

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 8:15 AM
Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

Members:

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

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Alternate:

Thomas Haynes

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of December 12, 2023 Minutes
3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair
4. Acceptance of Meeting Dates for 2024
5. Finance Report
6. Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum
7. Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation
 - a. Project Tracking
 - b. West Street Dam – CIP project FY 27
8. Budget Development
 - a. Bartlett Tree
 - b. Antioch Intern
 - c. Landscape Contractor
9. Upcoming Events
10. New, Other Business
11. Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 8:15 AM

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Tuesday, December 12, 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 Matthews
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation &
Facilities Director

Members Not Present:

Suzy Krautmann

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9
10 **1) Call to Order – Roll Call**

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12 Chair Arthur Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:20 AM.

13
14 **2) Approval of October 17, 2023 Minutes**

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16 A motion by Paul Bocko to approve the October 17, 2023 meeting minutes was duly seconded
17 by Dian Matthews. Vice Chair Ruzzel Zullo abstained as he was not present at the meeting. The
18 motion carried.

19
20 **3) Finance Report**

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22 Andy Bohannon stated that there was nothing new regarding the finance report. Ms. Matthews
23 will send Mr. Bohannon an updated invoice for work that was completed by Bartlett Tree
24 before the end of the year.

25
26 **4) Report from the Friends of the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum**

27
28 Leslie Casey, member of the Friends, was present at the meeting.
29

30 Ms. Matthews reported that the Friends worked tirelessly this past summer to keep the park in
31 good shape. She believed they did more than they should have and that they will need to come
32 up with a new plan to ensure their work isn't so physically demanding next year.

33

34 Ms. Matthews stated that with the help of Tim Garland (from the Parks and Cemeteries
35 Division,) a cut was made from the asphalt by the nearby Starbucks (located on West Street,) sod
36 was dug up, sand and sod were laid, and the base of the rain garden was put in and covered with
37 compost for next year.

38

39 Some of the plants that were bought for the Bridge Garden last year (including two of the large
40 plants) have expired. The Friends will see what survives the rest of the year and fill in with new
41 plants next year. Ms. Matthews believed they would have to continue testing out which plants
42 thrive in that garden, as the sun can be unpredictable in that spot.

43

44 Ms. Matthews continued, their big project for the winter will be creating plans to enlarge the
45 Pollinator Garden, which will join into the "Wedding Photo Garden." It will be an extensive
46 length, so they will create a cut-through, covered with woodchips. The current garden was
47 created by twelve high school students and the plants were generously donated by Home Depot
48 and the Garden Club.

49

50 Ms. Casey reported on the Friends' annual meeting. She stated that they took a trip to Franklin,
51 NH for a park walk. She explained that Franklin has beautiful industrial relics, train trestle
52 bridges, and granite structures. She believed something like that would not be available to the
53 Ashuelot River Park but that they could clean up some of the invasive plants between the
54 Knotweed Project and the dam to make it a more enjoyable stroll. She stated that Franklin has an
55 eddy by their dam for kayakers to practice on whitewater as well as parkour equipment. She
56 believed they should focus on outdoor sports at the park as well. Mr. Bohannon stated that
57 outdoor sports aren't as appealing in the Northeast and he hasn't seen a lot of success with it in
58 the past.

59

60 Councilor Chadbourne shared that she didn't like the Book Walk and thought the Park was
61 beginning to feel too busy. She believed that too many new additions would take away from the
62 nature in the park. Ms. Matthews stated that she has heard the same opinions from others. She
63 believed the storybook signs were supposed to be 18 inches high but they seem taller and would
64 like to see them lowered. Mr. Bohannon stated he will revisit the specifications and give the
65 Superintendent the information to review. Ms. Matthews also wanted to check with the people at
66 the Library on the average length of the stories, as they may be able to shorten it and take a few
67 of the storyboards down. Councilor Chadbourne suggested using smaller signs with a QR code
68 for people to scan with their phones to learn about the Park, although she was unsure if she liked
69 the idea of children using their phones at the park instead of enjoying the nature. Stephen Hooper
70 suggested that there should be a balance between sharing education with the community and
71 having an arboretum with nothing in it, which he believed they have achieved at the park. He
72 would like to see a Bird Park or Sanctuary, as that offers education without the need for more

73 signage. Chair Winsor is pleased with the current state of the park but suggested they speak with
74 Suzy Krautmann and the people at the Library to ensure the Book Walk is being used before they
75 discuss removing any signs. Councilor Chadbourne asked if the Board decided upon the book
76 walk to which Mr. Bohannon replied they did. Paul Bocko stated he would like to work with the
77 Friends to think of a way to encourage kids to use the park for their studies and bring classrooms
78 to the park. This could encourage use of the park for education without having to install
79 something tangible.

80
81 Ms. Casey shared that she was working on a one-page project description sheet to define projects
82 so everyone has the same understanding of the on-going projects. Mr. Bohannon shared that he
83 has a project worksheet that was created a few years ago related to the Master Plan that he could
84 update and bring back into use.

85

86 **5) Master Plan Implementation**

87

88 **A) Bartlett Tree**

89

90 Mr. Bohannon stated that they hired a consultant in regards to the vegetation control, specifically
91 the knotweed along the river bank. He stated that he met with Andy Powers from Vegetation
92 Control Services who will be doing the herbicide application, at a cost of around \$1,000.00. The
93 treatment will start at the dam and lead up to where the bench is, as well as the fence line along
94 the other side. Treatment will start late Summer 2024. Ms. Matthews stated that they will have
95 dead trunks of all the saplings after herbicide application, so they will have to remove them by
96 the Summer of 2025. Mr. Powers will need a special permit to work in the Park. They were able
97 to maximize their dollar by working with Mr. Powers as he was already working on a contract
98 with the Keene Public Works Department, so the ARPAB won't have to pay a second Special
99 Permit Fee.

100

101 **B) Rachel Marshall Area**

102

103 Mr. Bohannon shared a proposal with the Board. He met with a vendor from a conference in
104 Dallas, TX in October who makes fairy gardens (as seen in Boothbay Harbor, Maine) that could
105 be placed in the Rachel Marshall area of the park. Mr. Bohannon stated that they would have to
106 fundraise for this project as the price was close to \$35,000.00. Chair Winsor suggested the Board
107 take time to look over the proposal before they make any decisions. He informed the Board he
108 would be going to the Boothbay Harbor Botanical Garden and would try to take pictures of the
109 fairy gardens to share with the Board and Friends. Councilor Chadbourne shared her objection
110 regarding the fairy garden, stating it may take away from the nature. Vice Chair Zullo stated that
111 when they spoke of adding a fairy garden in the past, he imagined it would be more hidden and
112 something that park goers would have to seek out. Mr. Bohannon shared that the artist's other
113 fairy garden locations charge an admission but to see them at the park would be free, as they
114 have received LWCF grants in the past that would prohibit charging a fee. He believed this

115 would be great for underserved families in the community to enjoy. The Board will add this to
116 the next meeting's agenda to discuss further.

117

118 Mr. Bocko stated that he had been in contact with a grad student who is interested in developing
119 educational components about birds on the Rachel Marshall side of the park. The student has
120 work study, which would reduce the cost significantly. The project would begin in the Spring of
121 2024. Mr. Bocko and Mr. Bohannon will communicate about the cost before the January 2024
122 meeting to discuss it further so the Board can vote on it then.

123

124 Ms. Matthews suggested that each Board member share their vision on what they would like the
125 Rachel Marshall side of the park to look like before they add anything new. Mr. Bohannon
126 agreed that they should have a revision process to revisit the Master Plan and thought process
127 behind it, as it may have evolved over the past four years since it was created. Mr. Bohannon
128 stated that they are still waiting to hear if they will receive the new plot of land. He added that he
129 would add the discussion about the dam to the next meeting's agenda.

130

131 **C) Outdoor Education**

132

133 Mr. Bocko stated that on November 4, Rich Holschuh (Chair of the Vermont Commission on
134 Native American Affairs) lead a walk through the park and spoke on his Native American
135 heritage. Mr. Bocko and Ms. Matthews confirmed it was very educational and enjoyable. Mr.
136 Holschuh shared his own personal journey of when he turned his attention toward the Elnu
137 Abenaki Tribe's way of seeing things, which helped him heal his life. Mr. Bocko shared that the
138 Antioch University New England (AUNE) paid Mr. Holschuh \$300.00 and asked the Board if
139 half could be paid out of the ARPAB budget. Ms. Matthews made a motion to contribute
140 \$150.00 to AUNE for Mr. Holschuh's November 4 talk. Vice Chair Zullo seconded the motion.
141 Mr. Bocko abstained. The motion passed. Ms. Matthews suggested that they consider working
142 with AUNE and Mr. Holschuh again as part of their outdoor education planning. Vice Chair
143 Zullo stated they could add it to the Master Plan once they revisit it.

144

145 **6) New/Other Business**

146

147 None presented.

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149 **7) Adjournment – Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 8:15 AM**

150

151 There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 9:23 AM.

152

153 Respectfully submitted by,
154 Melissa Danneker, Minute Taker

155

156 Reviewed and edited by,
157 Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

