

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

8:00 AM

Recreation Center Room 12

Members Present:

Councilor Steve Hooper
George Foskett
Chuck Redfern
Paul Bocko

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation
& Cemeteries

Members Not Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Jenna Spear-O'Mara
Judy Sadoski

1) Welcome & Call to Order

The Board agreed to have Councilor Hooper act as Chair for this meeting. The Board also agreed to include Mr. Bocko as a regular member for this meeting.

Councilor Hooper called the meeting to order at 8:10 AM.

2) Approval of Minutes – May 8, 2018

Mr. Bohannon clarified information from the last meeting because he was not in attendance.

- 3rd paragraph of page 2 – there should not be reference to a contract. There is no actual contract with AGM and they are working on other city facilities. Mr. Foskett suggested it should indicate that work is just for the arboretum.
- Top of page 3 – regarding the landscape agreement, there is no contract agreement so the budget is separated into different line items totaling \$16,000; there should be no mention of a contract for landscaping. There is a \$5,000 agreement with AGM for mulching.

Mr. Foskett made a motion to approve the minutes of May 8, 2018 as amended, which was seconded by Mr. Redfern and carried unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported that he received three expenditures since May: 1) \$1,250 for AGM spring cleanup, 2) \$2,500 for mulching, and 3) \$175 for fertilizer treatment provided by Bartlett. Bartlett applied the fertilizer treatment in May and will do so again in late June. All park beds were mulched, which is more than in the past.

4) Friends of Ashuelot River Park Report

Mr. Foskett reported the highlight of the year so far was Saturday, June 9, when many volunteers worked in the park from organizations including the Old Homestead Garden Club and Next Level Church. He was very pleased with the turnout. Significant work was accomplished on the cobbles around the gazebo, weeding, the area near Starbucks, and the area between the park and Mascoma Bank (by Peter Ketchum and Diane Matthews).

Mr. Foskett continued that the 501(c)(3) application is still in progress as the Friends await a decision from the Attorney General. He added that the Friends would meet on June 12 at 4:00 PM and all are welcome to attend. He said more volunteers have been taking over areas in the park, including Yves Gakunde from Antioch, the Elm City Rotary, and Rotaract. He also met with a retired teacher's sorority who do park cleanup four times per year but he had yet to meet them. The sorority members were encouraged to see other groups working in the park.

Mr. Bocko reported that he was at the park Saturday as well with Jim Gruber, the outgoing Chair of the Environmental Studies Department at Antioch. He spoke with Mr. Foskett about Antioch's renewed involvement in the park, which is why he has accepted a place on the Board. They have also discussed having an Antioch faculty member on the Board to connect park projects with class work; this member could be Jean Kayira. Mr. Bohannon and Councilor Hooper agreed it will be great to rebuild the park's connection with Antioch.

5) Park Discussion

a. Volunteer Groups

Mr. Bohannon noted there was also a volunteer group from the Fenton Family Dealership visiting the park on June 12 at 1:00 PM. This group has worked at the park for their Day of Caring for several years. Mr. Bohannon hoped they could do more than just cobbles this year; most of the group went to Wheelock Park this year and a small group continued at Ashuelot Park. Mr. Foskett agreed to try to be at the park and guide the project they work on.

The KSC Links program will take place again this year on August 21. This is a program for incoming freshmen to get accustomed to college life during the summer; approximately 20 people are expected this year.

b. Chuck Simpson

Mr. Bohannon reported that Mr. Simpson (one of the lead landscape architects that established the majority of the park) agreed to return in 2017 and reestablish many beds. In 2017, he worked on the beds from the archway on West Street toward the parking lot and Starbucks. He is hired for \$4,999 so the work does not have to do out to bid. Mr. Bohannon said that is a generous price for his service; he has given back to the park for a very long time and this is a great way for him to be reconnected.

c. Hamblet Electric – Lights

Mr. Bohannon reported that the lights have arrived and he received the purchase order. The current lights, donated by the Keene Lion's Club, are from 1990 (he expressed regret for not having asked the Lion's to contribute again). The new fixtures are LED and will be brighter and more efficient, which should be a nice change for the park. There is a problem with the timer on one light that they will fix as well.

d. Programs & Events

Mr. Bohannon recalled there are always many requests for weddings at the park, all of which are denied if they are large. He informs people the park is not meant for events of that scale. There are some events, however, that he cannot prevent from happening. He received a certificate of insurance from a yoga class that takes place Sunday mornings. Mr. Foskett noted a problem several years ago with a yoga group when he suggested the participants consider making their class donations to the park. Mr. Bohannon does not believe the current group is charging money or suggesting donations but if other groups are, Mr. Bohannon will mention the Friends.

St. James Church will be holding a service in the park related to Jonathan Daniels on Sunday, July 22. This will be a larger group but Mr. Bohannon approved it with parameters like no tents or seating; they just want congregants to bring blankets to sit on. Mr. Bohannon will provide electrical access. He did not feel this would be a destructive group. He did ask them for a certificate of insurance, which is a policy for groups on city property (\$1 million liability, naming the city as additionally insured). Only small weddings are allowed in the park (less than 25 people) if there are no tents, chairs, or amplified sound; users are made aware the park is public and may be used for other activities at the same time.

e. Park Activity

6) "Hidden in Plain Sight" Homeless in Keene, NH Documentary

Mr. Bohannon followed-up on a conversation from the last meeting. He wanted to make sure concerns about park activity could be voiced at this meeting. He said there was not time to watch the film but he emailed the link so everyone can watch individually.

7) New Members

Everyone welcomed Mr. Bocko. Mr. Bohannon shared information with Dave Whaley, who is interested in joining the Board.

8) New Business

Mr. Bohannon demonstrated a feature on the City website, which better displays the various parks and cemeteries in the City. Mr. Bohannon researched other parks across the country and learned about new GIS (ESRI) technology. He developed this new site with his staff and the Planning Department and highlights include:

- Five sections: Parks & Open Spaces, Playgrounds, Ballfields, Community Courts, and Community Spaces.
- All sections link to a map that displays each location. There are adjacent links to further information about each location.
- Includes details about trails, water sources, open grass areas, etc.
- Accessible from mobile devices. If you are looking for somewhere to go, this connects directly to Google Maps and will direct you to the location.
- A photo gallery.

Mr. Bohannon said this is something positive to help City visitors find activities and he demonstrated other features, like playgrounds, for the Board. This is something he wanted the Board to be aware of and asked everyone to let him know if something needs to be added; he hopes, for example, to overlay the Bartlett tree information. Keene is the only city in New England with this interactive feature for parks that Mr. Bohannon is aware of. He credited Meghan Spaulding (Parks & Recreation) and Will Schoefmann (Planning) for developing this website improvement.

Mr. Redfern suggested including this at hotel information kiosks; Mr. Bohannon will look into that.

Councilor Hooper noted the City has done a lot of work on the website and asked how this is getting to the public. Mr. Bohannon replied he shares this information on social media and there has been good feedback so far. He is anxious to complete the trails portion because he knows there is a large group of users that will appreciate it. There is an intern this summer to work on the trails page.

Mr. Foskett asked about the sprinklers. Mr. Bohannon said that is going out to bid this fall; the narrative is finished and a scope will be sent to the finance department. Mr. Foskett asked if the green area will be straightened this fall as well. Mr. Bohannon replied no, that will take more effort and he does not think there are funds to do it. Mr. Foskett noted the City effort to “dig once” and accomplish as much as possible in one project.

Mr. Redfern asked for a report on the old wooden bridge on the Jonathan Daniels trail at the July meeting. He said it is very narrow for strollers, cyclists, etc. and there are difficulties when it is inundated. He said they are not able to apply for the rail trails grant this year but hope to next time for bridge improvements. He said it also needs crushed

stone dust occasionally. Mr. Bohannon said there are many maintenance activities in that area right now and he will work on it. He thanked Mr. Redfern for consistently sharing grant opportunities with him. Next year, Mr. Bohannon will explore a recreational trails grant program to introduce into the CIP. Councilor Hooper agreed it is great to apply next year and ensure the application is done well; he thanked Mr. Redfern for the information.

9) Next Meeting – July 10, 2018

10) Adjournment

Councilor Hooper adjourned the meeting at 9:04 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker