

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 9, 2025

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Suzy Krautmann, Vice Chair
Leslie Casey
Dian Mathews
Kelly Cook
Arthur Winsor, Alternate
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks,
Recreation

Members Not Present:

Paul Bocko, Chair

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Vice Chair Krautmann called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM. Roll call was conducted. Guests included Karen Flavin and Raynee Carlson of the Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum, and Councilor Ed Haas and Robert Hamm, who stated that they were there with an interest in enhancing Pat Russell Park and to learn from the ARPAB.

2) Minutes Review

Vice Chair Krautmann noted that line 100 is missing the name of a Keene State College (KSC) organization that the ARPAB had been talking about, and she does not know the name. Brief discussion ensued, and the ARPAB determined that it is “the Keene-Einbeck Choral Exchange.”

Ms. Cook made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 19, 2025, as amended. Ms. Casey seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Friends of the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum Report

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

- Someone cut the top of the dead branches on the dogwood tree, which made an amazing difference.

- The water in the park is a definite issue. It was very hard this summer, especially with the drought, lugging the hose to the wagon to fill the jugs to bring to the plants. Can a new zone be added to the sprinkler system?

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she will have a conversation with the irrigation person on staff, but believes it is not as easy as it might seem.

Ms. Mathews continued:

- The Elm is being cut down. Can the \$8,000 cork tree go back on the list? It is invasive, and mothering other invasive trees. It is not good.
- It would be good to create a group of people who specialize in identifying and removing invasive species in the City and parks and educating the public about invasives.

Discussion ensued about the various types of invasive plants, their growth speeds, the various ways people are addressing them, and what the best practices are. Mr. Haynes stated that the Conservation Commission contacted the City to request that someone on City staff become an invasive species expert so there is a person to go to. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that that conversation has stalled between Public Works and Parks and Recreation because both departments are severely understaffed. She continued that it is still a topic of discussion, looking forward to finding a sustainable solution.

Ms. Mathews continued:

- The list of cobblestone owners is on a thumb drive. The Friends would like to give it to Nicole Cullinane and see if the list of names can be alphabetized and then put on the kiosk with a QR code.
- The rain garden is in flux. They will leave the leaves where they fall, in the beds.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that as discussed in the last meeting, staff plans to take the clean leaf debris from the larger park spaces and bring it back to start the Department's own clean compost pile, eventually returning the clean compost to the garden beds. Discussion ensued.

Other Friends members added:

- A member of the public who walks the Jonathan Daniels Trail reported that there is a lot of litter on the trail and requested additional signage to remind people not to litter.
- A portion of a large silver maple tree by the dam is dead, and dangerous.
- The Friends Board is down to five members, and they are searching for a sixth person. They have enough gardeners and are looking for someone with other skills, such as accounting, digital marketing, fundraising, working with contractors, or liaising with the City.

Mr. Haynes stated that Source to Sea is happening soon. He continued that he will encourage them to look on the Jonathan Daniels Trail for trash to clean up.

4) Budget Report

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the budget report is unchanged.

5) New Business

A) KPRD Staffing Update (Permanent Sign Development)

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that to update the group on the changes to the KRPD's staff, Nicole Cullinane has left to pursue other opportunities and is no longer employed by the City. There is now an intern from KSC, whom she (Ms. Fisk-Hennessey) will give a crash course in what is needed for the KRPD in general. She already outlined that the ARPAB is very interested in getting the very rough draft that Ms. Cullinane provided so that they can have some different options to choose from. The intern will be working on that as well as two other time-sensitive projects for the department.

B) Sculpture Art Information and Request for Liaison

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the sculpture art went forward last Wednesday at a Special Meeting of the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee. She continued that the MSFI Committee recommended the City Council approve the installation of this sculpture, "Thought Cage" by Christopher Curtis, in the Ashuelot River Park behind Starbucks. The sculpture is made of granite with iron facets. She continued that Rick McMillan is the sponsor of the public art process, and he is working with the Friends of Public Art for insurance purposes. The sculpture will be here on loan to the City of Keene for about six months to a year. Discussion ensued. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey added that in 2018, the City created and adopted a detailed policy about public art, and every step of this proposal meets every single guideline in the policy.

6) Old Business/Updates

A) Bridge Redecking Effort

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the timber for the bridge redecking arrived on the Friday that Art in the Park started, so there was no way staff would have been able to remove and replace every single piece of the decking in time for the event. She continued that that work is starting this morning. All five of the full-time staff members who take care of Keene's parks are there working on it, and they hope to get it done by the end of the week. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey gave more details about the project's methods, and discussion ensued.

B) Arboretum Updates

i) Dogwood Pruning

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the dogwood pruning was done by a seasonal employee, Jeff Garland, who used to be KSC's arborist. She continued that he is passionate and knowledgeable, and he did a great job.

ii) *Bartlett Updated Contract*

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that their former Bartlett Tree contact, Frank Grano, is still in the region but Keene is no longer part of his territory. She continued that the new Bartlett contact Keene will be working with is James ("Jim") Tatem.

Regarding other old business, Vice Chair Krautmann reported that she heard from John Mitchell, chair of the Partner City Committee, who said that the itinerary for the Einbeck visitors who are coming to Keene this fall is already quite full, so they probably cannot participate much with Volksmarch.

Vice Chair Krautmann asked if there was any other business to discuss. Discussion ensued about fundraisers for trees, not specific to/for Ashuelot River Park. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey gave information about and answered questions about the reforestation fund staff has been planning.

In response to a question about the timing of herbicide application, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that the team from Vegetation Control Service, whom the City contracts with, will be coming in the next few weeks. She continued that VCS treats several City-owned properties and some park properties, and the primary focus is knotweed. Discussion ensued. Councilor Haas stated that he is happy to work with Councilor Williams in the Conservation Commission and some Master Gardeners to get an invasive species educational program going. He will start reaching out to people and see where it goes. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey suggested reaching out to the UNH Cooperative Extension, too.

7) Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Krautmann adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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