

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 8, 2024

8:15AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Paul Bocko, V. Chair (until 8:50 AM)
Stephen Hooper
Ruzzel Zullo
Thomas Haynes, Alt.
Kelly Cook, Alt.
Dian Mathews (arrived at 8:42 AM)

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks,
Recreation

Members Not Present:

Suzy Krautmann

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:18 AM. Roll call was conducted. Also present were Leslie Casey and Raynee Joy Carlson from the Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum.

2) Approval of August 13, 2024 Minutes

Ms. Carlson noted a correction to line 67: "Senna" should be "Sweet woodruff."

Mr. Zullo made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 13, 2024 as amended. Mr. Hooper seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Finance Report

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks & Recreation Director, stated that the two updates since the last meeting are that the temporary sign was made by Gem Graphics and put in the kiosk, and the ARPAB paid its share of the fee for the invasive species treatment. Herbicide treatment was applied.

Ms. Carlson stated that she thinks that money used for her personal reimbursement (\$328.51) should be coming out of the Replanting Program budget, not the Invasive Treatment budget. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she can easily make the needed adjustment.

Ms. Cook asked if Bartlett Tree already did all their work, or if they are expected to come back. She spoke of a tree with low branches that need to be addressed. Discussion ensued. Chair Winsor stated that Ms. Cook can email photos of the trees in question to him and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey. He continued that anytime anyone sees a tree that needs attention, they can take a photo including the identification tag and send it to them, to be forwarded to Bartlett Tree as needed.

Discussion ensued about what was sprayed and what was not sprayed with the herbicide.

Chair Winsor stated that the finance report is informational, so no motion is needed.

4) Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum

Noting that Dian Mathews is not present, Chair Winsor asked Ms. Casey for an update.

Ms. Casey stated that the park is being used more than it had been in the past, and the trash cans now are overflowing mid-week. She continued that they think they are starting to see a rat problem. They do not know what to do about that. She asked if the trashcans can be emptied twice a week instead of once a week. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that the trashcans already are emptied twice a week. Discussion ensued. Ms. Casey spoke of how littering is a problem, too.

Ms. Casey stated that Ms. Mathews was going to reach out to Tim Garland about whether he has recommendations for how to address the sinking mud puddle in front of the rain garden. Ms. Carlson added comments about the rain garden, and how in the very beginning, they had talked about potentially having a bridge there. It seems to be the only solution, as the depression sinks more and more as people drive over it. Ms. Casey added that also impacted by all of the driving is one of the big trees with big, sprawling, shallow roots that are being crushed. Chair Winsor spoke of how that corner near Starbucks does not need to be driven on. He continued that there could be a change in practice, with the trucks unloading elsewhere. Others agreed. Ms. Carlson added that the rain garden does not work when it is not the lowest point.

Ms. Casey stated that they have not talked much about the weeds, but that is probably coming up. Mark Johnson is the landscaper. Chair Winsor asked Ms. Fisk-Hennessey if he has a contract to do the work. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she believes so. She continued that she can reach out and see what the timeline looks like. Ms. Carlson and Ms. Casey spoke about how they have been putting a lot of energy lately into getting rid of the tall, ornamental grass by the pergola. They have cleared out a lot and have one more patch to go. They expect trouble with it again in the spring. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Casey stated that the area along the chain link fence is rather neglected, full of brambles, knotweed, bittersweet, and more. She continued that they want to think ahead about how involved they should be in cleaning that up, if the fence is going to come down. Chair Winsor stated that he knows the Parks & Recreation staff is overloaded, but he wonders if they could address that with the chipper and get that area cleaned up. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Cook asked if they have a sense of which/how many trees they will be taking down. Chair Winsor replied no, he does not have a sense yet. Mr. Bocko asked if the pile of cut knotweed is still there. Ms. Carlson replied yes. Mr. Bocko asked if it is still growing. Ms. Cook replied no. Ms. Carlson stated that they will have to figure out, in the long run, what to do.

Dian Mathews arrived at 8:42 AM.

Discussion continued about the knotweed management. Chair Winsor stated that at some point, it has to be brought to the transfer station and burned.

Ms. Casey gave more updates from the Friends, speaking about changes to trees. They are thinking about replacing some. The tree inventory will need to be updated at some point. A tree she did not know was in the inventory, in the back corner past the dam, has a severe bittersweet problem. It is not Bartlett's purview to remove the vines, but it would be helpful if they could tell the Friends about it. Chair Winsor replied that the last inventory done in 2014. It has a "trees effected by vines" section. That tree was not one of them. Frank from Bartlett Tree needs to come back. He has someone who does the GPS work. Maybe this needs to be refreshed.

Ms. Mathews stated that a granite bench right across from the shed has a loose top. She continued that the tree surrounded by drains used to have asters, which the Friends reluctantly pulled, then added mulch. Children had made a fort there, on the roots of an arboretum tree. They do not know who; perhaps whoever put the bench there. She found that the whole top of the bench was off-kilter and loose, not glued down. She moved it to seat it properly, but it could be dangerous. She asked if anyone knows who put the bench in. Chair Winsor replied no. Discussion ensued. Ms. Mathews stated that she will ask George.

Mr. Bocko left at 8:50 AM.

Ms. Mathews stated that the other mystery is that people have removed three stones from around the rain garden. Brief discussion ensued.

Ms. Casey stated that now that the growing season is winding down, the Friends are thinking about getting the sod off to do their enlarged pollinator garden. She continued that the Master Gardener class wants to do pollinator garden design as their internship project, which is great.

Ms. Mathews stated that the area by the pergola looks great after they removed the Japanese ornamental grass. She continued that they will keep going on Friday and take out the rest of the hostas there; the roots are awful. They expect it to grow back a little, and they hope stone dust can be put there in the spring once they get all the roots out. Ms. Cook added that it could be in a path so people can walk through.

Ms. Mathews stated that the Monadnock Conservancy plan is coming along beautifully, evidenced at their anniversary celebration at the park. She continued that they had a model of the building they will be housed in. She gave more information about the design and continued that the City's responsibility will be a driveway that has a connection with the parking lot and over to the kayaks. They will eventually have to figure out what to do with those arboretum trees in the middle. It is a nice design. Chair Winsor stated that they said they will break ground in 2025. Discussion ensued about the design.

Ms. Mathews asked Mr. Winsor how the arboretum walk went. Chair Winsor replied that it went well, and there were many people there. He enjoyed talking, and people asked great questions. The arboretum looks so nice at this time of year. Ms. Mathews stated that as a gardening group, they feel that they have finally gotten to the point where it looks like they have accomplished something.

Ms. Mathews spoke about Art in the Park, and the changes the Friends made this year, regarding scheduling their shifts instead of just having everyone show up for the whole thing. She continued that the Friends received donations and requests for stones, and many people wanted to talk with the Friends and asked good questions. Art in the Park was also the Friends' introduction to the new Antioch liaison, who has already been gardening with the Friends. Discussion ensued. Chair Winsor spoke positively about Art in the Park.

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

Chair Winsor stated that Mr. Bocko had to leave (the meeting early), but he says there is not much to report, other than the fact that he wants to develop a budget at some point. They could think about some signage to get people over the bridge to take the bird walk.

Mr. Hooper stated that Mr. Haynes has a workshop that he has graciously opened up for making the birdhouses. He continued that this week he will pick up the lumber at Hamshaws and work on the two birdhouses on Thursday. As the Bird Ecology Project grows, they can add to that. He estimates the cedar wood will cost \$125-\$150. He asked how to pay. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that he can submit his receipts to the City for reimbursement.

Mr. Hooper added that they are also getting inexpensive hemlock posts for the birdhouses. He continued that he will give Mr. Bocko the update.

Ms. Mathews spoke about the possibility of the Board someday setting it up so that people in the community can donate birdhouses, or have birdhouses. Others agreed. Mr. Hooper stated that Antioch has a bird club, and they could get involved. Chair Winsor replied that the birdhouses are the first step in making this official. He offered to help transport the hemlock posts, asking about their size. Mr. Hooper replied and discussion continued. Mr. Hooper continued that maybe early spring would be a good time for installing the birdhouses.

- B) Budget Development**
- C) Master Plan Implementation Discussion**

Chair Winsor stated that Mr. Hooper found some photographs that could possibly be used to refer to the indigenous roots of the park's land. He continued that Ms. Krautmann also found some great pictures of Chuck Simpson and Jeanna Hamblett planning the park. With Ms. Fisk-Hennessey's permission, he would like to have the group sit down with Nicole Cullinane, who designed the temporary sign. He thinks what is stalling this is not knowing how to present it to Peter Poanessa in the right way. They have the narratives and photos, and just need to organize it. Ms. Cullinane knows the language and how to depict what they are trying to do. In the meantime, the temporary sign looks fantastic.

Chair Winsor stated that he has something else, not on the topic of the master plan implementation. He continued that he wants to know if an un-inventoried red jade crab apple tree, near Starbucks, can be dedicated to middle school teacher Janis Wetmore. Ms. Wetmore previously had a tree dedicated to her, which was removed during reconstruction at the park. Starbucks thinks the tree is theirs, but it is not, and it would be good to reclaim it. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Mathews stated that she forgot to say earlier that the Friends want to request three handicapped parking signs for the parking area. She continued that they want to keep the snowplows from pushing snow into the beds right there.

- 6) Recent Events**
 - A) Monadnock Conservancy Anniversary - October 5, 2024**

Chair Winsor stated that they have already talked about this topic. He continued that he would love to see the Board start memorial trees that really recognize the people who dedicated those trees. Ms. Mathews replied that might be a way to do new trees, too, because they are expensive. Chair Winsor replied that many times, people say they want to put a tree in the park to honor a family member, but they want it to be a certain type of tree, often inappropriate, in an inappropriate spot. What the college did was show people a list of the existing trees and allow people to pick one to dedicate to their family member, with a plaque under it. That is the best method. Discussion ensued about the tree species in the arboretum.

- 7) New/Other Business**
 - A) Story Walk**

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that they improved the story walk so it has a natural flow. She continued that the stands are about the same distance apart. All that is left to do is make sure they are all about the same height. There are a couple of cracked screens and the Library is getting the Plexiglass to fix that. Discussion ensued.

B) Other

Ms. Cook stated that Source to Sea people who were cleaning up in the park were finding syringes. She continued that the question is whether it is possible to have a sharps container for the park. The Pat Russell Park has one, put in by the Serenity Center. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that is something they can look into.

8) Adjourn - Next Meeting Tuesday, November 12, 2024 at 8:15 AM

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 9:16 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks & Recreation