

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 9, 2018

8:00 AM

Parks & Recreation, Room 12

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
George Foskett
Paul Bocko (Arrived Late)
Dave Whaley
Judy Sadoski

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation
& Facilities

Members Not Present:

Councilor Steve Hooper

1) Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM.

2) Approval of July 10, 2018 Minutes

Mr. Foskett moved to approve the minutes of July 10, 2018, which Mr. Whaley seconded and the ARPAB carried unanimously.

3) Finance

Mr. Bohannon reported that Bartlett Tree has a new item in the budget for work in August and September. There is also a new line item for Hamblet Electric's light improvements; they are new LED fixtures that are pleasing aesthetically and respond well to sunlight using a photocell. Mr. Bohannon already reports a reduced electric bill. Because the tree canopy in the park is at the same height as the lights, it is hard to see them from outside the park. Chair Winsor said it is valuable for the park to be as lit as possible. Mr. Foskett said police officers he has spoken to prefer the park not be lit at night so they can notice flashlight use easily. Mr. Bohannon said the lights help people feel safe.

Mr. Bohannon reported that the landscaper finished fall clean-up. Additionally, Chuck Simpson will submit an invoice when his work is complete. This is a transition year and the landscaping contract will go back to bid next year.

4) Friends of Ashuelot River Park Report

Mr. Foskett reported that the Friends continue meeting monthly. He was not at the Links volunteer day on August 18 but Mr. Bohannon, Ms. Sadoski, and Mr. Whaley did attend. The Links group did a great job, as usual. They worked to raise some cobbles; when Mr. Foskett arrived at Art in the Park, however, the cobbles were too high and he almost fell. The cobbles need to be reset; Mr. Foskett and Barry LeClair began to reset them and a teenage passerby offered to help, which saved them two hours of work.

Mr. Foskett also reported on the successful annual Monadnock United Way Day of Caring; he has requested the names of volunteers to send thank you notes. It was a rainy day but everyone worked hard on the large grass area by the Jonathan Daniels (JD) Trail bike rack. Members of the Old Homestead Garden Club (OHGC) planned to attend but did not because of the rain. They have a bench on the Starbucks side and they are working to place cobbles there. Diane Matthews, who is on the board of OHGC turned in \$600 in orders for cobbles.

Mr. Foskett continued that the Friends are still struggling to complete the 501(c)(3) non-profit process; paperwork is taking time. The Friends are also working to update their bylaws to eliminate technicalities that are no longer applicable today, like not allowing downtown merchants as members. Ms. Matthews from OHGC offered to help and has been very valuable to the process.

Mr. Bocko noted the new Provost of Antioch, Shawn Fitzgerald, is interested in being a representative of the university for the Friends. Mr. Bocko will connect him with Mr. Foskett. Mr. Foskett said they are welcome to join Friends meetings the second Tuesday of each month at 4:00 PM.

5) Park Discussion

a. Irrigation System Update

Mr. Bohannon reported the irrigation project would start on October 9 or 10. The Board was happy with this development. The contractor is from Knotts Landscaping (recently did work at the airport) and they will complete the project as the weather allows.

b. Trust Fund Update

Mr. Bohannon recalled there are two trusts for the park: the Ashuelot River Park Trust and the Memorial Trust (for specific upgrades to the park; approximately \$43,000 with interest and principal; funds the irrigation project). Knotts Landscaping offered a bid of \$36,000 for the irrigation system. When Mr. Bohannon submitted paperwork, however, he found a difference in accounting principles of the Cambridge Trust and the City of Keene. The Attorney General sent information stating the City is following the correct process. If the end result does show \$10,000 less in that trust, then the remaining balance would be \$33,000, and the remaining \$3,000 necessary for the irrigation project can come

from the other trust. He added the tie-in to City water for irrigation will come from the Parks and Recreation Operating Budget.

Mr. Bohannon continued explaining that the current irrigation system drew from the river but that has been difficult in recent years as the river is lower. With the potential dam removal, the Board needs to be proactive, which will increase cost but enhance water coverage with the new system. With new technology, staff can use software to find a specific leak in the system or turn off the irrigation during high rain periods. Mr. Whaley asked the monthly cost for water. Mr. Bohannon recalled that cost would not come from the trust, but from the Parks and Recreation operating budget. The new sprinklers are designed for complete coverage and will be great once installed.

c. Simpson Landscaping

Mr. Bohannon reported that Mr. Simpson is on track to finish his work. Mr. Bohannon will ask for an update and inform him about the irrigation system work. Mr. Foskett added he spoke with Mr. Simpson who will help the Rotaract group start work on their plot. Chair Winsor noted Board concern about replacement planting and ensuring even well-intentioned volunteer's plant in appropriate locations. He suggested Mr. Simpson could provide a list of trees and shrubs to replace. Mr. Bohannon will explore a landscaping plan in next year's budget.

d. Bartlett Tree

Mr. Bohannon reported Bartlett Tree did their work, but they also did unapproved work as well.

i. Pin Oaks Tree Work

Mr. Bohannon does not recall the Board approving Bartlett Tree work on the pin oaks, but the crew did work on them. There was not money for those trees allocated in the budget, so there is an outstanding bill from Bartlett Tree for \$1,075. Mr. Foskett asked if they finished thinning the maples on West Street; Mr. Bohannon believes they did.

Mr. Bohannon said, since the unapproved work was completed, all he can do is return to the trustees to say the Board knew the work needed to be done but Bartlett Tree moved ahead of schedule. Chair Winsor questioned if there are any other funds to use; Mr. Bohannon replied no, not outside the operating budget. He told Frank from Bartlett Tree that this is not a good situation because he cannot just take more money from the budget or trust. The pin oaks were proposed as a part of last year's work and the board said to wait until a future year, which Bartlett Tree assumed was this year.

Ms. Sadoski asked if Bartlett Tree completed all of the other work they were contracted to do this year. She is hesitant to approve paying them this amount until she knows the rest of their work is complete. Mr. Bohannon replied it is challenging because he does not know when they will be working in the park. If they completed all other work in the

contract to satisfaction, then Mr. Bohannon could move forward if the Board agrees. Mr. Bohannon will contact the Board before any additional steps are taken.

Mr. Foskett asked about the \$5,000 in the budget for the planting replacement program. Mr. Bohannon replied that is for Mr. Simpson. Mr. Foskett also asked about the \$2,500 line item for mulch. Mr. Bohannon replied that is for fall clean-up by the landscaper; that money could be reallocated if fall clean-up were canceled, which would add burden to the spring clean-up.

ii. Software Update

Mr. Bohannon recalled that five years ago, the Board paid to update the Bartlett Tree software; they inventoried trees in the park and the software allows the public or staff to scan a QR code to see photos and learn about that trees age, value, or maintenance. This project is up for renewal, but Mr. Bohannon does not think it is a necessary cost for this year. The software is valuable, but the City has not had staff time to dedicated to entering information about the trees into the system (Bartlett does not do that). Ms. Sadoski asked, if the board does not sign an agreement with Bartlett this year, if we will lose all the information they already curated. Mr. Bohannon thinks he can convince them to hold that information for one more year; they are also doing work on the library and want to cooperate with the City. Pushing this until the November trustees meeting would make the bill three months past due. Mr. Foskett asked if this Board's budget follows the calendar or fiscal year. Mr. Bohannon replied the calendar year, so he would need approval to put off paying this invoice until January. Mr. Bohannon suggested waiting until the Board can be on-site in the park with Bartlett Tree staff to better understand the work choices they made and what work remains.

e. CIP Impacts on the Park

i. West Street Dam

The West Street Dam Capital Improvement Project (CIP) was put in the calendar cycle for 2025; Council allocated funds for the project to recognize the letter of deficiency from the state now that the hydro project will not occur. Thus, the City is moving forward but is unsure of the specific actions yet to either fix the dam or remove it. Ms. Sadoski recalled having this in the CIP means there is a placeholder for it as something that might happen in that year but it is reevaluated annually and project timelines might be altered.

ii. Jonathan Daniels Trail

Staff reviewed the needs of the many trails in the City. The Jonathan Daniels trail is not a rail trail but it is heavily used. In looking at the active and passive recreation management plans and trails plan, there is \$100,000 approved annually for facilities maintenance. Mr. Bohannon introduced something similar for parks in 2017, which allocated \$50,000 for park improvement annually. This year, he proposes a \$25,000 annual open space and trails program, which will help with critical annual routine maintenance on the trail system; the City built them but does not take care of them. That \$25,000 is also important

to show the City can match funds when applying for grants or assistance to enhance trails. He is unsure if Council will approve this, it is under review by the City Manager right now.

Mr. Foskett asked if the JD trail extend through the arboretum historically and changed to near the bike rack now. Mr. Bohannon replied no, it is all the same trail depending on where you enter the park. In theory, these funds could be used in the arboretum, but Mr. Bohannon's primary intention is improvements further down the JD trail. Crews have already been working to clear grass and resurface parts of the trail. Mr. Ketchum also did a lot of work to clear brush and increase sight lines. Ms. Sadoski congratulated Mr. Bohannon for thinking about trail maintenance proactively and the importance of matching funds.

f. Hermon Betzow Letter

Chair Winsor said the letter was eye opening. Mr. Bohannon said Mr. Betzow makes good points, including failed erosion control. Mr. Bohannon does not think the Board needs to take action on this but if parking lot development ever arises again, this could be part of that conversation. Chair Winsor suggested, if funds ever were available, that they could work with a landscape designer on a plan between the parking lot and the trail. Ms. Sadoski agreed it is hard to launch a kayak there and you have to walk a long distance.

g. Steve Hooper – Bat Houses in the Park

Councilor Hooper proposes this Board collaborate with the City to put bat houses in the park. Mr. Bohannon signed an agreement for this project but is unsure where the houses will be located. Thus he still has some concerns, but he agrees with the purposes, like controlling mosquitos and public education. Mr. Bocko connected Councilor Hooper with a student at Antioch who is bat expert. Mr. Bohannon said the City does not have resources for this project right now. Mr. Foskett noted this is related to pollination work the Board discussed before. The Board agreed this is a good project and will follow for updates.

6) New Business

Mr. Foskett asked for an update on the Rhode Island School of Design project on the West Street Dam. Mr. Bohannon replied he cannot share an update at this time but will at the next meeting. Mr. Foskett also asked about the Conway School, which Mr. Bohannon will also provide an update on at the next meeting after he speaks with Ken Stewart.

7) Board Membership

Mr. Bohannon reported the Mayor is reviewing all City Committee's, which is a good time to review Board membership. Ms. Sadoski's term will end soon and Chair Winsor's term ended a long time ago but Mr. Bohannon requested for his term to continue. Technically, members on this Board serve two terms (four years). Ms. Sadoski thinks she

is on her fourth term. Mr. Bohannon has told the Mayor it is more difficult to get active members for this Board and the active members are very productive, whether their terms need to be extended or not. Mr. Bohannon will continue conversations with the Mayor. He will also speak with the City Clerk to reinforce that this is a good Board that can introduce people to the City or allow them to be active with minimal commitment.

8) Next Meeting – November 13, 2018

Chair Winsor congratulated Mr. Bohannon on an award he received. The Board agreed they are proud of the work he does in the City.

9) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:59 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker