

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 14, 2020**

**8:00 AM**

**Recreation Center,  
Room 12**

**Members Present:**

Arthur Winsor, Chair  
Councilor Steve Hooper, Vice Chair  
George Foskett  
Suzy Krautmann  
Paul Bocko  
Dave Whaley  
Judy Sadoski  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,  
Recreation & Facilities

**Members Not Present:**

**1) Welcome & Call to Order**

**a. Honorable George Hansel, Mayor of Keene**

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM. The Mayor did not attend.

**2) Approval of November 12, 2019 Minutes**

Mr. Foskett moved to approve the minutes of November 12, 2019, which Mr. Bocko seconded and the Board carried unanimously.

**3) Elections**

Mr. Bohannon requested that the Mayor that this group of members remains active for at least another year – through the Conway School project – although some terms have expired.

Ms. Sadoski moved to reelect Mr. Winsor as Chair of the Board, which Ms. Krautmann seconded and the Board carried unanimously.

Mr. Foskett moved to elect Councilor Hooper as Vice Chair of the Board, which Ms. Krautmann seconded and the Board carried unanimously. Vice Chair Hooper accepted with the caveat that

he will tender his resignation if the role becomes too burdensome in addition to his various responsibilities as a City Councilor.

#### **4) Finance Report**

Mr. Bohannon referred to the 2019 budget in the meeting packet that reflected the final funds spent of \$11,295, which was \$1,000 less than the Board budgeted for the year. The Ashuelot River Park Memorial Trust has \$5,658.54 in principal and \$155.09 in interest remaining, which accounts for the funds unspent from the irrigation project. The Ashuelot River Park Trust has \$432,122.33 in principal and \$26,096.23 in interest remaining. Mr. Bohannon wanted to empty the Memorial Trust, to pay for approximately half of the Conway School fee of \$10,500.

Mr. Foskett asked if the Board must put 10% of the \$26,096.23 interest from the Ashuelot River Park Trust back into the fund. Mr. Bohannon said that was the previous Fund Manager's recommendation but it is not an actual rule. If the Board wants to spend it all, they can, although Mr. Bohannon did not recommend it. Chair Winsor asked if the Memorial Trust Fund was ever used for cobbles and Mr. Foskett said no. Ms. Sadoski asked if the Board needed to vote to spend the remaining Memorial Trust funds and Mr. Bohannon said no, the expenditure would suffice.

##### **a. Budget Development**

The Board needed to develop a 2020 budget at this meeting so Mr. Bohannon could present it to the Trustees via memo (in his absence) at their February meeting, to ensure the funds are available to pay the Conway School 50% of their fee in advance. The Board must pay for mileage for the Conway School (students will travel from throughout the region but will not need overnight accommodations) in addition to the \$10,500 fee. Therefore, Mr. Bohannon suggested budgeting \$12,000, which he thinks would more than suffice, and if it does not he could request additional funds from the Trustees later in the year.

Mr. Bohannon spoke with Frank from Bartlett Tree Experts, who is working on the QR code signs. Bartlett is trying to help reduce costs of QR signs for the City, Keene State College (KSC), and Proctor Academy by bundling the three entities, which could reduce the cost from \$4.19/tag to possibly \$2.95/tag. The funds remaining from the 2019 budget carry over to this year and would therefore cover the approximately \$500 cost of QR code signs for all trees in the arboretum and a few for the library campus.

The Board discussed the landscape contract. Chair Winsor and Mr. Bohannon agreed that AGM Landscaping has been very kind in his work for the City. Mr. Bohannon was confident that the landscape work would require more funds this year than the \$5,000 budgeted typically in recent years. Because the cost will exceed \$5,000, Mr. Bohannon must seek three quotes, though he does not need to put the project to bid publically. He thought that budgeting \$6,000 would suffice. The Board agreed that AGM had performed quality work in the past.

Mr. Bohannon noted that the Arborscope three-year term ended in 2019 and no funds were needed in 2020. Mr. Bohannon said that the pruning budget was high in 2019 (\$4,795) compared to the typical budget of approximately \$3,500. Mr. Bohannon will inform Bartlett that they must cap their pruning service at \$3,500 this year.

Ms. Sadoski asked if any other expenses might arise throughout the year, such as unexpected maintenance of lighting or irrigation. Mr. Bohannon said the City is now responsible for light upkeep and one needs replaced on the arch currently, which he anticipated would cost a few hundred dollars. Mr. Foskett asked what happened to the funds budgeted for Chuck Simpson's work improving the garden beds; Mr. Simpson was essentially fired but work remains on both the Starbucks and Mascoma Bank sides of the arboretum. Mr. Bohannon said those funds carried over. Mr. Bohannon continued suggesting that the Board wait to hear the Conway School's recommendations before budgeting for any improvements or changes, at which time he can request additional funds from the Trustees if needed, and the Board agreed. Mr. Simpson's work usually occurred once everything in the beds died, and Mr. Bohannon said that Conway School would have made their recommendations by then. Mr. Foskett said the Conway School should also be considering memorials in the arboretum, though the Board would not be spending money on that. Mr. Bohannon will seek Council approval to sign the agreement with the Conway School for work that would begin in March. This Board, the Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park, Antioch University, and a new KSC intern working with Mr. Bohannon will all be involved.

The 2020 Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board budget is as follows:

- Landscaping - \$6,000
- Pruning - \$3,500
- Conway School - \$12,000
- Miscellaneous - \$1,000
- **Total: \$22,500**

Mr. Foskett moved to adopt the budget, which Ms. Sadoski seconded and the Board carried unanimously.

#### 5) **Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park**

Mr. Foskett provided the following updates from the Friends:

- All paperwork was received from the NH Attorney General and the IRS to complete their 501(c)(3) Non-Profit status. An ID number from the IRS will be shared with donors for tax purposes.
- The cost of cobbles is increasing from \$50 to \$75.
- Photos were requested of the Monadnock United Way Day of Caring volunteers from People's Bank working in the park last year. Mr. Bohannon will share those on the web.
- The Friends want the West Street Dam to remain in place, which was supported by a recent Keene Sentinel article indicating that the dam is safe until at least 2024.

- The Greater Keene Rotaract, an adult service-oriented club, will continue taking care of their plot near the boat landing in 2020.
- The Friends are lucky to have members who are master gardeners to guide work in the arboretum to accommodate necessary replanting in shade gardens (formerly sun gardens), such as Julie Barrett who joined recently and has a greenhouse on Gunn Rd.
- The Friends hope to resume a schedule for planting daffodil bulbs. Eric Anderson used to donate bulbs but he recently retired and the Board must take on that effort.
- Volunteers are always needed and Board members should refer gardeners with interest to the Friends. Typical volunteer programs continue with the KSC Links program, the Lions Club and Junior Lions, and the Monadnock United Way Day of Caring, among others. Large volunteer groups have been successful distributing the work versus individuals or small groups assigned to plots, as was common in the past.
- Organizers of events scheduled in the park need to be conscious of the irrigation system so that vehicles do not damage it, which nearly happened at the last Art in the Park.

Ms. Sadoski asked if there could be signs at the various plots indicating that a group sponsored it and Mr. Foskett said that is on the Friends' agenda. Mr. Bohannon thought that was a part of what the Conway School might recommend.

## **6) Park Discussion**

### **a. QR Codes**

The signs are ordered but Mr. Bohannon has not received the final price yet. Mr. Foskett recalled that the QR code signs would list both the English and Latin tree species names and said the signs will enhance the arboretum.

### **b. Bat Houses**

Councilor Hooper reported that two of the four bat houses have been installed in the park by City staff, who he thanked for doing that work. He added thanks to the Board for their support of the project and asked for consideration of a "ribbon cutting" event to introduce the house to the public, perhaps in the late spring or early summer. Mr. Bohannon said that could potentially be an aspect of the Conway School work and he hoped the weather would allow. The Board thanked Councilor Hooper for shepherding the project. Councilor Hooper said it was enjoyable and would be a great theme for education in the park. In response to Mr. Whaley, Mr. Bohannon said the QR signs for the bat houses would be ordered separately from Bartlett. Mr. Bocko noted that Student Conservation Association volunteers from Bear Brook State Park provide free outreach programs and they have something premade for a nighttime bat program that could be nice in the park.

### **c. Conway School**

Chair Winsor asked when the first public presentation would be and Mr. Bohannon said the first would be a gathering session to understand public wants and needs for the park. Because the students must travel from all over New England, the Board agreed that changing an upcoming meeting to 4:00 PM instead of 8:00 AM would best facilitate an informal Board meeting with the students. That 4:00 PM time aligns with the Friends meeting time, so all could attend and collaborate. If a visit to the park were not possible as a part of any public sessions, people would be encouraged to visit the park in advance if necessary.

Chair Winsor displayed a map of original plans for Ashuelot River Park 25 years ago, that he acquired from the Historical Society, and he said it was interesting to see what did not happen and what still could. For example, original plans called for an overlook into the park on the Melanson side and a second bridge. The Conway School will receive a copy of these plans. Mr. Foskett and Mr. Bohannon have contacted Ken Stewart about plans for the vacant lot on Ashuelot Street; there used to be plans for parking and a playground on that side of the park. The Board relies on the generosity of the Mascoma Savings Bank for use of parking spaces.

Mr. Bohannon recalled that the main intention of the Conway School's work is to consider options for the gazebo or a pergola and moving trees in the dense area by the gazebo to open things up for more shade plantings and climate change. Mr. Haynes added concern about vegetation along the riverbank if the dam were removed. The Board was pleased with an approach focused on the arboretum.

Mr. Foskett asked about maintenance of planks on the bridge. That work is on Mr. Bohannon's agenda for the summer. Mr. Foskett recalled that the bridge should be repainted every 10 years and Mr. Bohannon did not think that was done.

Mr. Bocko asked if the Conway School would be intentional about seeking youth input in their facilitation. Mr. Bohannon replied that this Board can focus on youth engagement and can reach out to local schools to invite them to events. Mr. Bocko is a part of the place based education group in Keene and they might be interested in helping and attending some meetings.

## 7) **New Business**

Mr. Foskett noted that Mayor Hansel took over Chris Coates' Saturday morning program, which will now be available as a podcast. His recent guest was a member of Monadnock Family Services (MFS), who spoke of homelessness. Mr. Foskett said this is an important topic because many homeless use the park to access their camps and it was interesting to hear about MSF and Southwestern Community Services outreach programs.

Chair Winsor was a part of a podcast with President Treadwell of KSC, which he said was enlightening, and he shared information from this Board's work.

**8) Adjournment – Next Meeting Tuesday, February 11, 2020**

The next meeting would likely be in **Room 14** of the Recreation Center because of elections.

There being no further business, Chair Windsor adjourned the meeting at 8:54 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker  
January 21, 2020

Edits respectfully submitted by,  
Andy Bohannon, Staff  
February 3, 2020