

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 11, 2023

8:15 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:

None

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:13 AM.

2) Approval of June 13, 2023 Minutes

Ms. Mathews asked that “postponed” be changed to “agreed to postpone” at page 2, line 70 of the minutes of the June 13, 2023, meeting.

Councilor Chadbourne made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2023, meeting, as amended. Ms. Krautmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported that no money had been spent yet. He noted that he removed \$4,000 from the budget for tree removal by Bartlett Tree because he planned to hire a local contractor for less money, as Frank Bartlett had suggested.

Mr. Bocko arrived at 8:16 AM.

Ms. Mathews said that, with respect to the replanting program, City staff pulled out the barberry and planted six New Jersey tea shrubs in the area by the bridge. Once she gets six additional

John's-wort shrubs from Bagley Pond Perennials, that section of the replanting program will be complete. She will give Mr. Bohannon the invoices.

Mr. Bohannon stated the report he distributed is otherwise just informational.

4) Report from Friends of the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum

Ms. Mathews apologized for missing the last meeting, noting she was planning the garden club annual meeting.

She reported that the Friends heeled in the new plants for the rain garden by the bridge. One or two geranium plants did not survive. The John's-wort shrubs will be planted in that spot. She reported that a Cheshire County Conservation Opportunity Fund banner was over the site for Pollinator Palooza.

She further reported that Ms. Casey made three signs – one for the rain garden, one for the knotweed removal area, and one for the plantings replacing the invasive barberry by the bridge. As a master gardener project, Leigh Kamm, worked with Michael Nerrie to develop special paper and ink that would last in the rain for Mr. Nerrie's Distant Hill Gardens. Ms. Mathews purchased the special paper and ink, as well as several metal sign frames and stakes, for the Park. Ms. Casey noted that, because her printer did not work with the special paper, she was only able to use regular paper for the signs for Pollinator Palooza. Ms. Mathews said she would ask Mr. Nerrie what printer he used. Ms. Carlson wondered if Mr. Nerrie would volunteer to print the signs on the special paper. Ms. Mathews suggested getting Ms. Cammett involved.

Ms. Mathews reported on the invasive knotweed removal project. The Friends did some weeding of emerging knotweed. The volunteer "mermaid" discussed at the last meeting returned to help remove knotweed from the water. The Friends also removed some Dame's Rocket near Mascoma and covered the area with tarps, and City staff put down wood chips. The Friends still have one section to clear.

The Friends are at the preliminary planning stage for the pollinator garden project. The garden will be near the two granite posts marking the arboretum's exit, as well as the overgrown garden that high school students planted about three years ago. The two plots will be joined with a wood path between them and planted with pollinators plants. Ms. Mathews is thinking about partnerships to help with obtaining the plants. Ms. Carlson asked if the Friends could get plants donated, which has happened in the past. The Friends are thinking about asking the public what their favorite pollinators are and then planting plants that attract those pollinators. Councilor Chadbourne wondered if Julie Barrett would be willing to make a donation. Ms. Mathews responded that she was not sure about the ethics of her doing so, since she is on the Friends' board, but Ms. Barrett has made donations before. Councilor Chadbourne suggested asking Ellis Farm or Windsock Gardens. Ms. Carlson noted that nurseries might be particularly willing to make donations at the end of the season.

Ms. Mathews noted that there are few plants once the daffodils fade. The Friends are trying to plant for the first time in 30 or so years. She reported that because some of the plants purchased from Prairie Moon were small and planted too far apart, they were inadvertently weeded out. Ms. Mathews indicated that either volunteers or members of the public could be responsible.

The Friends weed every Friday morning for two hours starting at either 8:00 AM or 9:00 AM. They have put in more than 60 hours since June, if not more. They have had as many as nine volunteers, but the core group of four includes Ms. Mathews, Ms. Carlson, and Ms. Casey. Karen Flavin and Mary weeded the two beds facing West Street, which look really nice, and she and Ms. Casey weeded the back bed by the large sign. They will get to the other beds little by little. Mr. Bohannon asked if Ms. Mathews got in touch with the group that wants to help. She responded yes. She also noted the group plans to leave the lilac bush as a donation.

Ms. Carlson raised the area full of knotweed near the chain link fence, noting the Friends might work on it soon. Mr. Bohannon indicated a plan for the area could be years away. She noted that the Friends need tarps to cover the area once the knotweed is removed. In the past, they have gotten tarps donated. They still have plenty of wood chips.

Ms. Mathews closed with a thank you to Mr. Bohannon for getting the stone dust for the cobblestones.

5) Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation

A) Rachel Marshall Area

Chair Winsor reported that he and Ms. Mathews toured the area with Paul Bocko. Mr. Bocko pointed out the many birds, and plants that attract birds, in the area. What the area needs is people to visit. It would not take a lot of money to attract people to the area. It's already a great area for birds. Certainly, signage is needed. Maybe relocating a trail through the area would help, too. Ms. Mathews said she overheard two visitors say they did not know what the area was and therefore did not go. Chair Winsor suggested interpretive signage. Ms. Carlson noted the trail area was cleaned out a few years ago. Ms. Mathews agreed there is still a wide trail there. Mr. Bohannon said the City generally brush hogs the area once a year. Chair Winsor noted the boundary with Melanson needs clarification. Ms. Krautmann recalled that the Board discussed installing binoculars in the area.

Chair Winsor stated the area already is a bird sanctuary and just needs some planning to make it suitable for visitors. He said the Board needs someone who is knowledgeable about birds, besides Mr. Hooper. Mr. Hooper suggested the Audubon Society in Concord has resources. Mr. Bocko suggested the City could hire a work-study student from Antioch. Chair Winsor asked if Mr. Bocko is willing to get the process for hiring a student going. Mr. Bocko said yes, but he needs to know if the City will offer a stipend or work-study match. Mr. Bohannon said yes, but Mr. Bohannon can't supervise a student until after the fall semester. Councilor Chadbourne

asked if the City could screen and select from student applicants. Mr. Bocko said yes. Ms. Carlson wondered if an expert from the Audubon Society or at least someone more knowledgeable than a student could assess the area for free. Ms. Mathews suggested getting a student from the Harris Center for Conservation Education. She worked with someone there who set up a six-week drop-in program at the library in May and June that provided for people to ask master gardeners questions; it was a grant-funded program. Chair Winsor wondered if Brett Thelen from the Harris Center could offer some guidance. Mr. Bocko noted that Mr. Lamond offered further assistance; he could advise the Board but is very busy. Mr. Bocko noted that a student can always talk to other experts. Chair Winsor confirmed that Mr. Bocko would work on recruiting at Antioch. Chair Winsor said that he would look at the Audubon Society's website for resources. He expressed that he saw the area with new eyes after walking through it with Mr. Lamond. Mr. Bohannon asked if a job announcement or description is needed. Mr. Bocko said he would base a draft announcement off the one he did for the interpretive position. He asked if the target start date would be spring. Mr. Bohannon said he will not have time to accommodate another student until spring. Mr. Bocko wondered if a subgroup should be formed. Mr. Bohannon said he supports the effort; he is just short on time.

B) Kiosk Information

Chair Winsor asked Ms. Mathews about the timeline she has been working on. She said she had forgotten about it and would finish it.

Mr. Bocko said he is working on integrating some indigenous history. He wondered if there should be subgroup to fine tune the content. He suggested posting the timeline before the narrative history is complete. Rich Holschuh of the Elnu Abenaki in Brattleboro looked at the indigenous history included on the timeline and wondered if anything else could be included. Part of the problem is that indigenous people were not included in the development of the Park. He is not sure what indigenous people would want included on the timeline. He wondered about having more conversations with local Abenaki people. He suggested doing something with Miranda's artwork. Chair Winsor suggested, if the narrative is close to completion, to get it done and over to Peter Poanessa, along with a couple photos from Mr. Hooper. The Board discussed the timeline starting around the 1920s or 60s, rather than earlier. Mr. Bohannon asked about next steps. He wondered if the narrative should be unveiled in concert with Indigenous Peoples' Day or another event.

Mr. Bocko also reported that Mr. Holschuh is too busy to lead a walk for July. Instead, he plans to lead a walk at the nature preserve in November, possibly on November 4. He could do a second walk that day or around that day and include both the Park and the nature preserve. Mr. Bohannon expressed support for a November shoulder season walk because the environment and experience in the fall is quite different from the summer or spring. Of course, Mr. Holschuh's walk will likely focus more on history than the environment, which does not rely on the season.

C) Bartlett Tree

Mr. Bohannon reported that he recently signed the contract with Bartlett Tree.

Ms. Mathews noted that the Kentucky coffee tree is beautiful now. Chair Winsor described its ascending branches. He said coffee was made from the tree in early Colonial days. The Kentucky coffee tree is by the garden club bench and shed near the river.

6) New, Other Business

A) Pollinator Palooza – June 22, 2023, 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Chair Winsor said that the event was very successful. It was a beautiful day. The number of people there was incredible. Caterpillar, Moosehead, Harris Center, and other groups were there. Nicole Cullinane took photos for the website. It was a great educational event for the Park. Chair Winsor thanked the Friends for having a table at the event. Ms. Mathews reported the Friends received \$6.01 in donations at the event. The Board is confident there will be even more people at next year's event.

B) Reaching Wellness – July 14, 2023, 4:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Alissa Bender, youth services manager, talked about the event. She said the flyer for the event was included in the agenda packet. The event is Friday at the Park. She asked if the Board or Friends want to participate. She noted that gardening is good for stress reduction, and the event is focused on mental health, substance use, and overall wellness. People don't always think about how being out in nature, being in the sun, is good for mental health.

Ms. Mathews asked for a table for the Friends. Ms. Bender agreed. In response to Chair Winsor's question, she identified some of the ten or so other groups with tables, including Monadnock Area Peer Support, Everglow Wellness, YMCA, and Keene Housing Kids Collaborative.

Mr. Bohannon announced a community stroll would be led by an Antioch student at 5:00 PM on Thursday, July 27, 2023. The flyer is included with the agenda packet. It will be an easy stroll. It will take place rain or shine. It will go up the river and back, looking at wildlife. Participants should bring a picnic.

He further reported that Ms. Mathews shared information about a project about the cultural and ecological significance of ash trees, and conserving them, with him. Both indigenous and non-indigenous researchers and other stakeholders are involved. It is called the Ash Protection Collaboration Across Wabanaki. Ms. Mathews plans to sign up to receive information and updates about the project. Ash tree seeds may be available from the Wild Seed Project. Chair Winsor wondered about the impact of the emerald ash borer.

Mr. Bohannon showed the Board the ArborScope inventory and map of the Park that Bartlett Tree created, which shows where various trees are in the Park. For example, he showed the Kentucky coffee tree as tree number 29. There will be a QR code for every tree for visitors to scan for more information about the tree. Chair Winsor said he is still adding photos of each tree to the inventory. He will photograph the Kentucky coffee tree soon.

7) **Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, August 8, 2023, 8:15 AM**

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 9:01 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Wendy Chen, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon, PRF Director