

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Ruzzel Zullo
Paul Bocko
Dian Mathews
Suzy Krautmann
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation &
Facilities Director

Members Not Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Judy Sadoski

Mr. Bohannon 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.

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Dian Mathews, acting Chair in the absence of Mr. Winsor, called the meeting to order at 8:03am. Roll Call was taken.

Thomas Haynes became an active member for the meeting.

2) Acceptance of May 11, 2021 Minutes

Suzy Krautmann moved to accept the minutes of May 11, 2021 as presented. Ruzzel Zullo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon stated all April expenditures came from the project fund so there were no finance report updates for their budget. He mentioned that later on in the month of June they would likely see a bill from Bartlett Tree.

Ms. Mathews brought up Sam Jaffe from the Caterpillar lab. He had looked at the Rotaract circle in the back of the park and commented that one of the trees was an Asian Cork tree, which meant the Cork tree had spread into the park. This was noted as problematic because the Asian Cork tree is now known as an invasive species. Ms. Mathews asked if Bartlett Tree took that into consideration when they came and looked at the trees in the park, and suggested that it would be important to remove the Asian Cork tree.

Mr. Bohannon checked the inventory and reported that tree number 39 is labeled as an Amur Cork, with a tree value of almost \$8,000. He informed the board that he would ask Bartlett Tree to investigate whether or not the particular species is now invasive, and if that would warrant removal of the tree.

4) Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum

Ms. Mathews reported that The Friends appointed a new Treasurer, Jane Parent, and are in the process of setting her up with Walpole Bank. She also informed the board that she got in touch with the insurance company and a new policy is being drawn up for The Friends.

Ms. Mathews reported that the new pollinator bed they recently put in the park is doing very well. The kids sprinkled in Liatris seeds which are growing nicely as well. They planted 2 pussy willow shrubs on either side of the main park gate by West Street, which she stated are receiving water from the sprinklers. However, all of the shrubs on the Starbucks side are not getting water from the sprinkler, as well as the bed with the large main park sign. Additionally, Ms. Mathews stated the shrub in between the bank entrance and the entrance to park isn't doing all that well and they are looking into why that might be. She reported that they continue to water with jugs which is very difficult and time consuming, taking about 1.5 hours each time.

Ms. Mathews stated that The Friends are going to pair up with Delta Kappa Gamma of Retired Educators for a work day on the first Saturday of every month. She is going to see if she can bring on the Rotaract and Workforce Opportunity participants as well and noted that it would be a good step towards getting more people to volunteer. She had not yet heard from the Rotaract Club kids.

Ms. Mathews reported that the Workforce Opportunity process requires change and she is in the process of figuring that out. She explained that the kids aren't always free to come to the park because they are involved in workplace support, which is where an adult accompanies them to a set workplace.

Next, Ms. Mathews reported on the shed, which she stated is in very bad condition. She is working on cleaning it with bleach and suggested no one be allowed in until the cleaning process is complete.

Paul Bocko stated that he reached out to Sean Fitzgerald, Provost at Antioch University, and reported that he will not be able to join The Friends; however, he is trying to find someone else to represent Antioch University.

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

A) Invasive Species

Mr. Bohannon welcomed Eloise Clark from the Conservation Commission, who was present at the meeting to explore offering some educational opportunities in the park related to invasive species. He mentioned that the board had previously talked about educational opportunities, but it wasn't the right time of year, and wondered if now would be the right time to have a joint educational session with the Conservation Commission and advertise it to the public. Ms. Clark replied that it was a great time of year for it and a joint venture advertised to the public would make a lot of sense. She stated that she would be fully on board with making that opportunity happen.

Ms. Mathews suggested the board become more educated themselves before they begin to educate people in the park; furthermore, she suggested that they go around and ID everything in the park with tags to aid with public education sessions.

Ms. Mathews mentioned speaking with Doug Cygan, Invasive Species Coordinator for the State of NH Department of Agriculture, who recommended buckthorn baggies to contain invasive species. She suggested they have the public help with the process of placing baggies over invasive species in the park, as an educational experience. Additionally, she stated Mr. Cygan recommended they avoid mowing the knotweed and potentially getting pieces into the river, and suggested they get in touch with the Ashuelot River Corridor Management. She also reported that tarp placement over the knotweed should occur in the early spring, after making the site as clean and flat as possible and putting down 4-6 inches of mulch.

Mr. Bohannon asked if they could remove the current tarp covers, put the mulch down, and put the tarps back in place. Ms. Mathews stated it was too late because the plants are already too big. She went on to state that they have to get to the site as soon as they can in early spring, before the invasive species begin growing.

Renee suggested they could cut what is currently under the plastic tarp, put it in bags and throw the bags in the dump, but agreed the best scenario would likely be to wait until early next spring.

Ms. Mathews suggested the board, The Friends, and the Conservation Commission all be involved in the education session and marking of the invasive species with ribbons. Ms. Clark volunteered to give a tour and education session on invasive species in the park for them. Mr. Bocko agreed with the idea and suggested that, rather than marking every single buckthorn and Norway Maple, they only mark certain areas. He also mentioned a past project where they cut and pulled out roots of knotweed, placed plastic over the area and then mulch afterwards, and

it seemed to have been successful. Ms. Mathews replied that she would do some research to clarify the process.

Ms. Clark stated there are reputable contractors who can obtain a certification to spray near wetlands. Ms. Mathews suggested that they to talk to Ashuelot River Corridor Management to explore that route. Ms. Clark added that she is a part of the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee, who creates and maintains the park management plan, and would try to help in that regard. She also recommended Barbara Scully as a great source of information.

Mr. Bohannon suggested they set a date towards the end of the month, around 6pm, to hold the educational learning session, identification process, and general discussion about invasive species. He added that it should be amongst the board, The Friends, and the Conservation Commission. Short discussion ensued around dates and times, with the board landing on Monday, June 28, 2021 at 6pm. Mr. Bohannon stated he would obtain clarification on whether or not it will be a public meeting.

Thomas Haynes asked about the mustard challenge and if there was another event being scheduled. Ms. Clark replied that there were no more scheduled mustard challenge events at that time.

Mr. Bohannon reported that the buckthorn baggie prices are \$100 for 100 baggies, which they could do. He suggested first having the educational session and discussing best practices for removal, and then testing some areas at a later date.

Ms. Clark mentioned that 3 members of the Conservation Commission had completed the invasive species course through UNH Cooperative Extension and stated they would be at the educational session.

Ms. Krautmann suggested they order the bags now so they are ready to go.

Mr. Bocko made a motion to purchase \$100.00 worth of the buckthorn bags. Mr. Zullo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Bocko mentioned the motion was inspired by Suzy Krautmann.

Mr. Zullo and Mr. Haynes asked for clarification on if the June 28th session would be education and discussion, and then another date would be set for the actual removal. Ms. Mathews confirmed that was correct.

B) Pollinator Gardens

Ms. Mathews stated that there is a possibility to connect the new pollinator garden and the Rotaract garden and end up with one, large pollinator garden. She requested that Mr. Bohannon look at the sprinkler map and see if that connection could be a possibility.

C) Education

Ms. Mathews reiterated that they had already covered invasive species education earlier in the meeting and next brought up signage for the pollinator garden.

Mr. Bocko stated he reached out to colleagues that teach an Exhibit, Design & Interpretation class at Antioch University and he is hopeful that they will adopt the signage project as part of the course. He will keep the board updated.

- D) Ashuelot Rediscovery & Boat Building Festival**
- E) Antioch University – Bee Study**

Ms. Mathews reminded the board that the bee study was placed on hold to be discussed and possibly placed in the budget for next year.

6) LWCF Application – Letter of Intent

Mr. Bohannon reported that he submitted a letter of intent to the Land, Water and Conservation Fund (LWCF) to do some activities within the back of the arboretum, such as boat launch and connecting the Ashuelot green space, and had a meeting scheduled with the Putnams to review the space. He reiterated that it was solely a letter of intent and that the board doesn't have to pursue the project if the Putnams choose not to. Mr. Bohannon stated he would keep the board updated as discussions progress. He explained that the LWCF is made up of federal funds designated for park space, mentioning that the money is driven from offshore drilling on the coast and sent to the states annually to be split between National, State and Municipal parks. He added that once you acquire the grant the park becomes park land for perpetuity, and since the National Park Service is always looking to expand their footprint this particular project would look favorable.

7) New, Other Business

Mr. Bocko wanted to identify a teacher, or a few, who might do a project in the park for educational purposes with classrooms, to incorporate more education for kids. Ms. Mathews agreed with the idea and stated it would be great to have more kids in the park. She suggested one of the aforementioned work Saturdays could be a possibility. She also suggested starting a Sunday morning bird walk and noted that she has some contacts she will reach out to for support with that. She felt it would be a start to good use of the park on a continuous basis.

Mr. Bocko suggested the Antioch Bird Club, mentioning Steve Lamonde who is experienced in birding.

Mr. Bohannon stated he recently had a conversation with Jeanna Hamblet, who was a main founder of the park and arboretum. She shared positive comments about the park, including how much she liked the pergola.

8) **Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, July 13, 2021 at 8:00 AM**

There being no further business, Ms. Mathews adjourned the meeting at 8:56 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Additional edits by,
Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office