

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 20, 2021

4:30 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant

Members Not Present:

All Present

1) Call to Order

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

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 19, 2021

Councilor Williams moved to approve the minutes of July 19, 2021, which Mr. Walker seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3) Applications – None

4) Informational

A) Subcommittee Reports

i) *Outreach Subcommittee*

Mr. Haynes reported that Mr. Bill would lead a geology walk at Goose Pond on Saturday, October 23. The Subcommittee had not met to discuss winter walks yet. Vice Chair Clark continues submitting Nature Nuggets monthly.

ii) *ARM Fund Subcommittee*

There would be no non-public session at this meeting. Regarding the City Forest idea, the Chairman had contacted the Monadnock Conservancy, who he anticipates know much more about conserving land. He had not received a response yet. He hopes to meet with them before the next meeting to get guidance on moving the idea forward.

iii) *Goose Pond Stewardship Subcommittee [not formally agendized]*

The group did not meet last month due to Staff limitations. The next meeting is Friday, October 8, 2021, when the Subcommittee would continue prioritizing efforts at Goose Pond and continue seeking a final member of the group. They seek a community member enthusiastic about the pond and forest.

B) *Invasive Species*

Councilor Williams recalled success with invasive species pulls earlier in the season, and he hoped to do something else for fall, whether Japanese knotweed, burning bush, glossy buckthorn, or many others. Vice Chair Clark suggested pulling a patch of knotweed at Robinhood park on the eastern side of the pond where there is a small waterfall on the right side along the water course as you enter the woods. Councilor Williams liked the idea and said it was a good time to pull it while it is still flowering and before the plants' energy goes back into the roots for the winter, so they grow back with less energy next year. There was consensus that this was a good location, and the best timing would be the week before or after the October 18 Conservation Commission meeting. Councilor Williams would choose the time and place and email details to Ms. Marcou so she can begin advertising.

Mr. Bergman said the week before this meeting he was riding his bike along Maple Avenue and toward the intersection with upper Court Street where the new rotary is. There is a white line that demarcates the traffic lane from the shoulder, which is paved. He tried to bike on that shoulder because of all the car traffic and the knotweed was encroaching far into shoulder and even across the white line. He has used the See Click Fix app and he said the City Staff had been very responsive and while the knotweed at this location is not as pervasive as in the park, he thought the City might address it given that it is quite accessible from the road; it is not a good location for a group of citizens. Because he sees knotweed everywhere while it is flowering, he thought the See Click Fix app could be useful to map knotweed locations; commissioners could compile lists on public properties, rights-of-way, and visible areas on private properties that have potential to spread to public property or other private properties. He is interested in creating a knotweed database as a premier invasive that could require professional chemical applications to manage it over time in some locations. Chair Von Plinsky wondered if the See Click Fix app might be a way to collect data on knotweed locations, given that Staff are so responsive to submissions, like downed trees or power lines. Even if Staff could not solve the knotweed, they would at least have a catalog of all the complaints that the Commission could use; there could be discrepancies in GPS locations between

phones, though they are fairly accurate today. Councilor Madison suggested discussing the idea with the Director of Public Works, Kürt Blomquist. Mr. Haynes asked that the event not be scheduled to conflict with Mr. Bill's walk at Goose Pond on October 23.

Mr. Bill asked the importance of knotweed for pollinators. Mr. Therriault said knotweed is a large source of nectar during its two-week flowering period and non-native honeybees store that for winter in large amounts because they nest in large groups. Most other pollinators have already created their winter nests, though you would still see them using knotweed. Mr. Therriault said knotweed is not an essential source of nectar for any pollinators. All bumblebees besides the queen die before winter while she hibernates, having already mated, and she only needs a few small sources of nectar until spring. As a conservationist, he did not think the Commission should worry about knotweed removal regarding pollinators as it would not be fatal for any pollinator species.

5) Discussion Items

A) Conservation Commission Speaking Events

When he initiated this idea, Councilor Madison said the expectation was that people would be vaccinated and the infection rates would be lower by winter. Because that did not happen, he thought this matter should be kept on the back burner until the Commission can responsibly hold an indoor speaking event. He and the Chairman agreed that this was unfortunate but prudent.

B) Multiyear Pollinator Census Results for Cheshire County

Mr. Therriault received a report from Moosewood Ecological with a bee (only) census for 2015—2020 in Cheshire County, which showed 117 species from all over North America. He said this was a good starting point for a pollinator survey in a local park next year, because participants would know they were identifying one of 117 on the expected population list.

Mr. Bergman recalled that approximately 5-6 years ago, the Cheshire County Conservation District tried to establish many pollinator gardens/venues throughout the County. He said they abandoned the one they tried to set-up at Keene State College, but he imagined there were others functioning in the County. Mr. Therriault was unaware of that program and its locations, but he drives around and sees people gardening for pollinators and said there are a few established pollinator gardens in the area. Mr. Therriault spoke with the Parks, Recreation & Facilities Director, Andy Bohannon, about establishing pollinator strips on unused land at the Mountain View Cemetery but there were no plans to implement yet.

6) New or Other Business

Vice Chair Clark reported that she is a member of the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC), which is updating its Corridor Management Plan that was last written in 2006. Her task was to inform the Commission about the process that would occur in every town along 60 miles of the Ashuelot River in the 1/4-mile corridor on either side of the riverbanks, which includes some

urban areas in Keene that are not under shoreline protection. ARLAC is trying to enlist help from Antioch University and other naturalists like Vice Chair Clark to document the natural resource conditions, resource use, and any threats in the corridor impinging upon the river itself and affecting water quality, as well as any conflicts that might arise between resource protection and development. ARLAC would meet again on September 21. At some point, Vice Chair Clark would solicit the help of the Commission, possibly through a questionnaire that elicits the Commissioners' diverse knowledge of the corridor. ARLAC is still determining how to conduct the inventory. Mr. Bill asked who would gather the data and Vice Chair Clark said the ARLAC representatives from each town; she represents Keene. Councilor Madison asked if there was a consultant drafting the plan. Vice Chair Clark said that concurrently, the State is doing a resource inventory of the Ashuelot River waters and ARLAC would receive that data. ARLAC is responsible for what happens on the shorelines, the visible things such as erosion or a pipe emitting something toxic, for example. She thinks it is doable for a layperson to follow stopping points and check the resources. The Chairman read the 2006 plan and asked if there would be an assessment of progress since 2006. Vice Chair Clark said yes and someone from Southwest Regional Planning Commission is writing a grant for ARLAC that would pull together a lot of data, so there would be professional help at the end. Additionally, there is summer (4-month) water quality monitoring data available since 2001 that should be interesting. In response to Councilor Madison, Vice Chair Clark how the data was distributed from the Department of Environmental Services, but she would get him that information; they just finished the season, and she could send the results to everyone. Vice Chair Clark thinks Councilor Madison would have great input on the data.

The Chairman reminded everyone of the Source to Sea Cleanup event with meeting points at Ashuelot Park on September 24, at Beaver Brook on September 25, and in Winchester on September 26. He said it was helpful to have waders or a kayak/canoe, but people can also haul trash away from the shore and cleanup the shoreline.

On October 2, Mr. Therriault would be acquiring a lot of native lupine starts from Deerfield, MA that would be ready for planting the following week. Because of the Commission's focus on Goose Pond, he wanted a small patch planted there along a pine grove. Other suggestions for planting locations included the Airport property, where the Airport Director and crews have been amenable to mowing exceptions to allow specific plantings and conditions for the Caterpillar Lab's work. The location is coming from RT-32 to Airport Road along the left before the terminal in a grassy field outside the Airport fence, where there is a utility road along a pine grove; the grassy/sandy area is approximately 50 feet from the pine edge. Mr. Therriault would look at the area and speak to the Airport Director. Because knotweed must be pulled every year to keep it under control, Mr. Therriault did not recommend planting the lupine at Robinhood Park where the knotweed pull would disturb the ground.

Mr. Bergman requested institutional knowledge from Mr. Lamb at the next meeting about an area he visits periodically in NW Keene on Summit Ridge Road, which connects Summit Road with the Skyline Drive area. There is an area not too far from Summit Road that floods regularly; there is a pond on the south side with ducks and other animals frequent and on the other side, it looks like

wetland vegetation. The road is frequently flooded after heavy rains. He wondered about the wetlands considerations when that was paved, which he thought was at least 15 years ago. He wondered if there was a history of wetlands issues evaluated at that site before or after it was paved. The discussion could continue next month.

7) **Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Monday, October 18, 2021**

There being no further business, Chair Von Plinsky adjourned the meeting at 5:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
September 21, 2021

Reviewed and edited by,
Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assistant