

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 8, 2023

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Ruzzel Zullo, Vice Chair
Dian Matthews
Thomas Haynes, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation, & Facilities

Members Not Present:

Councilor Bettina Chadbourne
Steve Hooper
Paul Bocko
Suzy Krautmann

1) Welcome & Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:22 AM.

2) Approval of July 11, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Revisions: Line 99 should identify Mr. Bocko as having been present for the walk, not Steven Lamonde. Line 47, the woman's name should be spelled as "Leigh Kamm." Line 93, strike the sentence about installing stones. Lastly, Line 116 should read as, "... but Mr. Bohannon cannot supervise..."

A motion by Mr. Haynes to adopt the July 11, 2023, minutes as amended was duly seconded by Ms. Matthews. The motion carried unanimously.

3) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported that everything was up-to-date, and nothing had been spent since the last meeting. Ms. Matthews had just provided an invoice to Mr. Bohannon. Mr. Bohannon had not yet received an invoice from Bartlett Tree Experts, but they had completed the work; Ms. Matthews was in the park when Bartlett was fertilizing, and she knew they had pruned. She had asked Julie Barrett not to cut anything down if it had a tag on it. Ms. Matthews said that Julie Barrett cut something dead in the bed next to the pergola, but Ms. Matthews had not visited to

check on it yet. Ms. Matthews asked if Bartlett was supposed to cut dead things. She also mentioned a tree in the hosta bed that is badly girdled, and she wondered if someone should look at that. Mr. Bohannon replied that he could bring that to Bartlett's attention. He shared the example of a tree to be removed on the bank side this year, stating that it is best to do those with the City's local contractor. Mr. Bohannon thought that Bartlett would do it, noting that Frank Grano is very honest about charges to remove trees and whether a local vendor could do the work at a lower rate. Beyond pruning, Ms. Matthews asked who was supposed to be "doctoring" these trees. She mentioned two other trees that were girdled but she did not remember where. Chair Winsor noted that many girdled trees continue living despite struggling. Ms. Matthews would visit the park again to make note of those tree numbers.

Chair Winsor proposed a line item in the budget for \$5,000 for replanting/replacing trees. In the park or Rachel Marshall area, Chair Winsor proposed planting a dawn redwood (*Metasequoia*), which he thought would be a good addition to the tree collection. Dawn redwoods can reach 80 feet tall; there is one at Keene State College (KSC) as an example. He called them graceful, beautiful trees that can grow in the Keene area. September or October would be ideal times to plant. Chair Winsor thought that Millican Nursery might have them (3-inch caliper), and he agreed to research that possibility. Mr. Bohannon noted that with \$5,000 he was able to purchase four trees for Pat Russell Park.

4) Report from Friends of the Ashuelot Park Arboretum

Ms. Matthews reported that the week before this meeting, she visited the Bagley Pond nursery in Warner, NH, to pick-up the last eight St. John's wort shrubs, which were heeled into the bridge bed. However, she said they were not yet in hedge formation because all the rain garden plants were in the bridge bed. Once plants are ready to move into the rain garden, the St. John's wort shrubs would be arranged in hedge formation to fit them in with the New Jersey teas.

Next, Ms. Matthews talked about the remaining Dame's rocket, which look like beautiful phlox near Mascoma Savings Bank. She called it a gorgeous bank of invasive flowers. She had helped to take a lot of it out, and before they went to seed, the Friends got rid of the rest of it and addressed more Japanese knotweed in that area.

The Friends had also started weeding the various garden beds, including cleaning-up the pokeweed on the west side of the pergola (this requires more discussion), the front bed near the arts sculptures, and the side bed near the parking lot. The same week as this meeting, the Friends intended to also address the Jerusalem artichoke along the east parking lot fence so people can walk there; then, they would start on the Starbucks side so that everything will look better for Art in the Park. The Old Homestead Garden Club had budgeted \$200 for the park and asked the Friends to get some mulch and plants for the area that the Club considers theirs.

Ms. Matthews continued noting that the Friends had intended to use the compost. She referred to the triangle bed and said that the shrub that the Friends bought from Maple Hill three years ago

should have had a good year this year, but the snowplow knocked it over. Ms. Matthews would consider replacing it with something from her home garden. The grass in that area was tall, almost as if it had been seeded. She learned that the Friends considered one of their beds and had used compost that was completely full of seeds; it took him three hours because it was so bad.

Ms. Matthews shared that she was approached by The Samaritans (Safer at Home) and she talked to Mr. Bohannon about it. Ms. Matthews said the group had put a lot of things in the park that were not approved of by Ms. Matthews or Mr. Bohannon. Considering stones are needed, Ms. Matthews was trying to be conciliatory to work with them and see what happens monetarily; she is trying to get the 16 stones back. Ms. Matthews thinks the more people involved in the park, the better. She needed the rest of the Board to support the Friends in educating the public that they cannot come and plant things in the arboretum. Mr. Bohannon said this was a very unfortunate situation with someone taking liberties and sharing untruths about having permission from him or Ms. Matthews. Chair Winsor noted that people used to buy trees and try to plant them at KSC.

Ms. Matthews said the past month had been difficult with the rain and they had to change a lot of workdays, which was challenging given that it is always unclear how many volunteers are coming. Still, five Friends managed 41 hours of gardening with the help of three volunteers. Workdays were still tentatively scheduled for the first Saturday of the month and every Friday after that (not the first Friday of the month). She said this was the initial schedule because the Friends were trying to work with the Monadnock Garden Club, who were showing up on the first Saturday of the month for some planting and mulching. Ms. Matthews was not content with mulch being laid in random areas of the park due to aesthetics. She added that the Monadnock Garden Club was supposed to be in charge of the beds on each side of the pergola, but they had only laid mulch on one side. Ms. Matthews thought this was another instance of the Board needing to step in and ensure everything conforms with the rest of the arboretum. Mr. Bohannon thought there used to be larger dark brown mulch on the beds on either side of the pergola. Ms. Matthews would send photos to Mr. Bohannon. Ms. Matthews spoke to someone from the Monadnock Garden Club, whose members are required to do some work.

5) Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation

A) Rachel Marshall Area

Chair Winsor recalled a lot of discussion at the last meeting about the Rachel Marshall area already being a bird sanctuary that the Board wants to help people appreciate. He wondered whether additional interpretive signage on what birds to expect to see would help draw people across the bridge; he thought this could build upon Kyle Bradford's successful interpretive signage. Ms. Matthews thought clearer signage was needed to direct people along the small footpath. Mr. Bohannon said the City owns the land down to the granite post, it just needs to be delineated better. When taking the path toward Melanson's and to the right going toward behind Hannaford, there is a path that essentially marks the property line; the property line cannot be truly defined because of the Eversource power lines (grassy area under the lines is Eversource

property). All of the woods to the right of the path Mr. Bohannon mentioned are a part of the park. Ms. Matthews said that is harder to tell when coming from the other end of the park. A different trail is needed closer to the trees. Chair Winsor knew that Mr. Bocko intended to work on some of the interpretive signage with the student. He said that if the Board wants the Rachel Marshall area to be used in a good way, people need a reason to go there.

Ms. Matthews said she visited a few sites in the past month, and she was interested in the types of seeding. She said a few trees could be felled and moved to form a sort of outdoor classroom. Mr. Bohannon said those learning circles could be created and defined through the educational process. The concern is for those areas becoming campfire rings at night, so the Board needs to be cautious. Mr. Haynes recalled spreading a lot of wood chips to create pathways but noted that the vegetation would likely grow back through that. Mr. Bohannon thought that signage would be essential to establishing the outdoor learning areas. He thought that as long as the park is kept as open as possible for viewing, there should be less negative activities, though those activities can never be dissuaded entirely. The Board agreed.

B) Kiosk Information

Ms. Matthews gave Chair Winsor a timeline and the Chair was awaiting more creating writing on the history from Mr. Bocko. Chair Winsor would provide the timeline to Peter Poanessa for the sign before the history is completed. Ms. Matthews shared copies of proposed rules. Mr. Bohannon reviewed the rules and would add some other things, like no smoking, as well as other language edits to clarify things like no camping in City parks. The Board agreed that these should be posted in multiple areas. Ms. Matthews would resend the document to Mr. Bohannon with sign language for the work on the pergola two years ago and the local Interact Club's events during Covid. Chair Winsor agreed to visit the Cheshire County Historical Society and try to get more historical information, which he would share with Ms. Matthews for the signs. Discussion ensued about when Art in the Park began, which Mr. Bohannon thought was in the early 1990s, after the park opened in 1986; likely before 1998.

C) Bartlett Tree

Discussed earlier in the meeting under Finance Report.

6) New, Other Business

Chair Winsor mentioned that Ms. Matthews wanted to have leaves shredded. The Chair suggested a workday and renting a shredder, which would be less complicated than buying one with maintenance and storage challenges. Mr. Bohannon thought renting a shredder could be worked out in terms of insurance. The discussion was to have this workday in September or October. Chair Winsor will research the rental options. This should be on the September agenda to finalize.

Chair Winsor shared that he would give a presentation on the history of the park at the Keene Senior Center on September 8. He could share the presentation with the Board after.

Chair Winsor asked Ms. Matthews if she wanted him to work on organic foliage fertilization. Ms. Matthews thought the rain had been making the weeds grow too much. Chair Winsor clarified that this treatment would not go on weeds, but foliage of plants. Ms. Matthews thought it might be a good thing for the shrubs. Chair Winsor and Ms. Matthews agreed that this treatment could help things look good for Art in the Park. Chair Winsor would try to do this work on a Friday when Ms. Matthews would likely already be at the park. Ms. Matthews mentioned that the Friends were deciding whether to use tape or stakes to mark the shrubs to keep an eye on; the original marking on the plants had disappeared.

Chair Winsor recommended that the Board get ahead of the snow dump issue, noting that the snow was being piled in the handicapped parking spaces, which is illegal. The snow had pushed over some trees and damaged some plants. Mr. Bohannon recommended having signs made. Ms. Matthews shared the example of an area with two granite posts and asked if those are expensive; she thought that two posts with the handicapped sign and a no snow dumping sign could work. Chair Winsor said there is a NH Statute, and that language could be included on the signs.

7) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 8:15 AM

Chair Winsor will not be at the September meeting. There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:58 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker
August 14, 2023

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon, PRF Director