

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 13, 2024

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Steve Hooper
Ruzzel Zullo
Suzy Krautmann
Dian Mathews
Kelly Cook

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks &
Recreation

Members Not Present:

Paul Bocko, Vice Chair
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

1) Welcome & Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM. A guest from the Friends of the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum was present: Leslie Casey.

2) Approval of July 9, 2024 Minutes

Revisions: (1) list Kelly Cook as a member, not a guest; (2) Ms. Carlson's first name should be spelled as Raynee; (3) line 58, "Whitley" should be changed to "Whately."

A motion by Ms. Cook to adopt the July 9, 2024 minutes as amended was duly seconded by Mr. Zullo. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Winsor mentioned his intention to invite Ms. Carlson to help with a presentation in September on the history of Keene State College's campus, particularly outdoor education.

3) Finance Report

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey reported that there were no changes since the previous meeting. Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager, was helping the professional herbicide applicator to get started in the Park (as well as Ladies' Wildwood and Pat Russell Parks). The Friends advised that herbicide should not be applied along riverbank where native plants were growing thanks to the

Friends' diligent work. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said she would try to get that instruction to the herbicide professional, who Chair Winsor said is trustworthy, with more than 30 years' experience in vegetation control services. Ms. Mathews asked whether the City provided the professional with a list of areas to treat. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey thought the herbicide professional would look around and identify areas needing treatment. Ms. Casey said the buckthorn along the dam could be treated.

4) **Report From Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum**

Ms. Mathews shared the following updates from the Friends of the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum:

- The Old Homestead Garden Club (OHGC) had been using the Park as a feature of what they do. The Friends advised the Club that this practice should not continue unless the Club takes a more active role in Park upkeep. The President of the OHGC listened and formed a committee of members who will care for the bed next from the corner by Starbucks to the electric shed. OHGC members would work in the Arboretum with the Friends on certain Fridays. The Friends would teach inexperienced OHGC members how to properly perform certain tasks, like weeding, so no native plants are removed on accident. The Club also expressed interest in helping with the pollinator garden planning and planting.
 - This work would help the OHGC to apply for grants for various projects. For example, there is a State Garden Club award that could help with the pollinator garden. Ms. Mathews is the Awards Chair of the OHGC, and was advising them.
- The Friends would have a community ad in the Monadnock Shopper News on Fridays if there is extra space available in that section. For example, the week before the meeting, there was not enough space remaining to include the ad.
- Three very experienced and energetic new gardeners had joined the Friends. With new volunteers and new members, there had been some very active and productive days of work in the Park, with upwards of 10 workers. This was promising because the volunteers were experienced, which allowed for more efficiency and productivity.
- Since the Pollinator Palooza, the Friends dug up all of the ornamental grass next to the water box and replaced it with ground cover from Julie's Garden at Maple Lane Farm. Sweet woodruff was planted in the bed next to and around the corner from first bench.
- Other activities:
 - Nearly every garden bed had been attended to this year, including weeding, pruning bushes, removing branches, and more to help the Arboretum look neat. The cobbles in front of the benches were also weeded and swept. As the Friends work throughout the Arboretum, they are clearing the cobbles so they can be seen.

- Cut back buckthorn shrubs along the Jonathan Daniels Trail. The buckthorn was bagged and zip tied, and the Friend asked the nearby group of homeless people to not remove the bags. The Friends intend to source replacement shrubs or ground cover from Nasami Farm Nursery in Whately, MA.
- Removed the invasive honeysuckle on the bridge side of the pergola. Frank Anderson (“Pepper”) as superintendent of the Parks crews would work on chipping the cut honeysuckle, and the Parks & Recreation staff would haul it to the Transfer Station. The Friends intend to source replacement shrubs or ground cover from Nasami Farm Nursery in Whately, MA.
- The Friends had removed a significant amount of Japanese knotweed along the riverbank. These sites have to be treated repeatedly over time to fully eradicate the invasive. The Friends created three knotweed drying piles that had grown quite tall, so a new pile was needed.
- Both buckthorn and bittersweet were removed from the area between the bed and the bridge, along the shoreline. Native plants had started growing in their place (e.g., irises).
- There is a separate brush pile that will be removed by the Parks & Recreation staff.
- The cobblestone inventory was complete, digitized, and should be included with the QR code on the kiosk like the Bartlett Tree inventory QR codes.

Otherwise, the Friends would be assessing other work needed in the Arboretum. They were clear that the herbicide professional should not spray the native plants coming back in the Arboretum. The Friends also hoped that Mark Johnson—hired to cut perennials and remove debris from the landscaped beds—would replace mulch with loam instead of compost. Discussion ensued on the benefits of loam vs. compost, and which one is higher in nutrients depending on various factors; discussion also ensued about past challenges using low quality compost in the Arboretum.

Further discussion ensued about the American elms in the Arboretum. Ms. Casey spoke about all the beds along the wrought iron fence. There, she said there were many maple and elm saplings that had been cut back for approximately 10 years. Because of the saplings’ position under the fence, there is no easy way to address them. The Board discussed potential options and agreed that spraying the impacted areas along the fence line with herbicide (by the professional chemical applicator) might be the best option, even though it would leave the roots to contend with.

Chair Winsor asked if the Friends wanted him to spray fertilizer like he had in the past. Ms. Mathews said yes, and added that for the past three years, the Friends had left daffodil leaves to add more nutrients to the soil.

5) **Project Tracking**
A) **Bird Ecology Project**

Mr. Bocko was not present to report.

B) Budget Development

No action was needed at this time.

C) Master Plan Implementation Discussion

Completing the new kiosk sign was ongoing. Ms. Krautmann was visiting the Historical Society of Cheshire County to gather photos for the sign to share with the sign maker, Peter Poanessa. The Historical Society has a wonderful collection dating to 1927, including things like photos of middle schoolers or the mums brought in for planting each fall. These photos were not catalogued, and Ms. Mathews said that having them catalogued would allow for sharing a QR code at the Park. Ms. Krautmann agreed and noted what a significant effort that cataloguing would be, but she might help the Historical Society with this.

Mr. Hooper asked if there was a deadline for submitting photos and Chair Winsor said no, given that Mr. Poanessa was too busy to complete the sign at this time. Mr. Hooper explained that he spoke with Miranda Nelken about Indigenous art, but Ms. Nelken wanted to ensure that the local Abenaki tribes would approve of the art. Per Ms. Nelken's advice, Mr. Hooper contacted Abenaki Chief Donald Roger for approval, but he had not replied yet. Other Chiefs that Mr. Hooper contacted were very supportive. This would remain ongoing, and the Board agreed to continue this effort after the summer.

Discussion continued about the idea to hang a temporary banner in the park in the meantime, while the new sign is underway. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said all of the Parks & Recreation summer programming had just concluded, so those crewmembers would have more time for this task. When he talks to Mr. Poanessa, Chair Winsor said he would ask about the potential for moving the sign.

6) Upcoming Events

A) Art in the Park – August 31–September 1, 2024

The Friends would be working hard to ensure the Arboretum is beautiful before Art in the Park.

B) Monadnock Conservancy Anniversary – October 5, 2024

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey reported that the City Council approved the site plan for the Monadnock Conservancy's new headquarters. The Board was pleased with this advancement as there could be educational opportunities between the Park and the Conservancy's site. The Conservancy asked Chair Winsor to lead a tree tour.

7) New, Other Business

A) Japanese Knotweed Removal

Discussion of Japanese knotweed ensued above.

Discussion turned to homeless use of the Park. Ms. Mathews chose to alert one person laying on the bench near Starbucks that she would be calling the Police. The homeless person conversed with Ms. Mathews about challenges regarding the use of Narcan in the case of an opioid overdose. The Board discussed the best approaches for homeless use of the Park, as well as concerns that someone could be hurt or deceased. The Board discussed leaving the homeless in the Park alone vs. when it would be appropriate to call the Police. Chair Winsor and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey agreed that homeless use of the Park is not the Park's intended use, and it steers others from wanting to engage in positive activities in the Park; if it is ignored, the use is likely to increase. The Board also agreed to use caution, as it might not always be safe to approach someone, so calling the Police is the best approach.

Discussion turned to signs at the Keene Public Library and needing numbers on the posts, which could be removed later if needed. Many of the existing posts must be removed and replaced in different locations. Ms. Krautmann suggested wrought iron numbers attached to the posts. Ms. Mathews recalled that Library staff (Amy & Gail) helped to site the posts originally, and the Library's help would be needed to best determine the new post locations. Ms. Krautmann agreed to follow-up and let Chair Winsor and Ms. Mathews know about next steps.

Discussion returned to the topic of fertilizer. Chair Winsor would be leading a "no phosphorous fertilization" workshop at Swanzey Lake on August 24 at 9:00 AM. This is primarily to help the residents around the Lake to understand how maintaining lawns can impact the Lake. Chair Winsor had worked with Pilgrim Pines and private landowners around the Swanzey Lake to help switch their thinking about lawns. The Board agreed that a similar exercise at Ashuelot River Park would be beneficial (if well-advertised). Ms. Krautmann asked if Chair Winsor had also worked with the Spofford Lake Association, as she thought it would be helpful to that whole community; Chair Winsor had not worked with them yet. The Chair was also considering a workshop around Wilson Pond. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey would find out about fertilizer use in the Ashuelot River Park and let Chair Winsor know what she learns.

8) Adjournment – Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 8, 2024 at 8:15 AM

The Board agreed to cancel the September 2024 meeting due to conflicting with the State Primary Election. There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:59 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker
August 20, 2024

Reviewed and edited by,
Carrah Fisk Hennessey, Director of Parks &
Recreation, 8/30/24