



CONSERVATION COMMISSION

AGENDA

Monday, December 19, 2022

4:30 PM

**Room 22, Parks & Recreation
Center**

Commission Members

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

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 – November 21, 2022
3. Report- outs
 - 1) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Committee
 - 2) Outreach
 - 3) Invasive Species
 - 4) Land Conservation
4. Discussion Items:
 - a) Airport proposed wildlife control fence (Dave Hickling, Airport Director)
 - b) Conservation Commission speaking events
 - c) [Downtown Reconstruction Project](#)
 - d) Downtown Tree Inventory
 - e) Photo library
5. Adoption of the 2023 Meeting Schedule
6. New or Other Business
7. Adjourn – Next meeting date: **Tuesday, January 17, 2023**

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 CONSERVATION COMMISSION
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, November 21, 2022

4:30 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Alexander Von Plinsky, IV, Chair
Councilor Andrew Madison, Vice Chair
Councilor Robert Williams
Art Walker
Ken Bergman
Thomas Haynes, Alternate
Brian Reilly, Alternate
Steven Bill, Alternate (Arrived Late, via Zoom)

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Eloise Clark
John Therriault, Alternate

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9
10 **1) Call to Order**

11
12 Chair Von Plinsky called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

13
14 **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – October 17, 2022**

15
16 A motion by Vice Chair Madison to approve the minutes of October 17, 2022 was duly seconded
17 by Mr. Walker and the motion carried unanimously.

18
19 **3) Report-Outs**

20
21 Chair Von Plinsky noted that these are all working groups, with the exception of the Greater
22 Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee, meaning the meeting is announced publicly,
23 minutes are prepared, and a quorum of members could be present.

24
25 **A) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Committee**

26
27 Mr. Haynes reported that the Subcommittee met the previous week and had a good meeting
28 about many things. They talked a lot about signage because individuals are doing unauthorized
29 blazing in the park. Thus, the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities, Andy Bohannon,

30 erected temporary signage asking people to not blaze and indicating that the Subcommittee was
31 working on new trail signs soon. The Subcommittee hoped that a volunteer sign maker would be
32 involved but that had not panned out. Thus, Mr. Haynes would be using his own tools to make
33 the signs himself and they will be placed in the park as they are created. The signs would be
34 nailed to trees in some instances and placed on posts in other instances. Mr. Bergman mentioned
35 that this is not a good time of year for driving posts.

36
37 Mr. Haynes continued that the Subcommittee has tools at their disposal now. There are enough
38 for two small working groups to be in the field when the weather improves. The Subcommittee
39 talked about removing the kiosk at the north trailhead to reorient people to the new trailhead
40 opened last summer. The Subcommittee would be doing field work on December 2 and possibly
41 December 16 to take some trees down. If any Commissioners are available, help is needed to
42 move some timber to build a walkway. The Subcommittee also discussed Park maps and settled
43 on a design that would hopefully be available soon at the trailheads. The Subcommittee also
44 discussed their scope of work for next spring/summer to keep moving forward.

45 46 **B) Outreach**

47
48 Mr. Haynes reported that this work group also met last week. They were unsure at the last
49 meeting whether there would be a fall “Goose Pond Through the Seasons” walk, but just after
50 that meeting, Jeff Littleton confirmed that he would lead the walk on reading the forested
51 landscape. Mr. Haynes said it was a good walk.

52
53 A motion by Mr. Haynes to pay Jeff Littleton of Moosewood Ecological a \$150 honorarium for
54 the fall 2022 Goose Pond Through the Seasons Walk was duly seconded by Vice Chair Madison
55 and the motion carried unanimously.

56
57 Mr. Haynes said the group also brainstormed starting to contact people for a Tap-to-Toilet event
58 that was discussed pre-pandemic. The group still likes the idea and is aiming for fall 2023 with
59 the hope that there would be a walk at the Roxbury Reservoir. The program would be four parts:
60 1) a walk, 2) a lecture, 3) visit the water supply, and 4) visit the Wastewater Treatment Plant.
61 This would provide participants a history of Keene’s water.

62
63 Mr. Haynes noted that Mr. Bill was welcome to lead more geology walks. Mr. Bill thought about
64 something in the spring.

65
66 Mr. Haynes reported that the Goose Pond Through the Seasons winter walk would be something
67 on forest ecology and wildlife to educate people on the ecology of the forest. This is planned for
68 mid-February 2023. There was also discussion of a spring 2023 bird walk, which was successful
69 last year and could be in a different part of the forest this year. A summer program would be
70 harder to plan but the group would continue discussing the possibility of an event with the New
71 England Mountain Biking Association. In fall 2023, they discussed the idea of a history walk on
72 some of Mr. Haynes’ research of the forest.

73 The group also discussed a spring amphibian walk at Robin Hood Park and Mr. Haynes had been
74 reaching out to contacts about that. Also, the group discussed a birding/wildlife photo event at
75 the Airport, which Mr. Bergman agreed would be a good idea in the spring, perhaps May. Mr.
76 Bergman would bring further ideas to the working group.

77

78 Finally, this month the working group discussed a possible event on loons. Mr. Reilly is a
79 member of the statewide Loon Association. However, there are no loon ponds within the City
80 limits; options would be Spofford or the other side of RT-32 from the Airport in Swanzey at
81 Wilson Pond.

82

83 **C) Invasive Species**

84

85 Councilor Williams said the last event of the year was held on November 11 (Veteran’s Day) and
86 although it rained, there were seven participants, including a few students from around town who
87 heard about the event online and came to Keene. During this event, the group pulled bittersweet
88 vines, which were everywhere on this section of the Rail Trail by Eastern Avenue. They
89 eliminated most vines around the parking area. That felt more effective to Councilor Williams
90 than some of the other things they do because removing the vine unveiled trees that might
91 survive now. He said the main innovation this time was that they did not bag the invasives, but
92 rather gathered them into a brush pile on a raised palette. This pile would be monitored over the
93 winter and there would be a judgement call in the spring about whether to ask the City to take it
94 away or to let it go. A similar approach was used by a group on knotweed at the Ashuelot River
95 Park. Councilor Williams said cutting down the invasives is the fun part but bagging them takes
96 a lot of work and creates a lot of waste. In the future, he hopes to use a combination of garbage
97 bags and brush piles. Chair Von Plinsky favored using less plastic.

98

99 **D) Land Conservation**

100 **i) *30x30 Program***

101

102 Chair Von Plinsky said the working group would meet the next week for the first time in a while,
103 and they would discuss the “30 x 30” program. The goal of this program is to conserve 30% of
104 Keene’s land by 2030, but part of that is figuring out where the City is now. To that end, the
105 Commission proceeded to the next agenda sub-item.

106

107 **ii) *Antioch Collaborative Science Initiative Program***

108

109 The Chair and Ms. Brunner had applied since the last meeting (application was in the agenda
110 packet) for an Antioch University New England Collaborative Science Initiative Program, which
111 is for students seeking a studio project overseen by a mentor professor. Thus, the application was
112 for students to spend a semester looking at all parcels of land in Keene and their current
113 conservation status to determine areas best suited for conservation in the future—e.g., ease of
114 access, resources, connectivity, etc. The students would develop a matrix to help guide the
115 Commission as a starting point as they move forward toward a 30x30 goal. Next, the students

116 and associated instructors at the University will review the applications and let the City know
117 whether they accept the project for the spring semester. If the proposal is not accepted, the
118 Commission would move forward on this effort with less help. While there was no specific
119 deadline for a decision listed on the application, the Chair hoped they would hear something
120 before the winter break. He said it would be great to have motivated students to help sift through
121 the data. The Chair and Ms. Brunner moved forward with the application without a Commission
122 discussion because the opportunity and deadline had arisen since the last meeting and before this
123 one. If the proposal is accepted, the Commission should have a motion to accept the project. The
124 application was created by Antioch University.

125

126 Mr. Bergman appreciated the organized responses and workflow in the application because it
127 would help guide the work group even if they do not have students participate. The Chair
128 thought there were one or two professors supervising the students. Mr. Bergman cited a similar
129 case from Keene State College. The Chair thinks this project is a good fit for the students and
130 does not require them to travel far. The Commission budget or the City (the Chair would find
131 out) would have to reimburse direct costs like student travel, office materials, equipment, etc.
132 But there was no other associated fee with the student program.

133

134 Regarding the 30x30 program, Councilor Williams thought that for it to be effective, they would
135 need to get into the upcoming Master Plan process, which he asked Ms. Brunner for more details
136 on. Ms. Brunner said the Master Plan *Update* is upcoming; she was very specific that this is an
137 update to the Master Plan, not a complete rewrite. This is expected to be underway in fall 2023,
138 when funds are budgeted in the Capital Improvement Program. The first stage would be updating
139 the community vision with lot of outreach, to ensure the assumption is correct that the
140 community still supports the foundations of the 2010 Master Plan. In the second year, the
141 community feedback and data would likely be outsourced to a consultant. Councilor Williams
142 said it sounded like there would be a product in 2024–2025 and Ms. Brunner agreed. Councilor
143 Williams said it sounded like community outreach was a critical part of the process and as
144 considering 30x30, the Commission needed to think about how to go into the Master Plan
145 process with the community saying they want to accept the project. The Commission would wait
146 to make a recommended motion on this project after a more formal discussion of the idea and
147 whether the Commission wants to recommend to the City Council and community to go after
148 this goal. The Commission would discuss this more in the coming months as the working group
149 makes more headway.

150

151 **4) Discussion Items**

152 **A) Conservation Commission Speaking Events**

153

154 Vice Chair Madison said he talked to Brett Amy Thelen from the Harris Center, who seemed
155 interested in doing the first talk and thought it was a good idea. The Vice Chair wanted to follow
156 a model similar to the Science Cafés in Concord and Nashua, which are usually in the evening at
157 a restaurant with people interested in science. The guest would speak for 20 minutes, followed
158 by 10 minutes of Q&A, and 30 minutes for networking. He wants to call Keene’s program

159 Conservation Cafés. He planned to discuss having the first event(s) at Brewbakers. He thought
160 enough people would be interested to make it a worthy venture. He recalled that there is an
161 Outreach budget for speakers' honorariums. The Vice Chair imagined the events starting at 6:00
162 PM and lasting one hour. He hoped to have this first event in January. He hoped for Commission
163 attendance, but they would have to be careful to not establish a quorum. He wanted to work on
164 ideas and how to advertise the event with the Outreach working group. The Vice Chair would
165 reach out to the Harris Center and Monadnock Conservancy as potential partners to reach a
166 wider audience. If the Parks and Recreation Department could not advertise these like most
167 Outreach events, Ms. Brunner noted that they could be advertised on the Community
168 Development Department social media. Mr. Reilly imagined repeat attendance month-after-
169 month as the idea catches on. Vice Chair Madison said that if the idea blew-up, they could seek
170 voluntary donations from participants to help keep it going. Everyone agreed that Brewbakers
171 was a good location to start.

172

173 **B) Airport Proposed Wildlife Control Fence**

174

175 The Airport Director, David Hickling, would be visiting the Commission in December and
176 Commissioners were encouraged to bring questions. Mr. Bergman hoped the Airport Director
177 would bring graphics or maps to allow a more concrete discussion of the project plan. The Chair
178 would follow-up with Mr. Hickling. Mr. Bergman would share his report from a few years ago in
179 the Google Drive as a reminder for the Commission.

180

181 **C) Downtown Tree Inventory**

182

183 Mr. Haynes heard from Mr. Bohannon, who said there was a tree inventory on some of Main
184 Street and to contact the Director of Public Works, which the Chair would follow-up on. Mr.
185 Bergman mentioned a downtown tree inventory report from some local university students in
186 2010. Some reports he found were in software he did not have access to. Mr. Bergman added
187 some files to the shared Google Drive on urban and municipal tree inventory sites, including one
188 from a town that is similar in size to Keene. He said there were plenty of examples from across
189 the country. Mr. Haynes mentioned the inventory of the Ashuelot River Park. Mr. Bergman
190 mentioned the Bartlett Tree inventory at Keene State College, the latter of which was not in a
191 format generally readable by the public. Councilor Williams is a professional and could help to
192 access some of those inaccessible files. Councilor Williams also mentioned that the Keene
193 Library also has a good record of their trees. Chair Von Plinsky said the first job might be to
194 compile what exists before deciding a next step. Ms. Brunner found a tree inventory spreadsheet
195 from 2015 that she would upload to the Google Drive; there was discussion of whether this was
196 for street or private property trees, but no one was sure at this point.

197

198 Ms. Brunner reported that most downtown trees would likely be removed with the downtown
199 utility project. The consultant for the project analyzed the trees and their conditions. Trees will
200 be removed where needed for utility replacement or if they are diseased or dying. They will try
201 to save the trees they can. There is a presentation on the downtown project website available via

202 the City of Keene homepage that shows what trees will remain. Mr. Bergman noted that at Keene
203 State, the consultant provided a dollar value for each tree, noting that people should consider
204 those construction losses.

205
206 Councilor Williams mentioned that recently at City Council, he and Vice Chair Madison voted to
207 accept a donation of trees to Robin Hood Park. Gentle Dental will plant one tree at Robin Hood
208 for each new patient. This is to replace a budget line for new trees that was removed from the Pat
209 Russell Park project. The City would decide the specific trees to plant, and Councilor Williams
210 was confident they would choose native species. The City's consulting forester might be Matt
211 Kelly from the University of NH Extension. This would be on the agenda again in December.

212

213 **D) Photo Library**

214 **E) Shared Committee Folder on Google Drive**

215

216 All members should have received a link to the shared Google Drive and the public link was
217 listed on the bottom of the agenda. The Public can click to view what is in the drive, but only the
218 Commission can edit the contents. Anyone without a Gmail account should save the link they
219 received from Ms. Brunner via email for future access. She and the Chair could help those
220 without Gmail to access. This drive is shared with other City committees, and it could run out of
221 space, at which point the Commission could consider paying for more storage. All
222 Commissioners should be attentive to what they upload and edit because it is a public drive.
223 Everyone was encouraged to try to use it before the next meeting.

224

225 It was agreed that the photo library should be on this drive and not associated with the Historical
226 Society Flickr, which was still a work in progress.

227

228 **5) New or Other Business**

229

230 There was no new or other business reported.

231

232 **6) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Monday, December 19, 2022**

233

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

235

236 Respectfully submitted by,
237 Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker
238 November 30, 2022

239

240 Reviewed and edited by,
241 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

242



CONSERVATION COMMISSION

2023 Meeting Schedule

Meetings are generally held on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4:30PM

Site Visit, if needed, at 3:30PM

TUESDAY, January 17 (Monday Holiday)

TUESDAY, February 21 (Monday Holiday)

Monday, March 20

Monday, April 17

Monday, May 15

Monday, June 19

Monday, July 17

Monday, August 21

Monday, September 18

Monday, October 16

Monday, November 20

Monday, December 18