

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 9, 2024

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Paul Bocko, Vice Chair
Ruzzel Zullo
Dian Mathews
Suzy Krautmann
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

Stephen Hooper

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Arthur Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:25 AM.

2) Approval of December 12, 2023 Minutes

Ms. Mathews stated that her name was spelled incorrectly throughout the meeting minutes, as it was spelled “Matthews” instead of “Mathews.” On line 22, the minutes stated that she would give Mr. Bohannon an invoice for Bartlett Tree, that should be corrected to Bagley Pond Nursery. On line 63, the minutes stated that “the signs seem higher...” which should be corrected to “the signs are higher...” With those corrections, Suzy Krautmann moved to approve the December 12, 2023 minutes which was promptly seconded by Paul Bocko. The motion carried unanimously.

3) Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Ms. Mathews moved to nominate Chair Arthur Winsor as Chair in 2024. Ms. Krautmann seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Ruzzel Zullo moved to nominate Paul Bocko as Vice Chair which was duly seconded by Thomas Haynes. The motion carried unanimously.

4) Acceptance of 2024 Meeting Dates

The 2024 meeting dates take place on the second Tuesday of every month at 8:15 AM, conducted in Room 22 of the Recreation Center. Mr. Bohannon noted that the meetings were subject to change, especially in November when the Presidential election takes place. He shared that he is unable to attend the February meeting which they will discuss further at a later time. Mr. Zullo motioned to approved the 2024 meeting dates which was promptly seconded by Ms. Krautmann. The motion carried unanimously.

5) **Finance Report**

There were two outstanding invoices. Ms. Mathews handed Mr. Bohannon one invoice for \$376.00. There was another open invoice for around \$90.00. Mr. Bohannon stated that he would try to put them into the 2023 budget, otherwise he would include it in the 2024 budget. The ARPAB was under budget for the prior year. Mr. Bohannon stated that there is a lot to discuss regarding the 2024 budget so he would wait until the next meeting to present it to the Board.

6) **Report from the Friends**

Leslie Casey, members of the Friends, was present at the meeting.

Ms. Mathews stated that she submitted a report for the CCD Opportunity Fund Grant for the rain garden which was happily extended for a second year.

Ms. Mathews alerted the Board that there was a need for signage in the handicap lot at the Park because the snow plows had pushed snow into that space. Due to the snow being pushed up into the lot, they had already seen loss of shrubs and vegetation. Mr. Bohannon would discuss the issue with the current president of Mascoma Bank (owners of the lot beside the park) to ensure the plow trucks push the snow elsewhere. Ms. Mathews also considered putting stakes up at the right side of the Jonathan Daniels Trail, as they had already lost a shrub from the snow being piled there as well.

Ms. Mathews stated that the Friends made a list of what they would need and she would present it at a later date. She suggested that they think about getting new shrubs, ground covers, and understory trees to fill in the beds. Ms. Mathews asked the Board for recommendations on where to get the trees to which Chair Winsor replied that Millican Nurseries (in New London, NH) had top quality materials. He inquired about a dawn redwood tree last year but they only had one at the time so they could revisit acquiring the tree again in the spring.

Ms. Mathews stated that the Friends would meet at the Keene Library next month to pledge their work order and project ideas.

7) **Project Tracking**

A) **Project Worksheet**

Mr. Bohannon handed out a project worksheet related to the Master Plan that was discussed at the previous meeting. The Board and Friends looked over the worksheet as discussion ensued on how they might use it for project management.

B) Trail Clearing

Ms. Mathews stated that the trail in the park needs to be defined, as the back of the path isn't marked or easily identifiable. Mr. Bohannon stated that the area has been brush hogged recently so it looked nice, though it will grow back. Mr. Bocko suggested that if they knew the property line, they could extend the trail further back instead of having it going through the meadow.

Ms. Mathews stated that in the North Arboretum, on the Arboretum side of the granite posts, there was a sizable dip in the ground that floods with water. This caused people to depart from the trail and walk on what would become the Pollinator Garden. It was understood that fixing the area was part of a ten-year plan but that it needed to be looked at sooner.

C) Riverbank Plants

Ms. Mathews stated that as the Friends get rid of the knotweed along the riverbank, they needed to consider what plants should be planted to compete with the weed. Mr. Bohannon stated that Andy Powers, who would be applying the herbicide in August of 2024, could surely give them advice if needed. He will email Mr. Powers and carbon copy Ms. Mathews on that email. Mr. Bohannon will also speak with Vegetative Control Service about herbicide application on the dam structure with the glossy buckthorn.

Ms. Casey of the Friends suggested inviting Barbara Scully (of the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Council) to a meeting. She believed they would be a good partner in dealing with invasive plants along the banks of bodies of water.

D) Dam Project

Mr. Bohannon shared that the Dam Project was not scheduled until fiscal year 2027. In conjunction with another city, they had applied for funding with a state agency to receive funding to examine the dam's removal. There would be a public engagement process that would start in July of 2026, as that was when the funding would begin. They had allocated 1.2 million dollars for the project.

8) Budget Development

A) Antioch Graduate Student Internship for Spring Semester 2024

Mr. Bocko shared that a graduate student, Jen, would like to work in the Rachel Marshall side of the park as an internship (225 hours of work.) Jen would develop a plan to promote understanding and experience in the park and present it to the Board. Mr. Bocko suggested

creating a system, such as inviting Jen to meetings or conducting Zoom calls, to receive continuous updates on the project.

Mr. Bocko stated that if this were to be paid in full by the City, it would be around \$3,600.00. By going through Antioch University as a work study, the City would pay around 25% of the cost (\$1,070.00.) Mr. Bohannon stated that he would take the funding from a different source other than ARPAB's budget which will help to move the project along. She would then be working under Mr. Bohannon but would still be updating and reporting to the ARPAB.

B) Bartlett Tree

Chair Winsor stated that it had been ten years since they had done the inventory with Bartlett Tree. He suggested that they discuss inventory with Frank Grano (Manager of Bartlett Tree in Hookset, NH) as some of the older trees need to be replaced. Mr. Bohannon stated that he would speak with Karen Gray, manager of the City's trust funds. He reminded the Board that they are allowed to spend 10% of the interest generated from the principle. The current trust had around \$275,000.00. He stated he would have a report out for the next meeting to show the Board the trusts related to the park.

C) Landscape Contractor

Mr. Bohannon stated that although the park staff is responsible for the basic maintenance of mowing, trimming, and trash removal in the park, they may find a contractor that specializes in gardening to assist the Friends with completing work related to the garden beds. Chair Winsor questioned whether Tim Garland (of the City's Cemeteries Division) could assist. Mr. Bohannon shared that, unfortunately, he would not be able to assign Mr. Garland to the park as he holds a position in the Cemeteries Division.

9) Upcoming Events

Mr. Bohannon shared that he received an email regarding the 2024 Pollinator Palooza. There was no date set, as they were just reaching out to ensure the ARPAB is interested in hosting the event again, to which the Board replied they are.

10) New and Other Business

A) Boothbay Botanical Fairy Garden

Chair Winsor shared photos with the Board via email of his visit at the Boothbay Botanical Garden in Maine. He stated that it was a much larger location and, therefore, they had gates that are locked at night to close the gardens. He shared that without gates at the Ashuelot River Park, unfortunately, there may be vandalism of the large structures. Because of this, he believed it would not be possible to bring the fairy gardens to the park.

Ms. Krautmann suggested that the Board connect with a school to create fairy gardens with natural resources. This would be temporary and could be a yearly project for a group of people, potentially hosted by the Keene Library.

B) Book Walk

Ms. Krautmann stated that there are too many signs in regards to the book walk. She suggested planting perennials alongside the sign posts to help them blend in with the nature. Mr. Bohannon would like to meet in the park with park staff this coming spring to locate and spread out some of the signs that block the view of the river.

Ms. Krautmann stated she was disappointed in the amount of stories that the Library had created thus far, as there are supposed to be four a year. Mr. Bohannon stated that the kiosks were installed incorrectly which halted their project, although he believed that they had been fixed. He shared that he had already been in conversation with the Library regarding the Book Walk.

11) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 8:15 AM

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 9:37 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Melissa Danneker, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities