

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

8:00 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Ruzzel Zullo, Vice Chair
Councilor Bettina Chadbourne
Stephen Hooper
Paul Bocko
Dian Mathews
Suzy Krautmann
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

All Present

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

2) Acceptance of May 10, 2022 Minutes

Ms. Casey stated on page 4, line 122, the word ‘peaked’ should be ‘piqued.’ Councilor Chadbourne stated line 130 should read “Asian jumping worms,” as opposed to “jumping worms.”

Mr. Bocko made a motion to accept the minutes of May 10, 2022 with the aforementioned corrections. Mr. Zullo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon announced no changes with the finance report.

4) Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum

Invasive Tarp-Laying Project: Ms. Mathews reported that the knotweed is quite tall so they have decided to wait and do the remainder in the fall when everything starts to die. She explained that the dying plant structures will be removed and then cardboard and the remaining tarp will be laid down.

She mentioned that they will need more wood chips to place over the cardboard and tarps, and that set up will stay in place for 4 to 5 years. Ms. Mathews informed Mr. Bohannon that she has been putting the knotweed plants in garbage bags and placing them by the side of the shed in the park. Mr. Bohannon stated he will remind his crew to pick the bags up.

Rain Garden (CCCD Grant): Ms. Mathews stated Raynee performed a perk test last week and the results were within the criteria limits, meaning they are able to proceed with the project. She reported that the parks crew moved the granite posts to help prevent plow trucks from dumping snow over the chain and into the area during the winter months.

Ms. Mathews reported that the area is within two trees and digging was difficult, per Raynee, so they need to consider which root cutting method might be best for the two trees involved. She mentioned using a reciprocating saw but wants to be careful not to damage the trees. Chair Winsor suggested using compressed air, which is high pressure and will blow the soil away while the roots stay in place. There was short discussion and Chair Winsor stated he will look into obtaining a contractor.

Buckthorn Baggies: Ms. Mathews stated at some point they intend to begin the bagging of buckthorn and will update everyone when that happens.

Pollinator Palooza Event: Ms. Mathews announced that the Pollinator Palooza event will take place on Tuesday, June 21st from 1:00 to 3:00pm. The Friends will have a table and signage about native plantings for pollinators but do not currently have any activities planned.

Amendment of Beds – Ms. Mathews reported that Mr. Morarty of UNH Soil Science and Mike Kelley of UNH Cooperative Extension have asked to visit the park for a soil assessment. They are in the planning stages of that, which will include Mr. Morarty and Mr. Kelley providing ideas on how to go about amending the soil in the beds.

Ms. Mathews asked for suggestions on how they could go about obtaining good quality soil or mulch. She explained that what they have now is very difficult to work with and volunteers are very unhappy with it. She made note that a significant element in every plot is soil, so it makes a big difference to have it be of quality. Mr. Bocko asked if the soil they are currently working with is the soil that was mixed with leaves from city leaf clean-up, and Ms. Mathews confirmed that that is what they are using. Mr. Bocko stated that process seems to be what they need to be looking further into and trying to correct. Mr. Bohannon stated the process of mixing wasn't done well and perhaps the parks crew didn't fully understand, which needs to be corrected; however, there needs to be some understanding that the parks crew is incredibly busy during this time of year with cemeteries and opening and maintaining the pools. Ms. Mathews stated the process should be done in April as soon as the ground is not frozen and Mr. Bohannon agreed.

Ms. Mathews next brought up the topic of what happens when they need to hire a machine or people to do work for them. She wondered how much of their project activity is overseen by the advisory board. Additionally, she asked about where they would go for permits.

Chair Winsor suggested they mulch in the fall when the parks crew is not as busy, which would allow extra time for the leaves to compost over the summer. Ms. Mathews asked if the parks crew does leaf pick-ups in the fall and Mr. Bohannon stated they do in the late fall. Chair Winsor also suggested going back to bark mulch to get through with this bad soil situation. Ms. Mathews stated the park is in desperate need of soil amendment and proposed that they wait on a final decision with regards to this topic until Mr. Morarty goes through and does the soil assessment.

Mr. Hooper suggested a soil screener where you take the compost and put it through a screening machine. Chair Winsor agreed stating that will make the soil more processed. Mr. Bohannon stated his crew doesn't have the time to do that themselves. Councilor Chadbourne suggested they consider another source aside from the City and think about investing some money into the process. Mr. Bohannon stated the budget they have is what the City can do outside of mowing and trimming and mentioned potentially hiring someone to do the work. He added that the company they had the last few years did a good job but did put the mulch down later than they had wanted. He mentioned that if they can find a local landscaper who will mulch leaves they will likely have to pay a good amount for it.

Mr. Hooper asked for clarification on the difference between soil, mulch, and compost. Chair Winsor stated mulch becomes compost and Ms. Mathews stated mulch is placed on top and helps control temperature and weeds, as well as keep insects at bay. She explained that the idea with the leaf compost was for it to rot so the leaf mulch would compost and turn into better soil. Ms. Mathews wondered if they could have soil trucked over from the City landfill and Mr. Bohannon stated that is doable. Mr. Hooper mentioned that the soil from the City landfill needs to be screened because there are a lot of sticks and rocks in it. Chair Winsor added that taking raw leaves and hoping they break down quick enough is a tough process and suggested Peterborough Compost as an option for breaking down the leaves. Mr. Bohannon suggested the board think about how they want to spread the soil. He noted that manpower and womanpower is limited and it is a big job, so they would need volunteers and a heavy work group. Ms. Casey commented that they are supposed to have denser plantings and it takes a lot of skill to spread the soil properly.

Mr. Bohannon stated he will have his crew remove the bad soil before June 21st.

Chair Winsor stated the Friends wouldn't need permits to use compressed air so they should be all set on that front.

5) Pollinator Event – June 21, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Mr. Bohannon stated this should be a good event in the park and noted that he will bring tables, chairs, a speaker and some of the new educational signs that Mr. Poanessa recently finished.

Ms. Krautmann asked if the Cheshire Children’s Museum had been contacted and Mr. Bohannon stated he was unsure because the event is CCCD’s. Ms. Mathews stated she will send Ms. Krautmann some contact information to try and get the Children’s Museum notified and involved.

6) Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation

A) Educational Signage

Mr. Bohannon stated the educational signs are completed and Mr. Poanessa is now working on the Kiosk.

B) Book Walks

Mr. Bohannon reported that he needs to get the posts made but they did walk through and decide where to install them; however, the project is delayed because there are so many events and projects currently taking place. He added that the book walk will be completed before the summer is over.

C) Public Art

Ms. Krautmann stated things will not be ready by the end of the school year because of kiln use; however, they are aiming for everything to be installed by September to hopefully coincide with Art in the Park.

7) New, Other Business

Chair Winsor asked Ms. Mathews if she’d like him to fertilize the plants again using fish fertilizer. Ms. Mathews stated that would be fabulous.

8) Adjourn

Chair Winsor announced that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, July 12, 2022 at 8:00 AM.

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:49 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

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