

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Paul Bocko, Chair
Suzy Krautmann, Vice Chair
Leslie Casey
Dian Mathews
Kelly Cook
Arthur Winsor, Alternate

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks,
Recreation
Frank Anderson, Parks and Recreation
Facilities Manager

Members Not Present:

Thomas Haynes, Alternate

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Bocko called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM. Others present were Raynee Carlson, Karen Flavin, and Julie Barrett of the Friends of Ashuelot River Park

2) Approval of January 14, 2025 Minutes

Ms. Krautmann made a motion to approve the minutes of January 14, 2025. Ms. Cook seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Guest Information Presentation: Bartlett Tree

Chair Bocko invited Frank Grano, of Bartlett Tree, to give a presentation. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey introduced Mr. Grano, stating that she invited him to this meeting and asked him to put together some numbers for moving forward, and what the budget would look like.

Mr. Grano stated that the proposal he sent to (the ARPAB through) Ms. Fisk-Hennessey is above and beyond what the budget will allow. He continued that he spoke to Bartlett Inventory Services, led by Allan Fenner. Mr. Fenner says that best management practice is reinventorying every three to five years. The ARPAB has a small inventory of 95 trees on site. Every three years is a renewal of the software that ArborScope runs. He wanted to hear from the ARPAB about who uses that service and how much, because it is about to be (due for renewal), which is not

included in this proposal. The cost is \$2,400 every three years, or \$800 per year, for this software that allows them to interact with the inventory. He asked if it is of value to the ARPAB.

Mr. Winsor replied yes, he has been (using the software) to add photos. He continued that he has not deleted any trees. He will work with Mr. Anderson to remove the trees that have come down from the inventory. He (Mr. Winsor) uses the software and would not mind showing others how to use it. He would hate to lose the ability to use it.

Mr. Grano stated that there are two different directions they could take. He continued that Mr. Fenner says the most cost-effective approach would be to reinventory everything. That would do away with the numbers currently on the trees. The ARPAB needed tags anyway. Many of them are being swallowed up. Alternately, they could retain what they have and renew the software, but that puts the onus on (Bartlett Tree) to update things. He personally is willing to put some effort into that, at no charge, but he can only do so much. Reinventorying would be about \$2,485. The inventory was \$1,800 in 2014; that was the last time these trees were inventoried all at once. If they do not reinventory, to deal with what they have would mean going around and taking new diameter measurements. If \$5,000 is the general budget they are aiming for, doing a full inventory would give an outlook of all the things that could be done with the trees, but even just phase one of the work that should be done will be well over that figure. It might be best for him to continue to come down and identify two or three trees to work on, a certain scenario that he knows a two- or three-person crew can handle in a day, well-defined in a PDF like in what he sent to Ms. Fisk-Hennessey. They could run it that way and do away with the cost of new inventory.

Mr. Grano continued that there is also information he put together with tags. There is a company called Indianapolis Badge and Nameplate. It sounds like the Library created their own tags. If they have that ability, maybe they could keep the tags in house and tag the trees they know they want to tag. They could use the old inventory and update it as much as possible. Realistically, they only have 20 or 30 trees that are of size that he is watching closely for keeping them together, keeping them from falling apart or falling on objects.

Mr. Winsor asked why they would take the numbers away. Mr. Grano replied that he asked the same question. He continued that some of those tags are perfectly fine. Mr. Fenner said that cost-wise, it would be more time-consuming to update what already exists because it is more than ten years old, versus simply redoing the inventory in a new file. They (the ARPAB) would have access the same way, but they would lose any pictures that went in. Mr. Fenner said that was the best way to present as reasonable a figure as possible, versus entering each tree and altering already existing information. He was just as confused as Mr. Winsor is, but that is what Mr. Fenner said.

Mr. Winsor stated that the (software) is handy because someone unfamiliar with the name of a tree (for instance) could say, "tree #7 has a broken branch," and they could report that to (Bartlett Tree). He continued that he would hate to lose that (ability). Mr. Grano replied that more than

likely, if the trees were reinventoried, they would be able to use the same numbers for the trees that they are using now. That would not change. The files would be separate and different. The old inventory would be obsolete. The new one would have the same numbers. For example, the Siberian Elm would still be #91. But if the old inventory had a photo of it, it would not exist in the new one. The photo would have to be manually moved over.

Discussion continued about the software and what a reinventory would be like. Mr. Grano stated that for whatever reason, it is more efficient for ArborScope to redo the inventory, given how aged it is. Ms. Krautmann asked if it would be difficult to input information in the future if they do not do the reinventory. Mr. Grano replied that if they do not redo the inventory, they would need to get new diameters of the trees and determine which tags needed replacing, perhaps handling that in the same fashion as they handled the library. Or he could help them order new tags from Indianapolis Badge and Nameplate. They could continue with the older inventory, but the software license expires in July. They would have to renew it for three years.

Mr. Winsor stated that he knows they need new tags, but he does not think they want to make their own, which the library did some on a very small scale. He continued that he suggests they budget for some new tags. He would be willing to install them. Mr. Grano replied that he could help install them, too. He continued that the PDF he sent to Ms. Fisk-Hennessey includes information about that company he mentioned. He continued that Bartlett Tree can provide the QR information for the tags at no cost, but the City would have to interact directly with (Indianapolis Badge and Nameplate) to design and order the tags. Discussion continued and Friends and ARPAB members brought up that they have heard about QR codes possibly being used by hackers or spammers using overlays to redirect the links. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that it has been a problem in more urban areas, but not in Keene. It is just something to be aware of.

Chair Bocko stated that the ARPAB has the quotes for proposals in front of them, and the total includes the reinventory. Mr. Grano replied yes, and if they choose to use the old inventory, they would get – separate from what he sent, because it comes from the Inventory Services team – a heads up toward the end of June that the software license was due to expire and could be renewed for \$2,400 for three years. That is what they would need to do if they were to continue using the old inventory. Re-doing the inventory would be about \$2,485. It would cost just under \$5,000 to redo the inventory and have the software for the next three years.

Chair Bocko stated that the ARPAB has not had much time to go over this (proposal from Mr. Grano), but the bottom line is over \$12,000. He continued that it looks like no matter what, it would cost \$2,400 to renew the software. Mr. Grano replied yes, if they were doing the inventory. He continued that he is open to prioritization. He understands that is not the budget goal. He was giving examples of what he does, identifying a two- or three-person day to deal with the next couple of large trees he can re-cable and structurally prune. Then, he had an ornamental item. Their on-site discussion included the need for dealing with the coniferous ornamentals around the pergola. Then, the typical soil management. The ARPAB already has a discount on the soil sampling because they are already doing soil management on site. They have

had good improvement with the big magnolia over the past five years. A similar service/course of action for the maples is in there as well, but he can whittle (the proposal) however the ARPAB wants. It is best to build any larger, aerial tree work in day blocks with two- or three-person crews. He welcomes suggestions for whittling.

Chair Bocko replied that he does not think they can do that right now. He asked what the timing is, from Mr. Grano's perspective, and when the ARPAB needs to decide. Mr. Grano replied that they can decide to do the reinventory at any time. Their ability to utilize the old inventory would end at the end of July if they do not renew the software. Regarding tree work, Bartlett does that approximately between June and September. Soil management is done in the spring, by Jim Tatum. All of these are billed upon completion, so they are spread out.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the ARPAB's fiscal year has a January 1 start date, which is separate from the City. She continued that they can exist in this holding pattern until the next meeting, to truly identify what they are able to do.

Mr. Winsor asked what happens if they do not do the reinventory. He asked if their ability to add information stops in July. Mr. Grano replied that the inventory will still exist; it is the software that ends in July. They could renew the software license anytime. Their ability to change information in the inventory or input pictures would end in July if they do not renew the software.

Chair Bocko asked if Mr. Winsor could do some thinking about all of this. He continued that he suggests he, Mr. Winsor, and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey check in between meetings. Then at the next ARPAB meeting, they could have some options for everyone to look at. He thinks this will cost more no matter what. Mr. Winsor and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey agreed.

Chair Bocko asked if there was anything else on this topic before they move on in the agenda. Mr. Grano briefly spoke more about the specific trees he would target for aerial work for the year, and his willingness to whittle down the proposal as the ARPAB wishes.

Chair Bocko and ARPAB members thanked Mr. Grano for his presentation. Brief discussion ensued about certain trees, and Chair Bocko asked any ARPAB members or Friends to send him, Mr. Winsor, and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey a message with any input they have.

4) Finance Report

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that if everyone is on board, they are in a holding pattern right now until they figure out what the Bartlett Tree portion of the next annual budget will be. She continued that right now they have what they have, and that is rolled over from last year. Then, they will be able to adjust based on which option they choose to go forward with. She asked if anyone wanted to talk about any of the replanting, landscaping, invasive treatment, or bird ecology at this time.

Brief discussion ensued about fundraising. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey clarified, in response to a question, that the Friends does fundraising, but the City cannot. Raynee Carlson stated that part of the ARPAB's description is to assist the Friends with fundraising. Karen Flavin spoke about funds for plantings and stated that they hope that by next month's meeting they will have more of an idea about grant money. Mr. Winsor replied that the process is that if the Friends have a project description and budget, they could request X amount from the ARPAB to assist. He continued that an ARPAB member could then make a motion to spend up to X amount of money from their budget to assist with the Friends' project. Discussion continued. Ms. Mathews asked if there is a number for what the ARPAB's budget can be. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that between \$10,000 and \$12,000 is what the last five years have looked like. Last year was an anomaly.

Chair Bocko stated that a big part of this is clearly figuring out Bartlett Tree. He asked if Ms. Fisk-Hennessey will work up a general framework. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes. Ms. Casey stated that regarding landscaping, they expect to spend the other \$1,900 for Mr. Johnson on compost. She continued that they need to budget for fall leaf mulching, somewhere around \$2,000. Ms. Carlson stated that Ms. Fisk-Hennessey had said something about spraying again. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that it is always an option. Ms. Carlson asked if the City is doing any other herbicide. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she is not sure there is a plan yet.

Ms. Casey stated that she noted the sign renovations, moving the kiosk and repairing the entryway sign, which they do not know the cost of. Ms. Carlson asked Ms. Fisk-Hennessey and Mr. Anderson if moving the new kiosk sign is something the City can do. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes. Discussion continued about signage. Chair Bocko asked anyone who has input to send a message to him, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey, and Mr. Winsor.

5) Friends Report

Ms. Casey stated that Ms. Mathews asked her to give the Friends report since she was not able to be at the last Friends meeting. She continued that the Friends are working on grant applications for the pollinator garden and possibly broader master plan implementation in the beds. April would be turf removal, which they hope to have a grant for. Ms. Mathews replied yes, unless the City can assist.

Ms. Casey continued that regarding knotweed, they are waiting to see what regrow after the herbicide application. They might want to budget for another herbicide application for areas that regrow and/or the area along the chain-link fence. Ms. Carlson has a video to share about knotweed. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Casey continued that nothing new has happened with the rain garden. She continued that the Friends have been discussing getting something to blow soil out so they can work deeper. She spoke about a Master Gardener who is not a Friends member but was at the last meeting, who

brought up that a commercial business has a parking lot that is spewing pollution into the river, and this should not be allowed. She questioned why the Friends are raising money to try and figure out how to do this engineering project, when it is not even clear the City should be allowing this business to pollute the river. Her recommendation was to go in front of the Community Development Board and “rattle people’s cages” and make the business regrade their parking lot to re-do the drainage. The business owns the parking lot. Discussion ensued. Ms. Casey continued that the Friends would still want a rain garden there at least for demonstration purposes and to deal with drainage there in general since it is a sort of compacted area. This is worth continuing a conversation about. Discussion continued about the business’s parking lot. Ms. Cook noted that in the waterway (that the parking lot drains into), there are mussel species people are trying to protect. Mr. Winsor suggested they bring this up to the Conservation Commission.

Ms. Casey stated that the West St. bed still needs some replanting. The sooner they can get that in, the easier it will be to maintain. The pruning demonstration is on for April 5. She has not heard from Steph Sosinski, who will be leading that, about whether there is a UNH-approved blurb the Friends can use to publicize the event. She used the few lines from the UNH website in her town’s newsletter. She will try again to contact Ms. Sosinski, but if they still have not heard from her closer to April 5, she thinks it would be non-controversial to just use the few lines from the UNH website. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she will reach out to Ms. Sosinski, too. Ms. Casey stated that they would like to put the information about the pruning demonstration on the City’s website and in the Monadnock Shopper News. Ms. Flavin stated that one of the members will put something on the My Keene Now website, too. Discussion continued about publicity for the event.

Ms. Casey stated that this year is the Friends’ 30th anniversary, so they need to think about how (to celebrate that). She continued that the Friends also talked about the need for an online presence, and a way for people to donate online. The current Friends members are not the folks to do it, and they are in a little bit of a holding pattern as they try to find a person or people who could (create and maintain an online presence for the Friends). Discussion ensued. Friends members spoke about how they wish they had a student intern who could do this. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey suggested contacting the ELL program at the high school. Others suggested the MC2 School or KSC’s horticultural program. Chair Bocko stated that if the Friends put together a little description of the work/volunteer opportunity, then any of the ARPAB members could share it with people they know who might be interested. Discussion continued. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if it is accurate that the Friends are looking for an online presence that can be established and maintained in order to recruit additional members and funds, and that they would like it to include photos and video clips to make it flashy and fun. Friends members replied yes. Ms. Casey spoke about the challenges involved with collecting donations online, in terms of doing it safely.

6) **Project Tracking**

A) **Bird Ecology Project**

Chair Bocko stated that he has not moved forward with any of the items. He continued that they have the content for most of it. As he said earlier regarding the budget, the line for the Antioch bird ecology would not be there for a student, but they might need funding for signs. They have to weigh that priority over reinventory and everything else.

B) **Budget Development**

Chair Bocko stated that they have talked about this already. He continued that he encourages ARPAB members to share their thoughts.

C) **Master Plan Implementation**

Discussion ensued about the (UNH article about the Friends' work in Ashuelot River Park), and about getting print copies of it.

7) **Upcoming Events**

A) **Permanent Sign Development/Design**

Mr. Winsor stated that he wants to sit down with the ARPAB and Nicole (Cullinane), regarding the kiosk. He continued that the biggest roadblock was how to handle the indigenous piece of it, and Steve (Hooper) mentioned that they could work with what Dr. Goodby found in the archeological digs and use some of those photographs. Mr. Hooper was worried that they would offend someone, but these photos would be uncontroversial. Now that they are past that hurdle they just need to meet with Ms. Cullinane. Maybe he, Ms. Krautmann, Chair Bocko, and Ms. Mathews would be able to hammer out the rest of it, and Ms. Cullinane could give them (a design) to go to Peter Poanessa with. Chair Bocko asked if Mr. Winsor could set up that meeting.

B) **Friends & Board Roles/Responsibilities Review**

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that they had talked about clearly identifying the ARPAB's role and the Friends' role, making sure everyone was on the same page and knows what everyone's roles and responsibilities are. She continued that Mr. Winsor brought forth some information from the past, and Ms. Casey also found some information. She asked if the group thinks this topic needs to be revisited and if they need to dive into it.

Ms. Mathews replied that she thinks they had talked about updating what exists. Mr. Winsor replied that he thinks that what the City has is what they need to look at, regarding the ARPAB's responsibilities. He continued that the Friends updated about four or five years ago.

Chair Bocko asked if they want to make sure the ARPAB has its documents and say that it is everyone's responsibility to look at those, or if people want to have a meeting about this. Others

replied that not everyone has those City documents, and they need to look at them. Discussion continued. Chair Bocko stated that he suggests everyone look at those documents and then they could decide whether they need to discuss this in a meeting.

8) New/Other Business

A) Review of Annual Meeting Summary and Projected Agenda Items

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that this is something she brought up last time, regarding feeding all of the ARPAB's meeting minutes into the City's Artificial Intelligence (AI) program. She continued that AI came up with a summary of the 2024 accomplishments and projected agenda items for the next year. Information generated by AI will not be 100% accurate, so she asks everyone to look at it. Discussion ensued. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the idea behind this is that the City Council was thinking of requesting annual reviews from each City board, committee, and commission. The staff liaisons wanted to be as efficient as possible. She is the first staff liaison to do this. ARPAB members and Friends thanked Ms. Fisk-Hennessey.

Mr. Winsor stated that he thinks they have had an impact on the community, because Covenant Living of Keene planted some trees and is inventorying some trees as a result of the Library and Ashuelot River Park. He continued that it was Covenant residents driving that to make it happen.

Chair Bocko stated that Antioch is celebrating its 60th anniversary, and there will be an exhibit at the Cheshire County Historical Society. He continued that it opens on February 21. There is representation from the ARPAB and the Friends. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Mathews stated that if this year is Ashuelot River Park's 30th anniversary, they need to do something (to celebrate). Mr. Winsor added that it could be a fundraising opportunity. Others agreed.

9) Adjournment – Next Meeting Tuesday, March 11, 2025

There being no further business, Chair Bocko adjourned the meeting at 9:19 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Carrah Fisk Hennessey - Parks & Recreation Director, February 19, 2025