

City of Keene
New Hampshire

Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 10, 2018

8:00 AM

Room 11, Parks & Recreation

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Councilor Steve Hooper
George Foskett
Paul Bocko

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation
& Facilities

Members Not Present:

Jenna Spear-O'Mara
Judy Sadoski
Chuck Redfern

1) Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

2) Approval of Minutes – June 12, 2018

Mr. Foskett made a motion to approve the minutes of June 12, 2018, which was seconded by Councilor Hooper and carried unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported there were no changes since the June meeting; the budget remains the same. Mr. Foskett noted that last meeting Mr. Bohannon discussed removing the word “contract.” Mr. Bohannon will remove that from the budget. Chair Winsor asked if Bartlett Tree had come to see Mr. Bohannon; they have not.

4) Friends of Ashuelot River Park Report

Mr. Foskett noted the two oak trees need to be trimmed.

The Friends are grateful to the large group of volunteers who came to the park. The retired teachers group, Delta Kappa Gamma, has adopted the area to the right of the gazebo; they have already provided dates they will be there working. The Fenton Family Dealership group also volunteered this past month; they are an excellent contribution

each year. The KSC Links program is coming to volunteer in the park on August 21; Mr. Foskett hopes Board members will come help guide the students.

Mr. Foskett continued that Peter Ketchum did a great job trimming the weed trees between the park and bank; he was aggressive this time, though, and we might have to fill some spaces. Some trees were cut that should not have been – lilacs, etc. We are thankful for his work but we will revisit what should be cut.

Mike Ward, another volunteer, will be working on the Dave Putnam area; the cobbles are already weeded. Mr. Foskett will approach the Putnam Foundation to see if they will donate for some plantings. Mr. Ward emailed Chair Winsor to ask about replacement plants; he questioned if we have protocols for cutting and replacing. It could be a slippery slope without someone giving them good advice; Mr. Foskett agreed a process would be good. Chair Winsor said some plants are more than 20 years old and need to be replaced. Mr. Bohannon said we can develop a process but we have asked Chuck Simpson to do the beds in the front; we can ask him to look at other beds and see what can be removed. Mr. Foskett noted he has a list of the plantings and he will reach out to Mr. Simpson to walk through the park.

Mr. Bocko noted another group, Rotaract, who are also seeking advice on what to do with their bed. He suggested Amanda Littleton from the Cheshire County Conservation District or Antioch students to advise groups on park plantings. Mr. Foskett said there is a master gardener on the Friends; the Friends will be talking about Rotaract at their June meeting. Chair Winsor noted Mr. Simpson developed a plan for plantings and we need to make sure we have that. Mr. Bocko said in the past children were encouraged to develop plantings on the Rachel Marshall side of the park, which they had to propose and get approved. The students were coached on planting and were encouraged to plant native. There is a legacy of guided plantings in the park; some process is needed without it being cumbersome. Mr. Bohannon said it would be good if this group is involved in the process. Chair Winsor agreed. Mr. Foskett will contact Mr. Simpson. Mr. Foskett said there is progress getting people to take care of certain areas again. He said these volunteer groups are very willing to work, they just need supervision.

There are always conversations about Knotweed; Mr. Bohannon explained the laborious eradication process. Mr. Bocko noted his experience eliminating Knotweed on Daniels Hill Road and it is laborious; it has to be maintained for five years to ensure it is gone. Mr. Bohannon agreed it is a need, but a big task.

5) Park Discussion

Mr. Foskett mentioned replacing the gazebo with a pergola. Chair Winsor said the gazebo has become a shelter for bad activity and while it is sad to see the gazebo go, a pergola is more open and can deter undesirable activity. Mr. Bohannon agreed and thinks the pergola is a good option but he wants to make sure it is the right decision moving forward. He asked Mr. Foskett to ask Mr. Simpson his thoughts, because that gazebo was a part of his vision. Mr. Foskett agreed and said if it does go forward the Lions might take

it on as a project. Mr. Bohannon said he is seeking donations from the Lions for other things. Councilor Hooper noted the pergola at the Butterfly Park is beautiful and thinks this is a good option to discuss; he does not see people hanging out under that pergola.

Mr. Bocko noted this is related to the homeless problem in Keene and said the Rachel Marshall side of the park became a campsite after educational activities ended there. He asked what is happening with the homeless in the park; he asked if there is a City agency. Mr. Foskett suggested watching the film on the June agenda. There is outreach to the homeless by different organizations in Keene, but many of the homeless want to be left alone, without rules. Mr. Bohannon said Peter Ketchum brings the homeless trash bags and asks them to bring them as far as the power lines. Health, Fire, and Police Departments go out on occasion, but it is private property so there is little the City can do. Parks and Recreation does not get involved unless they establish camps on the park side. It is difficult to manage and the City does well to provide resources, whether or not they are received.

Mr. Bocko said he was at a picnic in June and there were people hanging out in the gazebo and it seemed unwelcoming; we want to welcome everyone and nothing should feel exclusionary. Mr. Bohannon agreed one thing that enhanced gazebo use was electrical outlets; he arrived and found both outlets used, including full use of a six-outlet power strip. After that, he cut the power. Mr. Bohannon said it is a continuous discussion and he thinks we have made progress; the lights have all been replaced on a photocell and there is a significant difference from the old lights. The lights should not be on during the day.

Chair Winsor said a lot of these subtle changes will help the park. Mr. Bohannon agreed and said he thinks it has been a good year for the park. There have been great volunteer efforts and there are more on the calendar; a lot of work gets done on volunteer days. With a minimum of two big volunteer days per year the park should do well. Now we need more use of the park; there is a church service on July 22, there are yoga classes. The more good behavior we can encourage, the better.

6) New Business

Chair Winsor noted the high school is interviewing a new horticulture teacher and he hopes they might get involved with the park. He is on the interview committee and will see if applicants are interested.

Mr. Foskett recalled discussion of getting volunteers from the high school. Mr. Bohannon said we can develop a job description for a volunteer group and give that to Jim Logan at the high school; he will make it available to groups looking to complete their community service.

Mr. Foskett asked if the parking lot and dam projects are dormant. Mr. Bohannon replied yes. The University of Rhode Island proposed an independent study of the dam, which the Planning Department is coordinating. He will keep the Board up to date on that

ARPAB Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2018

project as it gets going. They planned a tent in the park for the community forums. Now that the timeline has changed, however, that might not happen depending on weather. The project should start within the next six months. Ken Stewart's group, 1911, was looking at two projects, the dam and the parking lot. They own the parking lot and we have designs for the parking lot to be an extension of the park; this project has stalled.

Mr. Foskett asked if Mr. Whaley applied for the Board. He replied no, he will discuss with Mr. Bohannon.

7) Next Meeting – August 14, 2018

8) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker