

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

8:00 AM

**Recreation Center,
Room 14**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

George S. Hansel, Mayor

- 1) **Welcome & Call to Order**
 - a. **George Hansel, Mayor of Keene**

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM and welcomed Mayor George Hansel. The Mayor said this Board has full membership, but when new members are needed, he is responsible for nominations to Council and appreciates collaborating with this group to recruit. The Mayor agreed with Chair Winsor that as long as it does not get out of hand, this Board could have members that live outside Keene. The Mayor was aware that Chair Winsor's term had ended, but knew his intention to continue serving through the Conway School project. Mr. Foskett saw in the Mayor's biography that he gardens, and wanted to recruit him as a volunteer.

Members continued explaining Board activities for the Mayor. The Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park is the non-profit organization that created the park and gifted it to the City. This Board was created to manage fiduciary aspects of the park. The Friends manage all volunteer activities in the arboretum, which used to be centered on plots assigned to specific volunteers. That effort was less successful and so the focus shifted to volunteer workdays that have been highly effective with groups such as Keene State College Links, the Lions Club, and groups through the United Way Day of Caring. Staff helps with these workdays by bringing in

equipment for volunteer work. Additional regular volunteers include members of the Old Homestead Garden Club and a sorority of former teachers. The Board is newly working with the Conway School of Landscape Design to develop a sustainable landscape plan for the park. Many members of the public do not realize that the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park and the Ashuelot River Park are different entities, with the three-acre arboretum abutting West Street and the actual park beginning at the Jonathan Daniels Trail and continuing to the hospital. The Friends are only responsible for the arboretum. The Mayor said that the trail system is vital in Keene. The City has invested millions in trails, which have the potential as a real draw for guests and new residents if the system is capitalized on and advertised.

Mr. Foskett recalled hearing the Mayor's interview on homelessness with members of Monadnock Family Services (MFS) and Southwest Community Services (SCS), which Mr. Foskett said is of importance because many homeless use the park to access their camps. The Mayor said that MFS focuses on mental health illness support and resources, and SCS works to link people with shelters and housing options. The two organizations work in tandem. The Mayor said that homelessness is an issue in the City and even in the winter, at least five people are known to be sleeping outside, and that number is much higher in the summer.

The Mayor welcomes visits during his office hours, Monday – Friday 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM. He also welcomes appointments.

2) Approval of January 14, 2020 Minutes

Mr. Foskett moved to approve the minutes of January 14, 2020, which Ms. Sadoski seconded and the Board carried unanimously.

3) Finance Report **a. Budget Updates**

Mr. Bohannon sent the budget that the Board approved in January to the Trustees. He recalled that \$6,000 was budgeted for the landscape contract, but the previous landscape contractor AGM (of Westmoreland, owned by Kirke Parsons) agreed to continue their work for \$5,000 versus Mr. Bohannon having to send the work out to bid for exceeding \$5,000. The Board agreed it was kind of them to do so. The budget was revised to reflect that \$1,000 reduction.

Mr. Bohannon talked to Topher Hamblet, of Hamblet Electric, about replacing the light bulb on the left side of the archway entrance, which is out currently. He also inquired about replacing it with a longer lasting and more efficient LED bulb. Mr. Hamblet said he dug around the area and could not find a light fixture on the left side of the arch. Mr. Bohannon believed there was one and so he will investigate more. If there truly were no light fixture on the left, Hamblet would have to dig through the bricks at the entrance, which is not ideal. The Trustees are aware of this issue and it might not be revisited until spring. Mr. Foskett asked if there were two heads on the

existing fixture. Mr. Bohannon said no, there were lights on each side fixed on plaques, which then illuminated the whole arch. He said the absence of a left light is very apparent at night.

4) Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park

Mr. Foskett reported that the Friends met in January and discussed the following:

- The Friends collectively are excited about the Conway School project and want to be involved. They hope the Conway School can advise them on incorporating memorials in the park, for which there have been many requests.
- The arboretum began as a sun garden but has evolved into a shade garden over time. As such, this year the Friends plan to split the hostas (a shade plant) in the bed by the handicapped parking, which would only require labor and no expense.
- The Friends solicited GemGraphics (of Keene) to create a new logo for the Friends. The old logo depicted people and the new one will not. The Board suggested that the new logo should depict the new name Friends of *the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park* – the portion in italics was not included in the logo Mr. Foskett showed the Board, and so he would work with GemGraphics to revise it.
- GemGraphics was also commissioned to create a new brochure for the Friends to reflect their federal non-profit ID number and the price change of cobbles from \$50 to \$75.
- For an unknown reason, some donations for the park have been sent to Antioch University including a recent one from a member of the Old Homestead Garden Club, which Mr. Bocko has passed to Mr. Foskett. The current brochure lists Mr. Bohannon for donations and so he will look into the issue.
- The Friends are considering developing a calendar for different volunteer groups and workdays to ensure there is supervision to guide their work.
- Mr. Bohannon provided Mr. Foskett a list of cobble locations so the public can be easily directed to a cobble for which they are searching. The Friends will work to computerize that list. If and when a database of cobble locations is developed, Mr. Bohannon suggested organizing it in sections that are easily marked with the names in the section. Mr. Bohannon will inquire if Keene State College geography students can create a GIS layer map showing the names assigned in each section that can be easily referenced.
- A Friends member is now enrolled in the Master Gardener program and the University of New Hampshire, which is exciting.

Mr. Foskett inquired whether Mr. Bohannon contacted the Art in the Park organizers about increasing their donation to account for wear and tear on the arboretum lawn and beds. Mr. Bohannon has not contacted them yet.

a. Workdays

In addition to the workdays discussed earlier in the meeting, Mr. Bohannon suggested advertising some workdays that are open to the public, for which he thinks many volunteers would sign-up. He said that these volunteer days could spark interest for individuals to continue

collaborating with the Friends. Mr. Bohannon was not sure when the best time is for such an event.

5) Park Discussion
a. Conway School

The Conway School was working on the contract that was running late, for which the City had to wait to begin working through the Council process before the City Manager can sign it. Their work is supposed to begin late March. Mr. Bohannon was not worried but appreciated the school's attention to and understanding that his department has a small staff.

6) New Business

Ms. Krautmann recalled the Board's idea for a public celebration of the bat houses. Councilor Hooper can inquire if Ingrid Evans has a window of availability to come back for an event, and the Board could choose a date within that window. Mr. Bocko said that an event should occur before the end of April for Antioch student involvement before the semester ends. The Board agreed that April is a good month for an event and Mr. Bohannon and Councilor Hooper will collaborate to determine a date. While Mr. Bocko did not think that April would be ideal for the Student Conservation Association from Allentown to lead a bat program, he did think they could lead a subsequent program later in the summer or fall. Councilor Hooper liked the idea of introducing the bat houses in April and following-up with a fall event; both events should be advertised with a press release. Ms. Krautmann suggested contacting the Harris Center to incorporate their education. Chair Winsor thought it was good for the public to be aware of the houses and for Ms. Evans to see the success of her work. Mr. Haynes said the Conservation Commission would be interested in sponsoring and participating in educational aspects of the bat house events.

Councilor Hooper asked if the Board could solicit unwanted plants that community members have in their yards for the park. Mr. Bohannon said caution would be needed to ensure no invasive species were donated. Perhaps part of the Conway School's scope could identify how to recruit and use plants that would not be harmful and a plan to monitor them closely.

7) Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, March 10, 2020

Chair Winsor would be absent in March and Mr. Bohannon said that the March meeting might be canceled if there is little update from the Conway School before their work begins.

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ketryna Kibler, Minute Taker
Edits Respectfully submitted 3/3/2020 by, Andy Bohannon, Staff