

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Leslie Casey
Dian Mathews
Suzy Krautmann
Arthur Winsor, Alternate
Thomas Haynes, Alternate
Kelly Cook, Alternate

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks,
Recreation

Members Not Present:

Paul Bocko

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the ARPAB does not have a chair and vice chair yet. She continued that Andy (Bohannon) suggests Paul Bocko as chair and Suzy Krautmann as vice chair. Regarding ARPAB membership, Leslie Casey is now a member. There has been confusion about whether Kelly Cook is a full member or an alternate, and she and Ms. Cook are in communication with the City about that. Discussion ensued, and Ms. Cook clarified that she asked to be and would like to be a full member.

Mr. Haynes stated that he is fine with being an alternate member. He continued that he is mostly here as a conduit with the Conservation Commission. Ms. Mathews stated that the ARPAB went through the paperwork and found that they are supposed to have a Conservation Commission member as a full member of the ARPAB. Mr. Haynes replied that he would be okay with becoming a full member if necessary, but he cannot be chair or vice chair.

Ms. Mathews stated that for today's meeting, an alternate member will need to be a full member, for quorum purposes. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked who that should be. Mr. Haynes replied that he will do it.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that they received Ruzzel Zullo's resignation, effective today.

2) **Approval of December 17, 2024 Minutes**

Mr. Winsor noted a correction to line 205: “cotton tree” should be “cottonwood tree.”

Ms. Mathews noted a correction to line 218: “2:00 PM” should be “12:00 to 2:00 PM.”

Mr. Haynes made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 17, 2024, as amended.
Ms. Casey seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) **Finance Report**

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the only new payment the ARPAB made was half of the contract with Mark Johnson for half of the work. She continued that that \$1,900 came out and there is still \$1,900 available in that contract for the beds and mulching. Mr. Johnson said that if there is an opportunity for him to get an unfrozen pile of compost, he can get it out before the daffodils come up, but if that is not the case, it will have to be tabled. Mr. Winsor replied that it is important to get the compost right, and for the ARPAB to clarify with Mr. Johnson what they want him to source. They had a bad batch of compost once. The Peterborough company Ideal Compost is good, and there might be others. Raynee Carlson agreed and added that many people end up with invasive knotweed in their yards due to poor compost.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that moving forward into setting a new budget, the \$4,500 number can roll over and the next year’s budget would be between \$10,000 and \$12,000 total. The ARPAB draws from the interest on the Trust. There is money there for them to realize a \$12,000 budget for next year, including this rollover. Ms. Cook stated that that is significantly less. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes, and the reasoning she was given is that Bartlett Tree did much more this year than they had in the past. She continued that one of the key determining numbers is when Frank from Bartlett Tree gets back to her with a scope of the work that needs to be done in the park this year they will be able to nail down a firm number on what the budget will be.

ARPAB members spoke of how the ARPAB had talked about doing another inventory, and they do not know what Bartlett charges for that, but it will be more than what they paid 10 years ago. Mr. Winsor stated that he wants to re-do the tags no matter what. Discussion continued about the budget. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she can have information from Bartlett for the next meeting. Mr. Winsor asked if Frank can come to a meeting. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she will invite him. Mr. Winsor replied that Frank could participate remotely if needed. He continued that it would be helpful for Frank to refresh everyone’s memory about how the inventory works.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if there were any other questions on the finance report or thoughts on the budget. Ms. Krautmann stated that she has a question about the Bird Ecology Program. She asked if the ARPAB will give someone a stipend for the sound that will be put in, or how that will work. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she is not sure, but that is a good question.

Ms. Casey stated that regarding invasive species treatment, the Friends were talking about the area along the chain link fence that is a mess beyond what they can address with their loppers. She continued that herbicide treatment might be needed. Discussion ensued about how that fence will be coming down, but not for a couple years, because it cannot come down until the property is officially park of the park.

Ms. Casey stated that the Friends will be doing a lot of planting in the pollinator beds. She asked if it is still the current thinking that the model is for the Friends to fund that, through grants and donations. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes. Mr. Winsor stated that he thinks the ARPAB would support some of the \$1,500 being used for that. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that they were talking about making sure everyone is aware of the ideas for the plantings before they happen so that payment reimbursement can happen quickly. Mr. Winsor suggested a sketch. Ms. Mathews replied that that has already been done, a year ago, and the ARPAB saw it. She continued that she or another Friends member will bring it to the next ARPAB meeting.

4) Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park

Ms. Mathews stated that Karen Flavin, Robin Ackley, Dianna Lyell, and Heidi Koski are all master gardeners who formed a committee (for the pollinator garden project). She continued that they have the garden design Laura Andrews created a year ago, and the plants they ordered last summer, which she has repotted. She will have Ms. Flavin bring the list of all the plants. There are 50 native plants. It is the Prairie Moon Pollinator Garden Kit. The committee gave the Friends a preliminary idea of what they are doing, and a timeline. Next month, they will give the Friends an idea of what they need for money. March is community outreach, April is turf removal and garden soil preparation, May is mapping out the design for the first year of planting, and June is planting. They will spend the summer supporting the new garden.

Ms. Mathews continued that she has reached out to the Girl Scouts twice but has not heard back. She spoke with Barry LeClair before Christmas. He had many health issues and is now feeling better and says he will come back. He cannot officially be the cobblestone person, but he will check everything and add the new names into the list. The cobblestone list is organized by section, not alphabetized. Mr. LeClair told her he and Mr. Bohannon decided that Mr. LeClair would meet with Nicole (Cullinane), who would help him go through and alphabetize the list. That would be a good way to have it as a QR code on the kiosk.

Ms. Mathews continued that the Friends still do not know what to do about the rain garden. They will try and work with Tim on that. It will take some planning. Mr. Winsor stated that they can talk with Frank about the air spade.

Ms. Mathews stated that a couple weeks ago, she saw orange cones in front of the handicapped parking spaces. She continued that a couple days later, she saw that the signs were put in. She asked how that happened. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that they got it all figured out with Mascoma Bank. Ms. Mathews replied that it is wonderful, and they really appreciate having

those signs there. She continued that the signs are very tall, so they will still be visible if there is a lot of snow. Mr. Winsor asked if (Mascoma) will be putting the piles of snow somewhere else. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that they will push it further down. Ms. Mathews replied that that is great news.

Ms. Casey stated that the University of NH (UNH) did an article on the Friends' work in Ashuelot River Park. She continued that she has a color copy to pass around if anyone wants to see it. Discussion ensued about sharing it with the Keene Sentinel and the Shopper News. Ms. Mathews asked if the April pruning workshop could also be advertised. It will be Saturday, April 5, 12:00 to 2:00 PM, led by Steph Sosinski. Discussion ensued about the UNH article and about master gardener classes. Ms. Mathews stated that one workshop was on master gardener groups doing projects with municipal groups. She continued that there are not many master gardener projects like that, so this (committee of master gardeners doing the pollinator garden at Ashuelot River Park) is a model. The Ashuelot River Park has a list of 11 master gardeners signed up to work at the park, which is phenomenal.

Mr. Winsor asked if they could ask Ms. Sosinski to ask Ray Brewer to televise the (pruning workshop). Others agreed with the idea. Ms. Mathews asked Ms. Casey to email Ms. Sosinski about that. Discussion continued.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked Ms. Casey to send her the color PDF (of the UNH article).

5) Project Tracking
A) Bird Ecology Project

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that they do not have anyone from Antioch present to update them on the Bird Ecology Project, and Steve Hooper is "taking his retirement from the Board to heart, which is great." She continued that they will table this agenda item.

B) Budget Development

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the ARPAB has briefly discussed the budget. She continued that the budget really does depend on what Bartlett Tree is able to do, and then they can discuss modifications of the budget from there. She will invite Frank to the next meeting.

C) Master Plan Implementation

Ms. Carlson stated that the pollinator garden is the biggest thing, and then figuring out the rain garden. Mr. Winsor stated that they talked about having Peter Poanessa look at the old sign and see about rejuvenating it. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if Mr. Winsor could contact him. Mr. Winsor replied yes. Ms. Mathews stated that if they are talking about moving the sign forward, they would need to have something in the budget for that. Discussion ensued about which sign, and ARPAB members agreed that there are two signs that need to be addressed, the new one

and the old one. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked why the sign needs to be moved. Mr. Winsor explained how the sign went into the wrong location because Mr. Bohannon accidentally put the marking for where the sign should go in the wrong location. It needs to be relocated because it is too close to the plantings. Discussion continued.

6) **Upcoming Events**

A) **Permanent Sign Development/Design (January)**

Mr. Winsor stated that they will meet with Nicole Cullinane sometime this month or next to go through the photographs and see what she suggests for a layout. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if the first week of February would work. Mr. Winsor replied that he thinks so.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that something she wanted to bring to everyone's attention is that QR codes are wonderful, but they are becoming a target for hackers. She continued that hackers are putting overlays on them, so that when someone holds their phone over the QR code, it leads to a different site, not to the site you anticipated. Therefore, they (people putting out QR codes) need to think even more creatively. Discussion ensued. Mr. Winsor suggested they put name tags on the trees the old-fashioned way. The group discussed the benefits of QR codes as well as the potential risks, noting that while hackers are unlikely to target QR codes on trees in a Keene park, if they did, it could do damage to the whole Parks And Recreation site.

7) **New/Other Business**

Discussion ensued about the need for the ARPAB to elect a chair and vice chair, and the process for doing so, noting that Paul Bocko was not present. Mr. Winsor asked if Mr. Bocko was willing to be chair. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey and Ms. Mathews replied yes, he said he was. Mr. Winsor asked if Ms. Krautmann was willing to be vice chair. Ms. Krautmann replied yes, but she would not want to be chair. Mr. Winsor expressed his confidence in Ms. Krautmann.

Ms. Mathews made a motion to nominate Paul Bocko as Chair and Suzy Krautmann as Vice Chair. Ms. Casey seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that one more thing she wanted to bring up is an idea that has come forward, through the City's administrative staff – using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate an annual summary of the work of each City committee, board, and commission. She continued that the idea is to load all of a group's meeting minutes into AI, to have AI generate an overview of the events that happened over the year and potential action steps. If the ARPAB is interested, she is willing to feed all of the meeting minutes into the system and print it out to see. Then maybe the ARPAB could choose directions, based on that information gleaned from all the minutes from the past calendar year. ARPAB members replied yes, that sounds helpful.

Ms. Casey stated that she wanted to make sure everyone knew about the 1999 Stipulation for Decree, which says *“the Advisory Board shall receive and within their discretion approve or*

disapprove all requests for disbursements for the terms of said Trust for the benefit of the Park.” She continued that it does not explicitly say that it is on behalf of the City, but it gives this board that function. Discussion ensued. In response to a question of whether that is what Mr. Winsor read last month, Ms. Casey replied no, this is different. Mr. Winsor stated that the ARPAB always did (what this document says). He continued that the ARPAB would suggest, and Mr. Bohannon (now Ms. Fisk-Hennessey in the same role) would go to the Trustees on behalf of what the ARPAB approved as a budget.

8) **Adjourn – Next Meeting February 11, 2025 at 8:15 AM**

There being no further business, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey adjourned the meeting at 9:03 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks & Recreation Director - January 22, 2025