

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 19, 2025

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Paul Bocko, Chair
Suzy Krautmann, Vice Chair (arrived at 8:20 AM)
Leslie Casey
Dian Mathews
Kelly Cook
Arthur Winsor, Alternate
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks,
Recreation

Members Not Present:

All Present

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Bocko called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM. Roll call was conducted. The ARPAB welcomed guest Eloise Clark, liaison from the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC).

2) Approval of July 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes

ARPAB members gave several suggested edits for the July meeting minutes.

Suzy Krautmann arrived at 8:20 AM.

Ms. Cook made a motion to approve the July 8, 2025 meeting minutes as amended. Ms. Krautmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum Report

Ms. Mathews reported the following on behalf of the Friends:

- Thank you to the City employees who cleaned the stone walkways, which is amazing.
- There is a failing dogwood tree, which might be dangerous (Mr. Winsor stated that he will look at it after this meeting and let them know right away if it is hazardous).
- The Friends weeded by the dam, and found some holes which could be hazardous to people walking. They marked the holes with flags.

- Grant money was used for purchases at Bagley Farm, of ground covers, shrubs, and native plants for the pollinator garden.
- Maybe a committee needs to be created to figure out a new watering method. Friends have been watering the pollinator garden with a wagon of water jugs. There are no water lines in any of the beds, but historically, there used to be some.

Discussion ensued about watering. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that creating a committee is not necessary. She continued that someone can mark up the map with what currently exists, and what the Friends would like to exist, and she can bring it to the City's irrigation people and see what they can do. Discussion continued about watering options.

Ms. Mathews continued:

- The Friends discussed the "Leave the Leaves" project and had an idea. Last year, all the leaves went to a big pile in one spot, and the landscaper had to crunch them all up and disperse them. The Friends suggest leaving the beds alone, letting the leaves drop where they drop, and having the workers just get rid of the leaves on the grass spaces.

Ms. Casey added:

- The herbicide removed most of the glossy buckthorn near the dam and now knotweed is growing up. She heard the City is planning to use herbicide later in the year when it would get to the roots, which is encouraging.
- Food for thought for the future: now that they have cleared up plants by the pergola, it would be good to have the gravel or the pavers continue all the way to the bike trail, so it is not a bare dirt area. They should look at finishing that job.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the person who does the herbicide usually does it in the last couple weeks of August. Ms. Clark asked if the City gets a permit to spray herbicide so close to the river. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes, through a contracted vendor, a vegetation control service.

4) Finance Tracking

Chair Bocko stated that they touched on finance a little bit already. He continued that he feels like this is up to date.

Ms. Mathews asked if they have thought about what they will put in place of the elm that will be taken away. Discussion ensued, and Mr. Winsor spoke about a metasequoia/dawn redwood, which is a deciduous conifer. Others responded positively. Discussion continued about the process of putting a tree in, and a potential company to use. In response to the question of whether they have a schedule yet for removing the elm and putting in the new tree, Mr. Winsor and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied no, they do not. Mr. Winsor offered to check with a place that sells dawn redwoods.

Chair Bocko stated that the Finance Report is in the agenda packet, and there has not really been any change. He continued that unless anyone has questions, they can move on in the agenda.

5) Project Tracking

A) Permanent Sign Development

Chair Bocko stated that there has been some activity. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes, and they were hopeful they would have a draft, but Nicole (Cullinane) is on vacation this week and she herself was on vacation last week. Mr. Winsor stated that he and Ms. Krautmann met with Ms. Fisk-Hennessey and came up with a layout of what they would like Ms. Cullinane to do, all the photographs that go with it, and the narrative that Chair Bocko wordsmithed well. He continued that they are waiting for Ms. Cullinane to give her feedback so they can present it to Peter Poanessa. He thinks they made good progress. Ms. Krautmann agreed.

6) Upcoming Events

A) Art in the Park August 30–September 1

Chair Bocko asked if there was anything related to Art in the Park to discuss. Ms. Krautmann replied that they had talked about publicizing the Volksmarch during Art in the Park. Discussion ensued about how they could do that, such as posting it on the kiosk, using a QR code, or having printed information. Ms. Krautmann stated that she corresponded with Sandra Howard about whether the Keene-Einbeck Choral Exchange would be interested in partnering with Art in the Park on the Volksmarch. She continued that Ms. Howard was unfamiliar with Volksmarch, but was interested once she explained it, and wanted to help. Ms. Howard hosts a music exchange for people in Keene and Einbeck, Germany. She (Ms. Krautmann) also reached out to John Mitchell (chair of the Partner City Committee), who has not responded. Ms. Howard needs clarification on how to help with Volksmarch. Ms. Krautmann stated that maybe some Einbeck guests, during their visit to Keene in October, could give some guidance.

Discussion ensued. Chair Bocko spoke of the need for a flyer, on the ARPAB's webpage or somewhere on the City's website. Others spoke of whether/how to put something on the existing sign in the park, and what it should say. Ms. Krautmann stated that the City is a member of the AVA (American Volkssport Association), so people can get the map from the City's website now, but it is not very user friendly. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she will have to check on this. Discussion continued. Ms. Carlson suggested that the sign they post for Art in the Park have a map that people can take a picture of with their phones, since the online maps via AVA are difficult. Chair Bocko agreed with the idea and spoke about being careful not to put too much on Ms. Fisk-Hennessey's plate. Others spoke about how a hiker or hiker's group might take this up. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she brought the Volksmarch idea up to the Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC) and it was received well, with curiosity as to how the maps could be implemented into City mapping/trail networks.

Mr. Haynes asked if this Volksmarch is only for the Ashuelot River Park or if it could be other places in the city. Others replied that it is in other locations, too, and discussion continued about where, and how they connect. Mr. Haynes stated that at one time, Andy Bohannon's dream was to somehow be able to connect the various parks in the City.

7) **New/Other Business**

A) Sculpture Art Proposal (informational)

Chair Bocko asked who had the information about this. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that Rick MacMillan, member of Friends of Public Art, has been petitioning to install a piece of sculpture art on loan to the City of Keene. She continued that Russell Park was identified as the initial host location. It is a piece called "Thought Cage," made of granite and iron, and was found to be too heavy for Russell Park because the ground is so wet. The City identified a relatively flat space with no tree roots that would be impacted, behind the Starbucks side of Ashuelot River Park. Parks & Rec has been working on the details with the Engineering Division. The topic moves forward to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee next Wednesday. Discussion ensued. In response to a question, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey clarified that the sculpture would be on loan for six months to a year.

B) Park Maintenance

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that they already talked a bit about park maintenance, regarding the cobbles and pathway. She continued that there was a delay in ordering the decking boards for the suspension bridge, which should be in today or tomorrow. The goal is still to redeck the bridge before Art in the Park, but all would be dependent upon the decking delivery.

Ms. Mathews stated that she has something else for New Business, which is bird watching. She continued that she sort of let it drop. She got an email from the Antioch student who wanted to do a morning next week, which she does not have available, although she did not respond to tell him. She will respond, and see about scheduling something else. Discussion ensued about the Antioch Bird Club, and about how nice it would be to have something regularly scheduled.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that to piggy-back on that, she is part of a Senior Center committee that is working on different ways for members of the Senior Center to become more involved with the community. She continued that they would really like guided walks in the area. This could be another opportunity to engage with the Antioch Bird Club. Discussion continued.

Chair Bocko asked if Eloise Clark wanted to speak. Ms. Clark stated that she can share a little bit about what ARLAC does with relation to Keene. She continued that mostly they deal with permits, such as Shoreland, Wetland, and Alteration of Terrain (AoT) permits. Not much has been going on in Keene, but recently there has been some activity. For example, there will be redevelopment of an area on lower Main St., which needs an AoT, so ARLAC had some input there. Eversource is replacing all their poles through Keene and Swanzey, and some of that goes close to the river, so ARLAC comments on that. She gave another example of a multi-stage housing project, and the Monadnock Conservancy project. She continued that ARLAC is responsible for the corridor all the way from Washington to Ashuelot, right to the mouth of the river. She spoke about Ashuelot Pond in Washington, which has no zoning, stating that the development there indirectly impacts Keene as well. Keene is the biggest impact on the river. ARLAC monitors water quality from May through September, with two testing sites above

Keene. Repeated tests over years show that Keene has an outsized impact on water quality in the river. A lot of stuff comes out of Keene – for example, e. coli levels test high.

Ms. Clark continued that ARLAC thus has a broader perspective on the environmental impacts going up and down the river, which is different from what the ARPAB is doing, but it would be good for them to keep in contact. There might be projects of mutual interest they could be involved in. She cannot come to every ARPAB meeting, but she reviews the minutes to see if there is anything (of interest to ARLAC). ARPAB members replied that they have opportunities to educate the public, such as if dog waste is contributing to the e. coli problem in the park, or something like that. ARLAC can let the ARPAB know if there are things like that the ARPAB could help with. ARPAB members spoke about how another issue might be the runoff from the Starbucks parking lot, which flows onto the grass right into the river, and the Friends' rain garden there does not function properly. The commercial property owns the problem, not the park. Ms. Clark asked if they have filed a complaint with the NHDES (Department of Environmental Services). Others replied no and discussion continued. Ms. Clark stated that she will bring it up at tonight's ARLAC meeting.

Chair Bocko thanked Ms. Clark for coming and stated that he thinks he speaks for everyone when he says they are willing to collaborate, as it helps them all. He encouraged Ms. Clark to keep coming to ARPAB meetings as she sees fit.

Chair Bocko asked if there was any other new business. Mr. Winsor stated that Frank Grano, who was the ARPAB's liaison with Bartlett Trees, no longer has Keene in his territory. He continued that there will thus be a new person helping with the tree inventory for Ashuelot River Park. Mr. Grano seemed to think they can retain the numbers they have for the trees. He (Mr. Winsor) will introduce himself to the new person and he hopes to have an update for the ARPAB within the next couple of months about how they can go about the inventory, and some up-to-date pricing information.

8) Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, September 9th 8:15 AM

There being no further business, Chair Bocko adjourned the meeting at 9:21 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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