

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

8:00 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Councilor Bettina Chadbourne
Ruzzel Zullo
Paul Bocko
Dian Mathews
Suzy Krautmann

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

Stephen Hooper
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM.

2) Acceptance of March 8, 2022 Minutes

Chair Winsor announced a correction under item 4, first paragraph, stating the last line should read “site” instead of “cite.”

Mr. Bocko made a motion to accept the minutes of March 8, 2022 with the aforementioned correction. Ms. Krautmann seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported no new updates with the exception of pending expenses for Bartlett Tree and the Prairie Moon Nursery item approved at the previous meeting, both of which are pending but reflected in the budget.

Ms. Mathews inquired about the use of slack lines in Ashuelot Park Arboretum, commenting that they put weight on the trees, which is bad for them and thus doesn't seem appropriate for the park. Mr. Bohannon stated he has spoken to the individuals who use slack lines many times; however, there are no official rules that prohibit their use. He mentioned that they do a good job

of wrapping the trees to protect them but it's still not ideal. Chair Winsor added that they had trouble with this at the college because the slack lines damage the trees, especially if it's a young tree.

Ms. Mathews added that she'd like to get people out of the beds and make everyone more conscious that it's an arboretum. Mr. Bohannon stated they are in the process of updating City Ordinances and are creating rules along with that, so they can discuss the aforementioned. Ms. Mathews stated she is willing to help with that process. Mr. Bocko mentioned that the Rachel Marshall site is a good place for slack lines.

4) Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum

Ms. Mathews reported that The Friends will postpone their master gardener presentation for the May meeting, which will consist of a PowerPoint she and Ms. Casey put together and presented to the Master Gardener Club. She stated their first project this season will be laying tarps on the knotweed and they are aiming for May 7th if they can coordinate with volunteers and with Mr. Bohannon for wood chips. She explained that they are covering an area that's approximately 20ft by 150ft where they will lay the tarps over the knotweed and then cover with wood chips, which will remain in place for 4 years. Mr. Bocko asked for clarification on if they'd be pulling the knotweed and Ms. Mathews replied that they will not because the hope is that it is dead at the end of the 4 years, and then plantings can be placed in the area.

Ms. Mathews next reported that they will be holding work meetings every first Saturday of the month starting at 8am and going until 9:30 or 10am, depending on how hot it is. She stated on Wednesday April 27th at 1:30pm they will be meeting with representatives from the CCCC Opportunity Fund at the park to discuss the rain garden grant. She reminded everyone that they will be receiving more money than requested and stated everyone is invited to the meeting where they will select a spot for the rain garden and discuss appropriate plantings. She added that she will meet with Benee H from CCCC separately to discuss the summer program at the park.

Ms. Mathews reported that Barry LeClair recruited some help and has charted every cobblestone and is currently working on creating a new spreadsheet with over 33 names.

Lastly, Ms. Mathews stated they now have 10 master gardeners associated with the park, one of them is a consulting master gardener and one will help out when needed. She added that they started a Gmail account so they can send out communications.

Councilor Chadbourne arrived at 8:18 AM.

5) Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation

A) Educational Signage

Mr. Bohannon introduced Kyle Bradford from Antioch University. He reminded everyone that he, Mr. Bradford and Ms. Mathews have been meeting regularly since February to work on educational park signage and noted that he thinks the group will be very pleased with what Mr. Bradford delivered. Mr. Bohannon mentioned that he feels Mr. Bradford's work will help transform the park the way they had envisioned it and welcomed him to present.

Mr. Bradford thanked everyone for having him and announced that it has been a pleasure working with them and he is grateful for the opportunity. He began by showing an example of signage similar to what they will use. He described it as a pedestal with an 18x24 angled sign, with 32 inches to the lowest part of the sign at a 30 to 45 degree angle on a wooden post. He noted that these are standard sign measurements. Mr. Bradford stated they have been talking with Mr. Poanessa from Keene Sign Worx to obtain a quote for the signs and he told them to expect \$90 to \$200 for the sign panel only, with the price range depending on how vandal proof they want the sign panels.

Chair Winsor asked if every sign has a QR code and Mr. Bradford answered that they all do and will direct users to a website related to the sign theme, and then there are three signs that will have a picture of the actual arboretum specimen QR code.

Mr. Bradford next showed a map of the park Master Plan and noted that the signs are for the arboretum. He went on to share the locations and details of each sign, starting with the conifer bed in the entrance from the bank. He explained that this sign will highlight White Fir with a distribution map, information about the habitat and natural history, and two ID tips for people to identify between firs and spruce. The QR code brings users to a White Fir page on the ArborScope website. He explained the next location as the bed near where there's been work creating a pollinator garden. There they will highlight information on why pollinators are important, what folks can do in their own yard with regards to pollinators, and a focus on some less charismatic pollinating species. Additionally, they will ask people to look out for the metallic green bee because it's fairly common in suburban gardens. The QR code will connect folks to a nonprofit website that works on pollinator issues. Mr. Bohannon noted that Mr. Bradford took all the photos pictured, which is impressive.

The next location Mr. Bradford covered is on the other side of the pollinator bed highlighting another arboretum specimen, American Hornbeam. He stated the sign will again show a distribution map, information about the habit and natural history, and the QR code to learn more. Mr. Bohannon pointed out that you can see with this sign information that NH is clearly not in the green on the map and it introduces why it's important that the species grows well here. There was short discussion on other locations where Mr. Bradford found more American Hornbeam. He stated the tree can be found along floodplains and he let people know to look out for them when walking north on the Jonathan Daniels trail.

Mr. Bradford then pointed out the next sign location along the bank where they are having the Japanese Knotweed issues and stated there the sign will focus on invasive species. It will

highlight what invasive species are, why we care, what people can do in the community and at home, and it will have a focus on knotweed and what is being done at the park to control it. The QR code will take users to the UNH extension website for more information.

The next sign is located in the southern beds where the theme is to connect plants and how they impact animal life, and to encourage thinking about how we can increase biodiversity through increasing plant diversity. The sign will have a food web and the QR code will take users to a homegrown national park website which aims to restore biodiversity and ecosystem function by planting native plants at your own home.

The last location highlights the two mature River Birch with the distribution map and information about the habitat and natural history. He stated they could move the food web sign and the invasive species sign to different locations if they wanted.

Chair Winsor commented that the work Mr. Bradford did is impressive and inquired about a timeline from Mr. Poanessa. Mr. Bohannon stated it's dependent on the material and noted that Mr. Poanessa is very busy this time of year; however, he suggested once he builds them they could install them.

Ms. Krautmann asked if the sign would be welded to metal or wood posts. Mr. Bohannon stated they will be wood posts and Mr. Poanessa will try to make them durable and cost effective. He added that they need to consider potential damage and replacement costs, so potentially an aluminum based sign mounted to the wood post.

Councilor Chadbourne asked about the signs being vandal proof and stated her biggest concern is graffiti. She imagined something protective over them that could be removed if damaged. Mr. Bohannon stated Mr. Poanessa will have a varnish over it and they have cleaner that will remove graffiti to a certain degree; however, it's likely inevitable.

Mr. Bohannon stated Mr. Bradford was able to capture the message of seeing something in the park and then learning how to bring it home, which meets the mission of the board. Chair Winsor agreed and stated every trail that people walk could use interpretive signage and noted that Mr. Bradford did a great job. He thanked Mr. Bocko for finding Mr. Bradford to do the work. Everyone thanked Mr. Bradford for his great work.

Ms. Mathews made a motion to accept the educational signage presented by Mr. Bradford. Ms. Krautmann seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Bohannon stated he will get the finalized details over to Mr. Poanessa.

B) Book Walks

Mr. Bohannon stated the components are in and he has to pick them up at the library but they will have to buy the posts, which will be wood and the same height as the ones in Mr. Bradford's presentation. He added that he hadn't yet discussed the project with his maintenance crew. Mr. Bohannon stated he is unsure of the size of the signs but there are 20 in total. Ms. Krautmann stated the library will supply the frame and maintain it but the board has to install them.

Mr. Bocko asked if the book walk is intended to be permanent and Mr. Bohannon stated it is.

Chair Winsor asked if the walk will go over to the Rachel Marshall area and Mr. Bohannon stated they can take it anywhere they'd like. Councilor Chadbourne commented that they don't want the park to get too busy and crowded and there was general agreement. Ms. Krautmann suggested the Jonathan Daniels trail or RMOLL. Mr. Bohannon stated he thinks they can put some in RMOLL or even bring them up and around the park. He suggested they take a walk through and think about placement and there was general agreement.

C) Public Art

Mr. Bohannon referenced pictures of the sculptures in their packet and suggested the sculptures should be highlighted in the West Street beds, towards the front so they are visible, and possibly next to a light. Ms. Krautmann reminded them that they will be installed as sets of three. She reported that the pieces are still being made and then all pieces will be fired and will then be transferred to Brattleboro, VT, where they will be stained, glazed and fired for a final time. The estimated timeframe for installation is mid to late June because the Brattleboro location only fires once per month. Ms. Krautmann added that they will need to purchase rebar and quick concrete and help with installation of the sculptures.

There was short discussion about the classes who created the sculptures taking a walking field trip to the park and doing a celebration/unveiling of the art. Ms. Mathews suggested doing the celebration on June 21st when the Conservation Commission and Harris Center will be in the park and Mr. Bohannon stated the kids will be out of school by then. Mr. Bocko stated an intentional celebration is important for the kids and both the school and the community in general. Mr. Bohannon suggested they set the rebar and concrete ahead of time and then possibly have a live event from the park with some of the kids, and then have the rest of the school join in remotely. There was general agreement with Mr. Bohannon's idea. Ms. Krautmann also mentioned publicizing the event to show good things happening in schools and Mr. Bohannon stated they could do it all at once unveiling Mr. Poanessa's signs as well, or stagger all the upcoming Ashuelot Park happenings/installations and keep it in the news over time.

Councilor Chadbourne asked if they were to walk around and decide it's too busy in the park for the book walk, could they choose not to do it. There was general agreement that they need to move forward with the book walk but should be careful about placement. They decided to try and walk through the park on Wednesday, April 27th around 2pm.

There was short discussion and agreement on putting the tiny door idea on hold for the time being since there's so much else going on.

6) **New, Other Business**

Chair Winsor stated there is a new Horticulture teacher at the Career Center at Keene High School who he heard is doing great things. He plans to connect with her about the park and perhaps make a connection. Ms. Mathews suggested they could help with the pollinator garden as well.

7) **Adjournment – Next Meeting Tuesday, May 10, 2022 at 8:00 AM**

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:59 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director