

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

8:00 AM

Recreation Center, Room 12

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Councilor Steve Hooper
George Foskett
Paul Bocko
Judy Sadoski

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation
& Facilities

Members Not Present:

1) Welcome & Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:03 AM.

2) Approval of Minutes – February 12, 2019

Mr. Foskett moved to approve the minutes of February 12, 2019, which Councilor Hooper seconded and the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board carried unanimously.

3) Finance Report

a. **Budget Adoption**

Mr. Bohannon reported that he presented the budget this Board discussed at the February meeting to the Trustees, which they accepted. Bartlett Tree is adjusting the invoice to reflect the two line items. Mr. Bohannon will ask if someone from Bartlett Tree can come to a meeting and familiarize the Board with the Arborscope software. The line item for Chuck Simpson's landscaping was removed from the budget and Mr. Bohannon will explore other options for landscape architects. Mr. Bohannon also shared the idea of a part redesign with the Trustees, who are pleased with the Board's approach.

4) Friends of Ashuelot River Park Report

Mr. Foskett said the Friends did not meet in February but a meeting was scheduled for March, which Mr. Bohannon planned to attend—the Friends can discuss moving forward

without Mr. Simpson's landscaping. Mr. Foskett will be making a phone call to get an update on the 501(c)(3) application status.

Mr. Foskett continued reporting this is an excellent time to recruit volunteers; he's had many interested people inquire about volunteering. He is requesting volunteers from the Old Homestead Garden Club to place cobbles near their bench, which will be led by Dian Matthews, who recently submitted \$600 from the group for cobbles. The area from Starbucks to the shed needs work. Additionally, the Roteract group is ready to begin working on their parcel.

Chair Winsor asked if preparations are being made for the KSC Links program this summer. Mr. Bohannon reported he has not heard from them yet but he is comfortable with the relationship now, so planning is often last minute.

5) Park Discussion

Mr. Bohannon said he received a request from Mill Hollow Works, LLC. They conduct hands-on learning courses on wood working, boat building, homesteading, and traditional crafts. They want to have a boat building course where participants build boats traditional to western England and launch them in the river. They have proposed this event in June. Mr. Bohannon said he was not comfortable with this event because of the potential liabilities, especially without knowing how the flow will be or how well-constructed the boats are. Chair Winsor said he knows someone who participated in their workshops and said they were impressive; however, he understands the liabilities.

Mr. Foskett suggested they could launch the boats from the Rachel Marshall side. Mr. Bohannon replied that it is even dangerous past the bridge; also the organizers want to use the boat landing. Chair Winsor agreed that without knowing boat quality or control, this could be a dangerous event. Ms. Sadoski added that this Board has avoided projects with paid commercial businesses; building activities and river access could be considered conducting business on park property. Mr. Foskett recalled the Board voted in the past to allow a kayaking event that never came to fruition.

Chair Winsor asked if there is another location to suggest to the organizers; the Board suggested the beaches at Surry Mountain Dam and Otter Brook. Mr. Bohannon recalled that if the boats are constructed elsewhere and launched from the park this Board has no say; however, the Board can disallow boat construction in the park.

Councilor Hooper said he was against this activity because of the liability. If it were an area without moving water like Dublin Lake or Robin Hood Park it might be more appropriate. Chair Winsor expressed confusion as to why they would not construct the boats in their own workshops. Mr. Bohannon will reply saying they can launch from the park but not build at the park.

Mr. Bohannon reported that the annual canoe race has a new organizer this year, who contacted him about launching above the dam and taking different routes in both

directions. In the past, they have put the sign up in the archway too early; the sign is only allowed for 10 days and Mr. Bohannon shared that information despite not having a date confirmed yet for the event. Mr. Foskett noted the professional participants used to launch above the dam. He added that the canoers want to start clearing trees that have fallen in the river.

Mr. Bohannon recalled that last year there was a large group of volunteers from Next Level Church and asked Mr. Foskett if that will likely happen again. Mr. Foskett replied that he will discuss with the Friends because it is unfavorable to have volunteers with nothing to do; they were a wonderful group last year. There could be sufficient work when the park is re-loaded following the irrigation project.

6) New Business

Mr. Bohannon confirmed the Board did not need to vote again on the budget approved by the Trustees.

Councilor Hooper provided an update on the bat house project. Peter Poanessa has agreed to help with the signs. What remains is to buy the four bat houses or buy the materials and have someone build them. The houses are not that complicated, but the roofs must be protected. There are building plans available for them; he thinks the National Bat Conservation Society offers large kits as well.

Mr. Foskett suggested the Board agree to contributing to these bat houses could be a good use of miscellaneous funds in the Board's budget; the Board could sponsor the house in the park (there will be three others throughout the City). The Board provided other suggestions: contact the Cheshire Career Center (Randy Burns) to assemble houses if the Board buys materials, inquire about past projects by the bank, Michael Narry from Distant Hills who is experienced building the houses and has the tools. There can also be fundraising efforts.

The Board and Councilor Hooper agreed this is a great opportunity for educational programs in the park; the signage will help educate park visitors as well. Councilor Hooper is impressed by and confident in Ingrid's (Antioch student leading project) organization and work.

The Board agreed to wait until the April meeting to determine if they should donate to sponsor a bat house; they will be happy to contribute if the need arises. Councilor Hooper will report back in April.

7) Board Membership

Mr. Bohannon recalled this Board is seven to nine members when full. Mr. Bocko shared information about two retired school teachers (involved in the Rachel Marshall project), who he recruited to the Board; one of them is very interested and is working to submit the request to the Mayor and Mr. Bohannon will follow-up with her.

Mr. Bohannon said he will bring information about the Rhode Island School of Design project looking at public preferences for the dam, which the Board will be involved with in the spring. He will also follow-up with Ken Stewart about the greenspace initiative; the area is coveted for those wanting a dog park but Mr. Stewart is not interested. If the greenspace does not pan out, the City would have to buy the parcel to use it; it is a valuable piece of land, mostly in the flood plain. Mr. Bohannon will also share a narrative with the Board when he receives landscaping proposals.

8) Next Meeting – April 9, 2019

9) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:42 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon