

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday, February 12, 2019**

**8:00 AM**

**Recreation Center Room 12**

**Members Present:**

Arthur Winsor, Chair  
Councilor Steve Hooper  
George Foskett  
Paul Bocko (arrived late)  
Dave Whaley (by phone)  
Judy Sadoski (arrived late)

**Staff Present:**

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation  
& Facilities

**Members Not Present:**

**1) Call to Order**

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

**2) Approval of Minutes – December 11, 2018**

Mr. Foskett moved to approve the minutes of December 11, 2018, which Councilor Hooper seconded and the ARPAB carried unanimously.

**3) Finance Report**

Mr. Bohannon said the 2018 budget is closed and the Board would discuss the 2019 budget later in the meeting.

**4) Friends of Ashuelot Park Report**

Mr. Foskett reported that the Friends submitted their 501(c)(3) paperwork. At their last meeting, the Friends discussed the Bartlett Tree Arborscope proposal and the irrigation system. He asked what the arboretum will look like when the irrigation work is complete; currently there are many ruts where a construction trench was dug. He also noted the contractors installed a water shut-off box and asked if it is in their contract to landscape that area. Mr. Bohannon said that landscaping work is not in the contract; Mr. Foskett said the Friends will plan on that work because it is unsightly. Mr. Bohannon added that the water shut-off was not intended but was necessary.

Mr. Foskett noted that Shawn Fitzgerald, Antioch University New England Provost, has joined the Friends and is enthusiastic about reconnecting Antioch with the park. He continued reporting on the Friends' last meeting:

- Discussed Chuck Simpson not completing his work
- Discussed volunteers
- Discussed plantings moving forward; the area Mr. Simpson worked on along West Street seems bare and might need more daffodils or tulips
- Discussed the possibility of a pergola; most are in favor of a pergola because the gazebo is being abused but they want more input from this Board
- Diane Matthews is the liaison for the Elm City Roteract Club; they are enthusiastic about working on the area toward the back of the arboretum

## **5) Park Discussion**

### **a. Irrigation System Update**

Mr. Bohannon recalled the work is incomplete and will be finished in the spring; two or three weeks of work remain. The contractors have agreed to complete the work by the end of April. The project took less time than anticipated but there is still a lot to be done.

Chair Winsor said he had not seen the new water connection and will look into it; Mr. Foskett said it is in his area of the arboretum. Mr. Foskett asked how extensive the loaming will be and if April will be warm enough for seeding. Chair Winsor noted seeding can usually begin by the third week of April. Mr. Bohannon said all of the aesthetic issues from installing the irrigation system are fixable and he will be on top of it.

## **6) Budget Development**

### **a. Bartlett Tree**

Mr. Bohannon said the Bartlett Tree scope of work was in the meeting packet. Including the tree inventory will cost more than \$5,000, which means Mr. Bohannon would have to get two more quotes for the same service. Because no other companies can provide the Arborscope software, it can be written as a different line item, bringing the arborist work under \$5,000; therefore no other bids are required.

### **b. Conway School Landscape Design**

Mr. Bohannon spoke with the Conway School about redesigning the park. Initial communications said faculty review inquiries and schedule a visit in August if the proposal fits the curriculum. He inquired if it is possible to have one student for one semester to begin the inventory as an entry-level project, followed by two students the subsequent semester to work on design and planning. Knowing the cost for this student work is \$6,500, he asked for the Board's opinion in the context of the other budget items and knowing this work would not likely begin until fall. Last year the budget was \$14,000-\$16,000 and this would bring the 2019 budget to nearly \$18,000, which he said is a lot to ask from the Trust; a few years ago the budget was between \$5,000-\$9,000,

which used to be the Board standard. He said the Board could alternatively include miscellaneous funds in the budget (as common in previous years) and seek input from a local landscape designer.

Mr. Foskett asked why the Conway School services are needed. Mr. Bohannon recalled they are an option to inventory all plantings in the garden beds, consider new landscape designs in the rest of the park, and to create initial pergola designs. Mr. Foskett said there is already an inventory of plantings. Chair Winsor agreed but said it has been 30 years since the park was designed and it is time to regenerate the gardens; having someone with plant knowledge update the design will help the park evolve. Mr. Bohannon said someone local might be able to advise directions to improve the park. Mr. Foskett suggested Sarah Muston and master gardener Friends members; he asked if Bartlett Tree inventoried the species in the park. Mr. Bohannon said they only inventoried the tree species to include in Arborscope.

Councilor Hooper said he thinks this plant inventory and design is important after 30 years but he is concerned with the budget total if Conway School is included. For this fiscal year, he suggested finding local talent to work on an initial design. Chair Winsor agreed and said if Conway School is eliminated, the budget will be lower and the board will stay focused on next steps toward a master plan for the park; Ms. Sadoski agreed. Mr. Bohannon will maintain communication with the Conway School and contact others who might be able to help: Rhode Island School of Design (working on public outreach for dam alternatives), NH Tech Landscape Department, and the new Keene High School (KHS) teacher who is a landscape designer. He will also see if there are grants available to fund this work. Ms. Sadoski suggested it might be possible to spread the scope and cost of this project across a few years; Mr. Bohannon agreed and said there might also be funds leftover from the irrigation project. Mr. Foskett also suggested public fundraising, which has not occurred for many years. Councilor Hooper agreed another education group might be a good solution to compromise on budgeting.

Mr. Bocko asked if the Board has a budget maximum. Mr. Bohannon replied no, but the Trustees want the money spent for the right purposes. Eventually the Trust will run out and while that is not in the near future, the Board should as conservative as possible annually. Ms. Sadoski recalled that some park expenses are funded by the City's operating budget; the Trust pays for anything above and beyond that routine maintenance, which includes the landscape contract.

#### **c. Maintenance Contract**

Mr. Bohannon said the landscape contract went out to bid. All bids (from AGM, Brown's, and Knott's) were higher than anticipated and were rejected. In light of the rejections, Mr. Bohannon decided to instead hire two seasonal staff for facilities work; he will also use the operating budget to buy mulch. He reached an agreement with AGM, who did the maintenance last year, and they will do the same spring/fall clean-ups and mulching this year; he did not include weeding because there seems to be enough

volunteer support to manage. He still needs Council approval for this change but something similar happened recently for janitorial services.

**d. Clivus – Composting Toilet**

Mr. Bohannon reported that staff will be removing the composting toilet.

Mr. Bohannon will bring the proposed budget of \$12,295 to the Trustees including:

- Bartlett Tree: \$6,295
- Landscape Contract: \$5,000
- Miscellaneous Funds: \$1,000 (the Board agreed to increase this amount from \$500 in previous years)

Mr. Bohannon will bring more details from Conway School to the April meeting, when the Board will finalize the budget; he will discuss this possibility with the trustees when he proposes this budget.

Ms. Sadoski voted to accept the proposed budget for \$12,295, which Mr. Bocko seconded and the ARPAB carried unanimously.

**7) New Business**

Councilor Hooper reported that a graduate student from Antioch, Ingrid Evans, is working with the City to develop an education project at the park. She developed a well-thought-out proposal, with an ultimate goal to responsibly install bat houses in the park (with Mr. Bohannon's help) and develop an education program for the community to destigmatize the danger of bats. This project is just starting and is a nice opportunity to continue the mission of the park. The bats benefit the community, particularly through mosquito control, and he hopes the community will embrace the project. Chair Winsor said this is a great platform for similar projects throughout the City; he would welcome such a project at Keene State College. Mr. Bohannon agreed this would be beneficial at many parks where mosquitoes are a problem. Both Councilor Hooper and Mr. Bocko have offered to advise Ms. Evans. Councilor Hooper said Peter Poanessa offered to help with signage for the bat houses and Ms. Evans will explore creative ways to fund that signage and other materials to build the houses. Mr. Bocko said Ms. Evans is a knowledgeable Conservation Biology graduate student; he added that students with similar interests could work on this project annually.

Mr. Foskett asked what resulted from previous discussions about bridge repairs on the park trails outside the arboretum. Mr. Bohannon replied no work has occurred; there is money allocated for trail enhancements in a few years.

**8) Board Membership**

Mr. Bohannon reported there are one or two seats available on the Board. If anyone has suggestions, they should send them to Mr. Bohannon. The new horticulture teacher at

KHS might be interested but scheduling is difficult at this time. Mr. Bocko spoke with two retired teachers who worked on the Rachel Marshall project and might be interested; he will share their contacts with Mr. Bohannon.

Councilor Hooper said there are many educational opportunities in the park, which he will make an effort on this year. The Goose Pond trail walks were well-received and something similar could happen at the park. Mr. Bocko noted the focus on place-based education at Antioch, using place and the environment as a context for learning. This mission of Antioch and those of other schools could overlap with public events in the park. Mr. Bohannon agreed and noted the Keene Middle School has an outdoor learning lab. Chair Winsor agreed and said it is worth investigating if other arboretums have similar programs.

**9) Next Meeting – March 12, 2019**

**10) Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katrjna Kibler, Minute Taker