

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 12, 2022

8:00 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

Paul Bocko

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM. He made Mr. Haynes a voting member for the meeting.

2) Acceptance of June 14, 2022 Minutes

Chair Winsor made a correction to the minutes, stating that on line 47 it should read “obtaining a contractor,” rather than “obtaining an air compressor.”

Ms. Krautmann made a motion to accept the minutes of June 14, 2022 with the aforementioned correction. Councilor Chadbourne seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported no changes to the budget and stated Bartlett Tree has fertilized and will be doing their tree trimming within the week, but he does not yet have the invoice.

Mr. Bohannon announced that they are due to renew their annual service agreement with Bartlett Tree related to ArborScope, which is \$500.00 a year for three years and they would have to pay \$1,500 up front. He explained that ArborScope is the software for the QR tags they use on the trees and also a platform which helps users find the value of trees and evaluate them properly. He

also mentioned that it is a multiuser platform. Chair Winsor added that it has other capabilities beyond what Mr. Bohannon mentioned and it has already been utilized. Mr. Bohannon stated if they terminate the contract they will need to find a new home for the QR codes. He explained that he would need their approval to go back to the Board of Trustees and request the money, or they could take it from their current budget.

Chair Winsor asked if they could take the cost out of their current budget and Mr. Bohannon stated it depends on whether or not they want to mulch in the fall. Short discussion ensued and general consensus was to leave the money in their budget just in case.

Ms. Mathews made a motion to go back to the Board of Trustees and request \$1,500 for the Bartlett Tree Inventory platform. Councilor Chadbourne seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

4) Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum

Ms. Mathews mentioned that she is working on changing their meeting time. She reported that at the most recent work meeting they did a lot of weeding in the front of the park and used a spray can to mark the parameters of the rain garden. She noted that a good half of the Starbucks asphalt section was full of water so it's proving to be an ideal spot for the garden.

Ms. Mathews and Chair Winsor briefly discussed obtaining a contractor for clearing around the tree roots with an air compressor, and potentially paying for that using the grant money for the rain garden. Ms. Mathews stated she will look into any grant restrictions with regards to how the funds are utilized. Mr. Bohannon wondered if some of the money could go to rain garden signage/education and Ms. Mathews stated she doesn't believe so but would rather wait on signage until a later time.

Ms. Mathews mentioned that the Antioch University building is being sold so she was able to go obtain some plants from the property. There was short discussion about the pergola and Mr. Bohannon asked that they don't have any plantings attached to the pergola; however, a trellis in the back would be okay. Mr. Bohannon informed Ms. Mathews that there is a group who maintains the plantings surrounding the pergola and has done so for quite some time, which they are appreciative of and try to respect their desire to do their own thing. Mr. Bohannon stated they offered to help with adding a bench to the pergola, potentially for Brian Mattson.

There was short discussion about bed irrigation with Ms. Mathews noting that most of the beds are not getting a good amount of water and some are getting very little to none at all. She and Mr. Bohannon decided to explore this more outside of the meeting.

Ms. Mathews reported that the Pollinator Palooza was well received and is hopeful that it'll grow year after year.

Ms. Casey and Ms. Mathews stated they found a Dogwood tree near the handicap spot that's doing badly, as well as the Crabapple tree closest to the bridge. Chair Winsor suggested they check to see if the trees are inventoried and pass that information along to Mr. Bohannon.

5) Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation

- A) Educational Signage Installed – Mr. Bohannon reported that all the signs are installed and look great in the park.**
- B) Book Walks – Mr. Bohannon stated his parks crew is working on the book walk and they will likely go out and take one more walk through before final installation.**
- C) Public Art – Mr. Bohannon stated the public art project will take place in September.**

Mr. Bohannon reported that, during the recent pollinator event, Steven Lamonde, in partnership with Moosewood Ecological, took children around Ashuelot River Park and documented 16 species of pollinators, and several were new additions to the 256 species already documented in NH. Ms. Mathews added that Mr. Lamonde would like to come back and do a pollinator workshop.

6) New, Other Business

Ms. Krautmann inquired about what's going on with the Monadnock Conservancy. Mr. Bohannon stated Tom Hanna, who represents JRR Properties, LLC, brought forward to City Council a request to accept a land donation of a portion of Ashuelot Street for use as a City Park, contingent on quite a few things related to the 2.5 acres within the current green space. The plan is for the lot to be used as a playground and City park and have access to the river for kayak and canoe launching. The private lot, above the 100 year flood plain, will be the site for the 4,000 to 5,000 square foot Monadnock Conservancy building. This will house the Conservancy and likely a meeting space and educational center. Mr. Bohannon explained that adjacent to the building there will be parking and an acre of solar panels, with the goal of having a net zero building as well as taking care of the electrical needs for the park. Due to the size of the solar array they have to go before the Zoning Board of Adjustment and request a variance. Mr. Bohannon stated there is still a lot of work that needs to be done, including developing the scope of the project.

Ms. Krautmann mentioned that there has been some discussion about the property not being taxed. Mr. Bohannon stated the Monadnock Conservancy is a non-profit and believes they can request to waive taxes. He added that donations back to the City or park would not require taxes to be paid on that lot.

Ms. Krautmann asked if solar panels can negatively impact animals, especially birds. Mr. Bohannon stated that, to his knowledge, they do not. Mr. Haynes added that there's already fencing around that area limiting entrance for a lot of animals, aside from birds and squirrels. Mr.

Hooper noted that birds tend to have problems with higher objects so they should be safe with the solar panels.

Ms. Krautmann asked if the board would have anything to do with the new building and park. Mr. Bohannon stated they won't on the private side but on the park side they could certainly discuss involvement.

There was short discussion about the playground and Mr. Bohannon stated they would love to have a natural playground but it's a lot budget-wise. He went on to state that he plans to do a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application and natural playgrounds are not necessarily supported by the Federal Government LWCF program because of the uncertainty in how long natural elements will last. He went on to state that certain types of more expensive wood can last quite a long time but he has to combine elements carefully and figure out how to go about it. Mr. Bohannon explained that LWCF is funded by offshore oil and gas and can only be used for development state, municipal, or federal park lands. He stated it's a 50/50 match and this particular round is \$500,000. They distribute the money yearly to each state and the states take what they need for state parks to develop their state master plans, and then money is pushed down to municipalities.

Councilor Chadbourne asked if the public will share the same boat landing right of way and Mr. Bohannon stated that is part of the discussion because of the grant funding and property line.

Chair Winsor stated it's an exciting plan and property tax may have people upset but they truly couldn't ask for a better tenant than Monadnock Conservatory. Mr. Bohannon stated he will put this item on the agenda for more discussion at their next meeting.

Mr. Haynes asked about the dam and kayak access downstream. Mr. Bohannon stated discussion about the dam likely won't happen for another 3 to 4 years. Councilor Chadbourne added that removing it would change the river flow dramatically and wondered how feasible kayaking would be then. Mr. Bohannon stated they would definitely still be able to kayak with the dam removed and noted there are several different scenarios for dam removal or adjustment.

Chair Winsor mentioned that he did not fertilize out at the park yet because it's been so dry and stated he will do that when there's been more rain. He briefly discussed his process of soil building and mentioned figuring out how to do that on a larger scale.

7) Adjournment

General consensus was to skip the August meeting and meet next on September 13, 2022.

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

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