

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, May 11, 2021**

**8:00 AM**

**Recreation Center,  
Room 12**

**Members Present:**

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

**Staff Present:**

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,  
Recreation & Facilities

**Members Not Present:**

Judy Sadoski  
Ruzzel Zullo

**1) Welcome and Call to Order**

Chair Winsor read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM. Roll call was taken.

**2) Acceptance of April 13, 2021 Minutes**

Suzy Krautmann made a motion to accept the minutes of April 13, 2021 as presented. Paul Bocko seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**3) Finance 2021 Budget**

Mr. Bohannon briefly reviewed the budget they agreed on during their last meeting and informed the advisory board that it was approved by the trustees.

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

Dian Mathews first brought up the water issue in the park. She stated that Mr. Bohannon is working on putting in two faucets and she is trying to locate something similar to a horse hose,

with a valve that automatically turns on and off with a certain placement of the hose. She mentioned that she found a grant which could be used for purchasing more hoses; however, she can't apply for it until January of next year.

During the recent working days in the park Ms. Mathews observed that some of the plants were unknown to the adults, which resulted in some valuable plants being pulled up. To avoid this in the future, Ms. Mathews stated that she plans to walk around and put in wooden tags with labels on the plants that she can identify, and eventually transition to metal tags. She reminded everyone that they still need to discuss stepping stones for the Bartlett Tree ID tags. She tested them with high school kids using their cell phones and they had to walk right up to the tag to make it work, which puts the plantings around the trees at risk for damage from the foot traffic.

Ms. Mathews reported the next project for the Friends will be a pollinator garden, noting that the Rotaract Club would like to do it in their circle. She suggested the area in the park where they recently took down the black locusts, since the area gets a good amount of sun. She has a list of plants ready and mentioned that it would be a good project for the Conservation Commission to get involved with.

Next, Ms. Mathews touched on invasive species, stating she took a walk around the park with Sam Jaffe from the Caterpillar Lab. He recommended that they mow the knotweed often and then place tarps over it afterwards. She informed the advisory board that she is working on obtaining more tarps from Julie's Garden and Amanda, a contact from a local farm. Ms. Mathews noted that tarps were put in place during the last working day and knotweed was already pushing them up when she checked four days later, indicating there will be a need for frequent mowing. The walk around also revealed new natives as well as a service berry, which will be relocated. Ms. Mathews referred to the beds on the right of the park between Mascoma Bank, stating that area is what Sam Jaffe felt the entire park should eventually look like, more filled in and with good ground cover.

Ms. Mathews mentioned that she found an insurance liability policy for The Friends and asked the board for their thoughts. Mr. Bohannon replied that The Friends should have board insurance.

Lastly, she asked if it was possible to have a representative of Antioch University on The Friends board, referring to a previous discussion about Antioch helping with signage as an education component. She also wondered if someone from the Conservation Commission would be willing to join. Paul Bocko stated he would help to try and find a representative from Antioch. He mentioned their Provost, Sean Fitzgerald, was previously a member of The Friends board but his role doesn't allow that flexibility anymore. He also offered to connect with the instructor of the interpretation class at Antioch for the signage project, as well as Libby McCann. Thomas Haynes stated he would check to see if anyone from the Conservation Commission would like to get involved and Ms. Mathews recommended it be someone who is interested in Bee City.

Mr. Bocko stated, with regards to the Japanese knotweed, he is concerned about cutting it due to pieces flying around and possibly getting into the river, unless they pick up every bit of it each time. Ms. Mathews agreed, stating the knotweed is going to be an ongoing issue. She recalled Sam Jaffe recommending one other technique where they plant shrubs and low trees in with the knotweed, which would shade the area and make it less viable for the knotweed. Mr. Bocko suggested a consultation with someone from the state agricultural sector. Ms. Mathews mentioned they had discussed having a meeting devoted to invasive species and suggested they decide when that will occur so she could invite someone from the state to be involved. Mr. Bohannon suggested they focus on invasive species during their June meeting.

Suzy Krautmann mentioned a natural poisoning mechanism for the invasive species and she and Ms. Mathews stated they will both look into it for the June meeting.

Chair Winsor agreed it would be good to focus the next meeting on invasive species. He mentioned that they could move some of the Bartlett Tree tags if that would help solve some of the issue of people damaging the area when walking up to the trees.

**5) Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation**

**A) Invasive Species**

Chair Winsor stated the invasive species talk will be tabled for the June meeting.

**B) Pollinator Gardens**

Mr. Bohannon stated someone from the Lady of Mercy School reached out to him and informed him that they have 15 high school kids and 3 adults that would help with the pollinator gardens. They are only available on May 26, 2021, from 12:30 to 2:30 PM. He offered that option to Ms. Mathews and stated they could discuss details in a separate meeting.

**C) Education**

Mr. Bohannon reported that they want to increase educational outreach related to the park and invasive species. He suggested they bring in Eloise Clark from the Conservation Commission for the June meeting to discuss this and help them promote conservation outreach.

**6) Request from Ashuelot Rediscovery & Boat Building Festival**

Chair Winsor invited representatives for the Boat Building Festival to present.

Heather Holloway introduced herself and her husband Wade Smith. She explained that they run Mill Hollow Works in Keene which is a heritage craft school where they teach boat building, woodworking and carpentry. Their goal is to help people learn how to live more sustainably by

working with traditional tools and utilizing local resources. Mrs. Holloway stated they are looking to host the Boat Building Festival in 2022 and would like to bring in education elements relating to the Ashuelot River and its history, and basic river ecology. She stated they aren't necessarily sure how it will all incorporate into the park but they do want to incorporate the board's mission into what they are doing. Mr. Bohannon replied that the event absolutely meets the board's mission and their master plan of climate resiliency. He felt there was a potential for collaboration and welcomed the board to discuss.

Dian Mathews asked if they were looking to have it as a festival to launch the boats they build. Mr. Smith explained that he designed a boat building project 20 years ago at Mystic Seaport and they have since been teaching it as a class at their school on a smaller scale, by building 4 boats at a time. The idea with the festival is to make the class available to more kids in the area who may not necessarily have access to the program. He mentioned that they could do the boat building at their shop but would really like to build them right on the side of the Ashuelot River, to highlight it as it runs through Keene. He went on to state that they would hold a month long series of boat building with several different groups, say 6 boats and 6 teams per week, and then have one big launching celebration at the end of the month. Additionally, he stated that they would like to bring in experts to explain different elements of the Ashuelot River, such as history of water power and transportation and current ecology.

Mr. Bocko asked if they had an indigenous perspective in mind and stated if not he has a contact from the Abenaki that he could pass along to them. Heather Holloway stated they don't have a contact but it has always been a part of their plan to eventually involve the indigenous aspect. She welcomed Mr. Bocko's help with the topic and connections.

Suzy Krautmann added that the festival sounded like a fabulous idea and asked if the Historical Society had been contacted for involvement in the event. Mrs. Holloway replied that they've done preliminary research on whether or not there would be enough interest and are now working on details such as dates and times. Once they have more concrete information they plan to reach out to places like the Historical Society. Ms. Krautmann asked if the groups would all be at the Ashuelot River Park building the boats, or would they be along the river in multiple locations. Mrs. Holloway replied that 6 boats would be built per week and they are hoping to obtain one location for the building process. Ms. Krautmann inquired about how much square footage they would need for building. Mr. Smith answered that the canoes are 14 feet long and built on a set of sawhorses, and they could be flexible working with space limits. He did note having some sort of tent or shelter would be helpful.

Mrs. Holloway mentioned the vacant lot right next to the Ashuelot River park and wondered if they could use that to eliminate some traffic in the park. Mr. Bohannon stated he will connect them with a contact he has to discuss the lot next to the park. He added that they can work on details offline so they can be ready for next year and suggested either within the park or in the Rachel Marshall Learning area as good building sites. He thanked Mrs. Holloway and Mr. Smith for being there.

Ms. Mathews noted that she felt this was a great idea and that the park could benefit. She suggested doing a different educational topic each week and gave the example of inviting the public in every Saturday in July. Mr. Smith agreed and said they had already begun to discuss different programs for each week to draw different people.

**7) Request From Antioch University - Bee Study**

Michael Akresh, professor at Antioch University, explained that he and an Antioch student are leading a study on bees in wetlands throughout New Hampshire, specifically in fens, peatlands and red maple swamps. The goal is to survey the areas and do a full scale study looking at what bees are in the areas and how distance from the uplands might impact the bee community, and in turn how that could then influence policy and laws. He stated that they are looking for funding for the project as well as looking for different sites. One site will be the Keene Airport wetland and fen, for which they received \$500 from the Conservation Commission. Mr. Akresh mentioned that each site requires an estimated \$2,000 to \$4,000 for supplies and work efforts, adding that once the bees are collected they require lengthy identification in a lab. He stated it will likely be a two year project so they could move to new sites next year, and hoped the Ashuelot River Park could be an option. He made note that they could bring in bee education with the information gained from the project and possibly do an education session or day. Mr. Akresh requested any information on the wetlands in the park if available and stated they have a scientific proposal that he can send to the board. He ended by suggesting that an Antioch student could get involved on The Friends board, referring to the earlier conversation Ms. Mathews had brought up.

Mr. Bocko asked who was currently funding the project besides the Conservation Commission. Mr. Akresh replied that they don't have any funders in the Keene area but this is part of a larger project throughout NH, adding that they did receive funding from the NH Military Army for some work in Strafford, NH. They also received funding from Antioch through the Faulkner property to do work in a town outside of Keene.

Chair Winsor stated Keene State College did a national resources study 5 or 6 years ago and those materials might inform the bee project. Mr. Bohannon stated he would share those resources with Mr. Akresh. Chair Winsor was unsure if the board could fund a research project but stated they may be able to help find other funding avenues and mentioned the Swanzey Conservation Commission. Mr. Bohannon added that they hadn't supported a research project in the past but felt it was important for the board to hear this project because it seemed very valuable. He continued to state that they don't have the funding in this year's budget but mentioned they may be able to connect Mr. Akresh to other programs to tap into their grants. He added that he would be happy to write a letter of support which would be the main way they could help the project.

Mr. Bocko mentioned the Rachel Marshall Trust, wondering if that could be used for funding, especially if the project came with a strong educational component. Mr. Bohannon replied that the trust had been closed and put into a project fund related to the resiliency plan. It would be something for the board to discuss and agreed that it would have to tie into an educational component. Thomas Haynes stated they could consider it for next year's budget if it's a two year study, including the educational component pieces. Mr. Akresh replied that they'd be happy to do it next year and could definitely work in educational components.

**8) New, Other Business**

Chair Winsor asked for new or unfinished business. Mr. Bohannon shared a video from the working days that he received from Louise Zerba. Chair Winsor thanked Mr. Bohannon noting he recognized it took a tremendous amount of work and coordination to make the working days happen. Mr. Bohannon read a statement from the Keene Interact Club thanking the advisory board for their help. He also personally thanked everyone for their help and support on the project.

**9) Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 8:00 AM**

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Edits respectfully submitted by,  
Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Additional edits by,  
Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office