

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, December 17, 2024**

**8:15 AM**

**Room 22,  
Recreation Center**

**Members Present:**

Arthur Winsor, Chair  
Paul Bocko, Vice Chair (left at approximately 9:00 AM)  
Stephen Hooper  
Dian Mathews  
Suzy Krautmann (left at approximately 9:00 AM)  
Kelly Cook, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of  
Parks, Recreation  
Frank Anderson, Parks & Cemeteries  
Manager

**Members Not Present:**

Ruzzel Zullo  
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

**1) Welcome and Call to Order**

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM.

Members of the public were present: Raynee Carlson and Leslie Casey of the Friends of the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum, as well as Robert Hamm and City Councilor Ed Haas.

**2) Approval of November 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Chair Winsor noted a correction: his last name is not spelled with a D. Ms. Mathews noted a correction to line 130 – the correct spelling is “Leslie,” not “Lesley.”

Ms. Krautmann made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 12, 2024 as amended. Ms. Cook seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**3) Finance Report**

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she did not have a copy of the Finance Report, but nothing had changed from the last one.

**4) Friends Report**

Ms. Mathews stated that the Friends met the prior week, and they were beginning the planning for the pollinator garden. She continued that they now had 11 master gardeners working in the Park. Four of the master gardeners, who just completed the class, would start the pollinator garden planning. The Friends would fundraise for it. Moving forward, the Friends meetings would be the first Tuesday of the month from 1:30–3:00 PM, if anyone is interested. The mailing address changed to PO Box 374, Marlborough, NH 03455.

Ms. Mathews continued that Ms. Fisk-Hennessey had been in communication with a Girl Scouts troop that wanted to work at the park. The Friends looked forward to working out a schedule with them for the summer. She said she would work with the troop leader so they would be ready to start in the spring and she would keep everyone posted.

Ms. Mathews continued that they still needed the red stakes to mark the handicapped parking spaces, so the snow from the Mascoma Bank stops being piled there. Chair Winsor spoke of the need for a conversation with Mascoma/the person who pays for snow removal. Discussion ensued. Ms. Mathews stated that several people had already spoken with them, and she thought the only solution would be to install “handicapped parking” standing posts. Chair Winsor spoke again of the need to tell Mascoma Bank to put the snow somewhere else. Ms. Mathews replied that she would try again. Ms. Carlson stated that they still needed to have signs to designate those three handicapped parking spaces, per NH law. Discussion ensued about whether the signs would be on City land, in the garden, or on Mascoma Bank’s property in the parking lot, and about how it is Mascoma Bank’s responsibility to designate the spaces. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey would look into this. Discussion continued.

Ms. Mathews said that the Friends talked about the relationship between the Friends and the ARPAB. They had an antique flow chart that showed how the two related. This went back to the discussion they had about how the Friends had their projects funded. She spoke of “the enormity of a group of little old ladies who are guerilla gardeners, maintaining five acres, soon to be seven acres, of flower beds.” That is a lot of fundraising. The Friends had spent four years cleaning up beds and now they were ready for new soil and new plants, which Ms. Mathews said the Board needed to talk about funding. The ARPAB needed to talk about a structure for how those beds would be maintained in perpetuity. Chair Winsor replied that most arboretums have a group of volunteers that do a lot of work, and sometimes full-time staff, which the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum did not and probably would never have. The new master gardeners coming to the Arboretum were a good sign that for the future, there would be volunteers to do much of that maintenance. City staff does what they can.

Discussion continued. Ms. Mathews stated that there would need to be something concrete in the ARPAB’s standing rules about this. She continued that twice, the University of NH (UNH) had called on her to give talks about what was happening at Ashuelot River Park, and she needed to have a structure to back up what she was saying. Discussion continued and ARPAB members asked for more details on what Ms. Mathews is asking for. Ms. Mathews replied that going forward, they would need to

know whose job it is to maintain what, who takes care of the beds, who buys the plants, how they get put in, etc. She said Friends should not spend their personal money on things, for example.

Chair Winsor stated that City Code outlines the Functions and Guidelines of the ARPAB, in Section 2-655. He read the Board's Functions and Guidelines out loud to emphasize, as Ms. Casey said earlier, that the ARPAB is not an executive Board, it is an *advisory* Board. Regarding projects that require money spent first, when ARPAB members have needed to spend their own money for supplies, the City had quickly reimbursed them (e.g., with Mr. Hooper and the bird houses). When the Friends come to the ARPAB with requests for funding projects, the ARPAB votes on an amount. If a Friend needs to pay money up front, the ARPAB would make sure they are quickly reimbursed; there is a mechanism but no formal account to draw from.

Ms. Mathews said she told the Friends working on the pollinator garden that it would have to be well-planned with fundraising. Ms. Krautmann suggested fundraising in advance and Ms. Mathews agreed but said concrete budget figures would be needed. Ms. Mathews read about Hannaford donating \$25,000 to the Conway Library because they were doing a project in a park in Conway, so she planned to contact Hannaford. Ms. Krautmann mentioned Hannaford also having a relationship with a greenhouse in Gilsom, but other Board members noted that the greenhouse had closed.

Chair Winsor noted that it was good for the Board to review its bylaws because they included some things that the Board had forgotten. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey suggested forming a subcommittee to combine the interests of the Board and the Friends and review the roles and responsibilities in those bylaws to ensure they were clear moving forward, as well as to ensure any bigger Friends projects are presented to the Board even if they are in-line with the Master Plan. Ms. Mathews asked for printed copies of the Master Plan with larger font, and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey agreed to try.

To Ms. Mathews earlier point, Ms. Krautmann wondered if UNH should be included on some of this. Ms. Mathews said that the UNH Master Gardeners were included through the Friends.

Chair Winsor said the Board would look into this further within the City Council's guidelines for the Board. Ms. Carlson said that what happened financially with Ms. Mathews in the situation of the grant was a specific bad situation, but in other situations, the Friends were usually reimbursed quickly. Ms. Mathews agreed. She shared a hypothetical scenario of purchasing 10 understory trees and shrubs at \$100 each through a grant, noting that it would be a lot of money out of pocket. Chair Winsor replied that in such an instance, the Friends would need Board approval first to approve the type of plantings, etc. In that case, Ms. Mathews wondered if the other garden club in the Park should be involved and aligned with the Master Plan. Chair Winsor agreed, noting that if something was planted in the Park that the Board disagreed with, it would have the right to move/remove it.

Vice Chair Bocko agreed that it would be good to look into the bylaws and clarify. He thought it was good to hear the Functions and Guidelines that Chair Winsor read. He thought the mission statements of all the individual groups mentioned would help to clarify as well. Though he only wanted to form a subcommittee if truly needed. Ms. Mathews did think it was needed, especially with the Friends being a

newer non-profit. When the Friends became a non-profit officially, Chair Winsor asked if their bylaws were rewritten, and Ms. Mathews said yes. In that case, Chair Winsor agreed that it would be prudent to review all of these pieces together.

Mr. Hooper observed that various ideas and activities over the previous 5–10 years might have put stress on the fundamental vision and strategy for the Park and Arboretum, so he agreed that a subcommittee to fine tune these things would be worthwhile. Chair Winsor agreed, noting that the past 30 years had flown by and that it was time to revitalize the Park.

Along these lines, Chair Winsor said he realized that the Board’s bylaws outlined different membership than was currently serving, including representatives of the educational community (Chair Winsor), the City’s Arboretum Committee (no longer existed), the Friends, a City Councilor (missing at this time), a member of the community at large (Mr. Hooper), a representative of the Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Laboratory (Mr. Bocko), and a representative of the Conservation Commission (Mr. Haynes). What Mr. Winsor read was different than what Ms. Cook found recently on the City website, so discussion ensued on which was correct. The list on the website (Section 2-652) did not include the Arboretum Committee or the Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Laboratory, and it listed three community members instead of one. The Board thought that Mr. Haynes should be a regular member instead of an alternate. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked for time to review the membership and to consult the City Clerk, Patty Little, for confirmation.

**5) Project Tracking**  
**A) Bird Ecology Project**

Chair Winsor recalled that Mr. Hooper reported progress at the last meeting and that Ms. Carlson had volunteered trees for the posts come springtime. Vice Chair Bocko had no other updates. Chair Winsor asked if the Antioch Bird Club still existed and Vice Chair Bocko said yes, so Chair Winsor thought it might be able to help. Vice Chair Bocko said there was a small sign on the arboretum side of the bridge encouraging people to cross the bridge and another sign across the bridge explaining the bird ecology project. The QR code signs would go down the trail for the bird sounds (funding available), which Vice Chair Bocko said he could coordinate as a student project. The Board agreed that being winter, there still was time to implement. Vice Chair Bocko thanked Mr. Hooper for the bird boxes. The Vice Chair added that the story map was ready online. Ms. Mathews asked Vice Chair Bocko to share her contact with the Antioch Bird Club because she wanted to set up bird walks with them in the spring.

Ms. Mathews asked if Vice Chair Bocko would do another Native American walk in the spring and Vice Chair Bocko said he could. Ms. Mathews encouraged doing so every spring to get the community in the Park.

**B) Budget Development**

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said she was meeting with the Deputy City Manager, Andy Bohannon, later the day of this meeting to review budget building for the Park.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey also mentioned that the original carved wooden Park sign was about 30 years old, noting that it was being held together at this time with screws and bolts. She wanted the Board to consider replacing it. Chair Winsor asked about recreating the original sign. The Board asked when the official 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary would be. Chair Winsor thought it had passed, with the Park having opened in 1990.

### **C) Master Plan Implementation**

Discussion ensued about the pollinator garden. The Master Plan suggested situating the garden on the riverbank, but the Friends had a suggestion that Chair Winsor thought was better. He noted that the Master Plan was an idea, not a blueprint.

Ms. Cook asked where the group was in the timeline of the Master Plan. Ms. Mathews shared the printed scope of the master plan with Ms. Fisk-Hennessey and asked if they should revisit it. Chair Winsor listed past projects that were suggestions from the Master Plan: bird ecology, the sign (and clean-up of greenery behind it), pollinator garden, pergola, the entryway by the bank. Ms. Mathews suggested thinking ahead about the outdoor classroom and the additional two acres on the Monadnock Conservancy property, which someone said would be non-gardens. Chair Winsor clarified that the Friends would not be solely responsible for the additional two acres and Ms. Mathews said she was talking about the Board. Chair Winsor said the Monadnock Conservancy building could be a huge asset and might be somewhere that visitors could access information about the Park or the environment that helps the Board. Ms. Krautmann noted that there would be a small parking lot and boat launch on that parcel.

### **6) Upcoming Events**

#### **A) Permanent Sign Development/Design (January)**

The Sign Subcommittee would have a separate meeting on sign development in January.

Ms. Krautmann left.

Chair Winsor noted that Vice Chair Bockó's term was ending but he might be asked to continue. The Vice Chair was interested and willing. If so, Chair Winsor also hoped that Vice Chair Bockó would take over as Chair in January.

Vice Chair Bockó left.

#### **B) Mark Johnson Landscaping Contract**

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said the leaves were all mulched and bedded. In addition, the Parks and Recreation crew brought in 8–10 loads of mulch that was requested from the far end of the Park to past the garden shed. They also removed a long log from the dam and a dead evergreen from the entrance to the

Jonathan Daniels Trail. The Friends and Board were very grateful. Chair Winsor asked, when the Parks and Recreation crew cuts trees, to keep the QR code inventory tags and Mr. Anderson said he kept them.

Chair Winsor asked if Mr. Johnson's contract was still active. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey said yes, to apply the additional compost. Chair Winsor knew Ms. Mathews was concerned about the compost freezing before the daffodils would sprout and the Chair wondered if the compost could be applied after the daffodils sprout. The Friends said no, too many other things would have sprouted by then.

**7) New/Other Business**

Chair Winsor noted that Ms. Casey identified an issue with vines on a cottonwood tree and he encouraged anyone to take pictures when they see an issue because he was willing to be the liaison with Bartlett Tree on those matters moving forward.

Ms. Mathews asked if Chair Winsor could stay on the Board and the Chair thought he could continue serving as an alternate with the Mayor's approval. The Board agreed that his historical knowledge was important to keep on the Board and they thanked him for his long-term leadership. Mr. Hooper's term was also ending, but he was committed to remain as a community volunteer for the Park and to attend the Board meetings; he would only remain as an alternate if needed. He agreed that continuity for the bird sanctuary would be important, and he would be happy to volunteer for bird walks and photography as needed. Mayor Kahn was also nominating some other new members who had applied.

Chair Winsor asked Ms. Fisk-Hennessey about a pruning demonstration with Ray Brewer. Ms. Casey said it would be April 5, 2024, at 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM at Ashuelot River Park.

**8) Adjournment – Next Meeting January 14, 2025 at 8:15 AM**

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida & Katie Kibler, Minute Takers  
December 20, 2024

Reviewed and edited by,  
Carrah Fisk Hennessey, Director of Parks & Recreation  
December 30, 2024