of the fence. Chair Von Plinsky said a  
314 Bill recently passed his desk about creating pollinator score cards for big solar projects, but it did  
315 not move forward; he would share a link. He also said there is more than just the fence perimeter,  
316 noting that ground cover could also be used under solar panels as pollinator habitat. Mr. Bill  
317 asked Mr. Therriault to also inquire about forthcoming solar projects in the City so the  
318 Commission can be proactive; the Chair was unaware of any.

319  
320 Mr. Bergman asked for an update on the wildlife fence at the Airport, as he has had challenges  
321 reaching the Airport Director about the budget/planning status of that project. The Chair would  
322 add that to his discussion with Staff, noting that there had been a lot of turnovers in the  
323 Community Development Department.

324  
325  
326  
327

328     **6)     New or Other Business**

329

330     Mr. Bergman noted that the Harris Center petitioned the City Council to close Jordan Road for  
331     the amphibian migration and wondered if the City Council would have any objection or need to  
332     hear Commission support. Councilor Williams said the matter was referred to Committee, which  
333     would make a recommendation, and send it back for Council vote. He said the City Council had  
334     already been through the matter of amphibian migration for multiple years and heard the matter  
335     of Jordan Road right before Covid-19, when the Council did approve despite some safety  
336     concerns. Councilor Williams did not anticipate problems with the request but would be  
337     attentive.

338

339     **7)     Adjournment**

340

341     There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 5:38 PM.

342

343     Respectfully submitted by,  
344     Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker  
345     February 28, 2022

346

347     Reviewed and edited by,  
348     Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant

349