

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

8:00 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

Councilor Bettina Chadbourne

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:20 AM and roll call ensued.

2) Approval of February 20, 2024 Minutes

Vice Chair Paul Bocko motioned to approve the February 20, 2024 meeting minutes which was promptly seconded by Stephen Hooper. The motion passed unanimously.

3) Bird Ecology Project

Dian Mathews motioned to move the Bird Ecology Project to agenda item three which was duly seconded by Ruzzel Zullo and the motion passed unanimously.

Jennifer Hlivko, a third year master student at Antioch University, was present at the meeting to introduce her Bird Ecology Project proposal. This project would be in the Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Laboratory side of the park.

She described her goals of the project which included designing signs and QR codes, creating a GIS Story Map, placing nest boxes and planting native plant species to draw in more birds.

The first sign would draw people across the bridge to the RMOLL and the second sign would include a trail map and a QR code leading to a GIS Story Map, which would have a “seasons” theme, talking about migratory birds and when they may visit. Her plan was to create three short video and audio recordings describing birds and their calls found in the park, climate impacts, and information on rare or uncommon species in the park.

Ms. Hlivko explained that she would like to place two to three bluebird-sized boxes around the RMOLL side of the park to help bring in breeding pairs. She hoped to include a wood duck box in the future as well.

She went on to explain the plantings she would like to place in the park, focusing on perennials that would require minimal maintenance including Scarlet Beebalm and Cardinal Flower, as well as different types of shrubs.

Ms. Mathews asked if Ms. Hlivko had looked into QR code signs that would not have to be nailed into trees as they can become loose and would require additional maintenance, which she had not considered at that time. Stephen Hooper suggested putting different sized holes in the bird boxes to attract different species. Thomas Haynes asked if Ms. Hlivko had considered any information for people who may not have a cell phone and, therefore, would not be able to scan the QR codes. Ms. Hlivko replied that she could possibly write out links on the sign for park goers to look at from a home computer. Vice Chair Bocko stated that they could potentially create a brochure from the GIS Story Map as well.

4) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon stated that there are no current updates as they were still developing the budget.

5) Report from The Friends of Ashuelot River Park

Ms. Mathews stated that they had four projects that they were focusing on. The first project being the invasive knotweed, continuing towards the bridge as well as towards the shed. The second project she discussed was the rain garden, as it was ready to have the plants moved from the bridge gardens into the rain garden. The Friends were also considering the pollinator garden project, in which they wanted to mark the territory, take up the saw, and lay tarps so it is ready for the following spring season. The fourth project discussed was the West Street beds where they would be putting in ground covers and perennial native plants.

Ms. Mathews discussed upcoming events, including the project that the Friends did with a group of film class students from Keene State College. The students interviewed members of the Friends and would create a five-minute video in which the Friends would receive a copy of. The Friends were also still working on the passports for the Pollinator Palooza.

Ms. Mathews stated that the Friends would continue meeting Friday mornings for their summer schedule, which typically begin at 9:00 AM, although they would probably end up meeting earlier in the morning as the summer went on. They also moved their volunteer schedule to the second Saturday of the month rather than the first.

6) Budget Development

Chair Winsor stated that he walked the park with Bartlett Tree in order for them to create a proposal, which came to a total of approximately \$10,400.00. They also considered the 55 yards of compost and leaf shredding needed, as it would cost around \$5,000.00. They expected the cost of ground covers on the West Street beds to be \$1,000.00, the Bird Ecology Project to be approximately \$1,069.00, and \$1,500 for the invasive plants. Chair Winsor stated they may also want to plant a new tree, which would be around \$1,000.00. They anticipated their budget would be around \$19,000.00. Mr. Bohannon stated he could submit the budget to the trustees to get it on their agenda for the following week.

7) Project Tracking

Chair Winsor stated that the bathroom in the park was gone, which was where they had thought to place the “Take Flight” art installation. Mr. Bohannon would meet with the artist on April 2 to discuss the potential placement further. He stated that the City had accepted a piece of land as a donation so they would be able to develop the land behind the bank parking lot.

8) Master Plan Implementation

There was no discussion on this item.

9) Upcoming Events

Ms. Mathews stated there would be a pruning demonstration held on April 15 that would teach people how to prune their plants. They had chosen different trees and shrubs for the demonstration and expected it to be a great event. People could register through UNH to attend.

Kids to Parks Day, which would take place on May 25, would be an event held at different parks around Keene to encourage kids to connect with nature.

Art in the Park would be held on Labor Day weekend per usual.

10) New/Other Business

On Saturday, May 18 at 8:00 AM, there would be a bird walk in the Goose Pond area.

Chair Winsor stated that he and Vice Chair Bocko had surpassed their term limits of three years and, therefore, would need to step down from their respective positions. He urged the members to consider their replacements for a potential vote at the next meeting.

11) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 9:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Melissa Danneker, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager